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## A Summer in the Public Interest

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The main fundraiser for the Buffalo Public Interest Law Program is the group's annual auction, which always draws a crowd eager to bid.



## A summer in the public interest

**T**hey stayed in town or traveled far. They helped represent defendants and public prosecutors. They advocated for children, for refugees, for the poor. For the Law School's newest crop of public-interest fellows, this summer meant making a difference for those who need it most.

The Buffalo Public Interest Law Program, along with awards funded by alumni, the Buffalo Human Rights Center and the New York Bar Foundation, sponsored 25 students for work in the public interest this summer. These summer placements are typically unpaid, and the Law School's roster of grants, fellowships and awards makes it possible for students to follow their passions without using their savings.

A brief sampling of our students' summer experiences reveals the breadth of their interests and the scope of what they learned.

**Maria Apruzzese '17** found her summer posting with the U.S. Marshals Service in Arlington, Va., via Google searching, and started two days after her last final exam. In the agency's Office of General Counsel, she did research and wrote memos regarding the tort claims brought against the U.S. Marshals. "For example," she says, "a civilian would file an administrative tort claim with the Marshals Service if they thought a deputy marshal was negligent in causing their motor vehicle accident." She also researched cases involving asset forfeiture and Fourth Amendment searches.

"I eventually want to be a federal law enforcement agent," Apruzzese



says. "I like the work that the marshals do — they definitely make a difference every day."

**Nikolay Feodoroff '16** spent his second summer at Journey's End Refugee Services, in Buffalo, and says with that foundation "I was able to do more intricate work." For example, he worked on asylum filings for individuals who claimed they would be persecuted if they were sent back to their country of origin. Feodoroff researched and wrote briefs to be presented to an immigration judge, detailing the political conditions in the applicant's country.

"The attorneys at Journey's End have an open door policy, so it's a really



wonderful environment," he says. "I learned a lot and I was also part of a team."

"Everyone is so passionate about what they're doing," says **Christina Kennedy '17** about her experience at Advocates for Children of New York, in New York City. The agency advocates for families of children with disabilities, working to ensure they get the services they need, without discrimination, from the city's school system.

In the position, Kennedy worked on requests by families that believe they have been denied due process by the schools, and are requesting a new hearing. "It's really important to protect the rights of students to a free, appropriate public education, because it's a steppingstone to a really great life," she says.



**Madison Ozzella '17**

put her 1L training to good use in her hometown — Olean, N.Y. — in her work with Legal Assistance of Western New York, which represents indigent clients in areas including public benefits claims, housing issues and family matters. As part of the agency's Family Court division, she spent time in court, did intake interviews, wrote letters, orders and motions, and met with clients. (Her classmate **Sara Hicks '17** also spent the summer with LAWNY.)

"I've always known I wanted to do family law," Ozzella says. "This internship has shown me the importance of understanding public benefit and housing law in order to best help your family law clients."

At the Partnership for the Public Good, in Buffalo, **Jayne O'Connor '17** worked on the agency's Open Buffalo



Initiative, helping to seek a community benefits agreement with the Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus. As part of that advocacy, she also researched the Affordable Care Act and New York State health law.

"I've always been interested in human rights and civil rights and underserved populations, and this was a way to really make it happen," she says. "I learned a lot, and I felt like I was doing something, not just stuck in a cubicle somewhere. And I wouldn't have been able to do it if I hadn't had a grant."

