Cooley Law School Pro Bono Programs: 2010-11

For additional information on all these programs please go to http://www.cooley.edu/ethics/programs

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All Campuses

Thomas Cooley's **Service to Soldiers** program offers free legal assistance to Michigan military personnel who are deploying to, are serving in, or have recently returned from deployment and are experiencing civilian legal concerns. This program is offered state-wide to service members of E5 rank or below, and works cooperatively with other veteran and military assistance programs throughout Michigan. For more information please contact Heather Spielmaker at **spielmah@cooley.edu**.

Lansing

Advent House Ministries offers a weekend day shelter for the homeless that also provides Food Stamp assistance, employment counseling and assistance, transitional housing, a literacy program, and social security disability and SSI application assistance. Students supervised by lawyers provide general legal advice and referrals, and help with letter writing and forms preparation for the indigent in Lansing. For more information contact Professor Nancy Wonch at **wonchn@cooley.edu**.

Cristo Rey Community Center: Cooley Professor Chris Trudeau provides assistance to Lansing residents seeking help through the Cristo Rey Community Center, and appreciates help from Cooley students. For more information contact Professor Chris Trudeau at **trudeauc@cooley.edu**.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA): This program offers Cooley students tax filing experience while helping low-income families file for much-needed refunds. For more information contact Professor Dan Sheaffer at **sheaffed@cooley.edu**.

Project Homeless Connect and Stand Down events occur annually to assist the homeless and veterans. Cooley Professor Nancy Wonch recruits students to assist participants with legal issues. For more information, contact Professor Nancy Wonch at **wonchn@cooley.edu**.

The **Homeless Assistance and Prevention Project (HAPP)** is conducted at the Open Door Ministry of Downtown Lansing. Legal advocacy services include providing basic legal advice, letter writing, and referrals to other community and social services resources. Law students benefit greatly from this volunteer opportunity as they are able to apply the knowledge, skills, and ethics they learn in the classroom to real life situations

and serve those who are traditionally under-served. Contact Assistant Dean Cynthia Ward at **wardc@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Grand Rapids

Stand Down: Faculty and Grand Rapids area attorneys, accompanied by Cooley students, offer pro bono legal services at **Stand Down**, an event open to West Michigan veterans. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Dégagé Ministries: This soup kitchen serving the homeless population provides counseling and interviewing opportunities for students. The legal assistance and counseling program is offered under the supervision of faculty to patrons of Dégagé the first, third, and fourth week of each month. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Ferguson Apartments is a nonprofit Dwelling Place site serving formerly homeless and disabled. Legal services are offered to Ferguson residents two days each month by Professor Sherry Batzer. Two students are encouraged to accompany and assist her each time she goes. Students can also help offsite, as the case load warrants. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

The **West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** serves the self-employed. Grand Rapids faculty assist at the Chamber on an "as needed" basis. Bilingual students are usually sought for the Chamber opportunities. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Mel Trotter Ministries:. This Christian mission is West Michigan's largest homeless mission and is located next door to Cooley's campus. It offers a residential substance abuse program, and programs for women-and-children and occupational training, a soup kitchen, and other services. Cooley's Center for Ethics, Service, and Professionalism and the Cooley Volunteer Corps offer free legal services to the mission, coordinating schedules for Cooley students who volunteer to support the work of the Christian Lawyers Association, and Cooley faculty members who donate their time to offer free legal service. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Kent County Legal Assistance Center: Cooley's partnership with the Grand Rapids Bar Association and Kent County to operate the Legal Assistance Center has helped over 50,000 unrepresented persons obtain legal forms and information to navigate the courts. Over one thousand patrons visit the Kent County Courthouse-based Center every month, where they are served by a Cooley staff attorney and students, other volunteers, and a full-time paralegal staff. Spanish-speaking staff is available. The Center also assists with family law matters, landlord-tenant matters, expunging criminal convictions, consumer disputes, and a host of other legal matters. Contact Kaleena Kowalkowski at **kowalkok@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Pro Bono Consumer Bankruptcy Program: This partnership between the Grand Rapids campus of Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Legal Aid of Western Michigan, the Grand Rapids Bar Association, and several area attorneys, offers a program to assist older adults and the disabled who fall below 150% of the poverty level. Screenings are done at Legal Aid and qualified clients are matched with an area bankruptcy attorney and a Cooley student. Trained students gather information, complete paperwork to file the petition, and participate at the creditor's meeting. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Prisoner Civil Rights Training: Each spring Cooley offers training to Michigan attorneys interested in taking USC § 1983 Prisoner Civil Right cases. Interested students who have successfully completed Research and Writing are also trained in managing the pro bono representation of a prisoner in a civil-rights case. As cases are assigned by the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Cooley students are matched with attorneys that request student assistance. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) Community Education Project: Students, under the supervision of Professor David Tarrien, study case law, prepare resource materials, and present to area parent groups and educational organizations to help educate parents and guardians of school age children with documented disabilities on their legal rights at IEP meetings, and to give counsel as to how parents can advocate successfully for their child. Contact Karen Rowlader at **rowladek@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Wills and POA Program: Area seniors and individuals falling below 150% of the poverty level receive assistance with wills and financial and medical powers of attorney and view educational presentations on estate planning and workshops. Contact Karen Rowlader at rowladek@cooley.edu for additional information.

Auburn Hills

Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association /Cooley Pro Bono Mentorship Program: Through this partnership, the DMBA receives cases from local legal aid programs in the Detroit Metropolitan area and secures an attorney who will represent the client pro bono. Cooley students assist the pro bono attorney with the case from start to finish. Typical cases include landlord-tenant, consumer law, expungements, family law, and probate. Contact Dionnie Wynter at **wynterd@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Land Conservancies: Professor Gerald Fisher provides counseling on negotiating, drafting, and enforcing conservation easements, and on presenting and approving millages to purchase land for conservation; Professor Frank Aiello oversees efforts to revise the model form of Conservation Easement used by land conservancies in Michigan. Each semester, one or two Cooley students assist Professor Aiello with each transaction. Contact Professor at Frank Aiello at aiellof@cooley.edu for additional information.

Help with Real Estate Issues: The "Ten Commandments of Real Estate Law Society" student organization at Cooley Law School (10CORE™ Law Society) is committed to educating the public about real estate issues. The 10CORE™ Law Society operates through three committees—scholarship, educational outreach, and computer donations—and provides people or organizations with basic information, fundamental tools, and legal protocols regarding real estate issues so they can, for example, avoid scams or foreclosures or be made aware of new laws or mandatory steps to successfully complete housing developments (for non-profit developers). Contact Professor Florise Neville-Ewell at **nevillef@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Senior Pro Bono Outreach: Volunteer faculty local attorneys and students meet individually with seniors at various locations, where they provide counseling, legal advise and referrals to individuals 60 or older at various community centers or other living facilities. Contact Professor Ashley Lowe at **lowea@cooley.edu**, or Professor Dustin Foster at **fosterd@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Legal Aid and Defender Association (LADA) Expungement Clinic: Eligible Southeast Michigan residents receive help expunging offenses that carry less than a life imprisonment sentence from their criminal records. LADA estimates that over 3,700 residents qualify for the expungement program. Contact Professor Kevin Scott at **scottk@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance: Students work with Cooley faculty members to provide income tax assistance to low-income citizens. Contact Professor Dan Matthews at **matthewd@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Immigration Law Outreach: Through a partnership with Catholic Social Services of Oakland County – Hispanic Outreach Ministries and Cooley's Center for Ethics, Service, and Professionalism, pro bono attorneys from the community and students teach and prepare qualified individuals for the naturalization process (from lawful permanent resident to United States Citizens) and help immigrants complete documentation. Contact Dionnie Wynter at **wynterd@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Bankruptcy Education Outreach: This partnership between the United States Bankruptcy Court -Eastern District of Michigan, the Federal Bar Association – Eastern District Chapter, the Pro Se Law Clerk's Office – Eastern District, and Cooley Law School, brings a legal education program, conducted by students, to pro se litigants—those who are representing themselves—in bankruptcy court. Contact Professor Frank Aiello at **aiellof@cooley.edu** or Assistant Dean Lauren Rousseau at **rousseal@cooley.edu** for more information.

Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency Partnership: Cooley's Career and Professional Development Office and the Center for Ethics, Service, and Professionalism collaborate with the Michigan Unemployment Insurance Agency (MIUI) to allow law students, under the supervision of MIUI attorneys, to help represent individuals who have been denied unemployment benefits at their administrative hearings. Contact Professor

Ashley Lowe at **lowea@cooley.edu**, Center Assistant Director Dionnie Wynter at **wynterd@cooley.edu**, or CPD Coordinator Alana Glass at **glassa@cooley.edu** for more information.

Ann Arbor

Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association /Cooley Pro Bono Mentorship Program: Through this partnership, the DMBA receives cases from local legal aid programs in the Detroit Metropolitan area and secures an attorney who will represent the client pro bono. Cooley students assist the pro bono attorney with the case from start to finish. Typical cases include landlord-tenant, consumer law, expungements, family law, and probate. Contact Dionnie Wynter at **wynterd@cooley.edu** for additional information.

Washtenaw County Bar Association Road Show: Cooley students team up with volunteer lawyers from the Washtenaw County Bar Association as they "go on the road" to offer legal assistance to indigent citizens who need legal help. Contact Assistant Dean Martha Moore at **moorem@cooley.edu** for more information.

Safe House: Cooley works with Safe House, a local domestic violence shelter, to place volunteer students in the circuit court personal protection order (PPO) office to assist indigent residents with PPOs. Contact Assistant Dean Martha Moore at **moorem@cooley.edu** for more information.