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# The rights stuff

## *New Wolfe Fellowships put 11 students into rewarding summer externships*

A new student fellowship program, funded with a major gift from a UB Law alumnus, sent 11 UB Law students on the adventure of their lives this summer through placement in human rights externships near and far.

From Buffalo to Nairobi, Kosovo to Micronesia, the students worked in areas they are passionate about, bringing their nascent legal skills to the challenge of promoting basic human rights. The initial Thomas and Barbara Wolfe Fellowships went to:

- **Joanna T. McKeegan '10**, TransAfrica Forum, Washington, D.C.
  - **Bianca Stella D'Angelo '10**, Executive Office for Immigration Review, Immigration Court, Buffalo
  - **Kasia McDonald '10**, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Buffalo
  - **Kristen W. Ng '10**, Volunteer Lawyers Project, Buffalo
  - **Sean Mulligan '11**, International Food Policy Research Institute, Washington, D.C., and Uganda
  - **Allison Chan '11**, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Nairobi, Kenya
  - **Hy Won Kang '10**, Korean National Assembly Legislative Research Service, Seoul, Korea
  - **Tiffany Lebron '11**, Fund for African Development, Kampala, Uganda
  - **Estelle Atalig Hofschneider '11**, Micronesian Legal Services, Saipan, Northern Mariana Islands
  - **Bernadette N. Koleszar '11**, Organization for Safety and Cooperation in Europe, Kosovo
  - **Elene Steigman '10**, Center for the Promotion and Defense of Sexual and Reproductive Rights, Lima, Peru.
- These unpaid externships were

made possible by grants of \$4,000 apiece from a fund established by Thomas and Barbara Wolfe. He is a 1961 graduate of the Law School.

"Tom and Barbara Wolfe have been very generous to UB Law," said Dean Makau W. Mutua. "The Wolfe Fellowships give us a great opportunity to expose our students to the practice of human rights both here and abroad. These awards put us in league with leading law schools in the country."



Tiffany M. Lebron with young friends in Uganda.

Stefanie A. Svoren '09, who herself worked for the Kenya Human Rights Commission in Nairobi after her 1L year, was part of a team of students involved with the Buffalo Human Rights Center who helped select the fellowship recipients. She also served as co-editor in chief of the *Buffalo Human Rights Law Review*.

The grants, she says, are "completely enough to cover living expenses" for the summer, making it financially possible for students to take human rights externships, which largely are unpaid positions.

"We are seeing more enthusiasm

from the student body for these types of externships," Svoren said. "People are realizing that law is no longer confined within definite borders – it's international. With the rise of international law and Buffalo being on the border, there's greater overall interest in international human rights."

Applicants for the fellowships, she said, were asked for a resume and a letter of interest. The panel looked to see whether they have made some effort to

contact organizations for which they might work – "We just want to see if people are enthusiastic about it on their own." The award process, she said, is "quite competitive."

Students also can get course credit for their summer's work; upon their return, they will consult with faculty and write a substantial paper about their experience, perhaps outlining the project they worked on or critiquing the effectiveness of their organization.

Svoren knows how rewarding – and involving – such an externship can be. Her time in Nairobi, she said, was "overall a very positive, rewarding experience.

But it was also a very emotionally draining experience. It was the first time I was a minority; being a fairly pale white girl with blond hair, I stood out. But the people were very receptive and protective of me. People at the commission gave me opportunities I never thought it would be able to have."

As part of the externship, she created a framework for creating a police oversight body in Kenya, to curb abuses by the authorities as they battled criminal gangs. The Kenya Human Rights Commission, she said, is in the process of proposing this to the country's Parliament.