

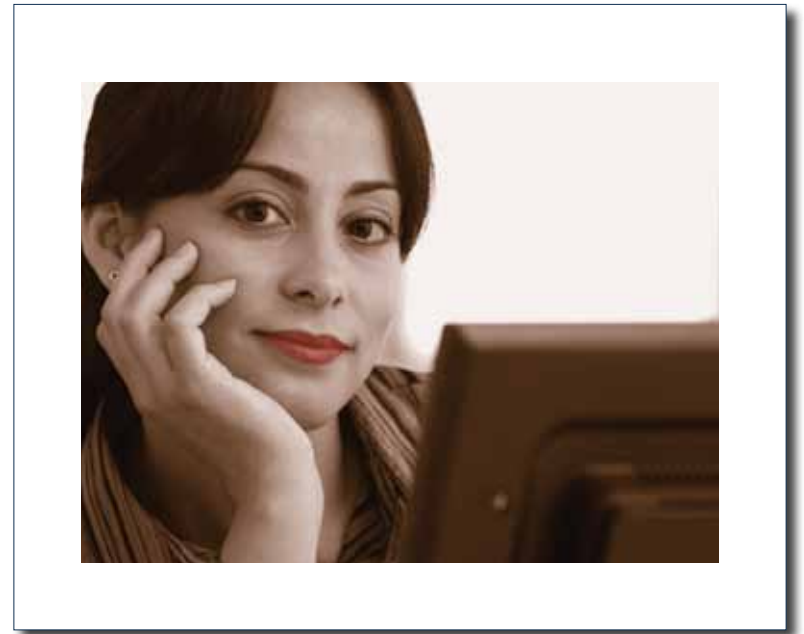


Inspiring Pro Bono:
THE THOMAS M. COOLEY LAW SCHOOL EXPERIENCE

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“*T*o know even one life has breathed
easier because you have lived.
That is to have succeeded.”

RALPH WALDO EMERSON





Day of Caring - United Way



Cooley Faculty Help



"Kids Food" Breakfast

Emerson may have captured the motivation behind the faculty and students at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School who logged over 300,000 hours of free legal work in just one year for those who could not otherwise afford or may not otherwise fund that help — people who can now, hopefully, breathe a little easier. Through clinical work, externships, and service, our students and faculty offered \$45 million worth of free legal assistance in just one year.

How is it that a law school can accomplish such a thing? A great part of the reason lies in the spirit our students bring to their study of law. The Millennial Generation has arrived on our campuses, laden with expectations for serving the public, as they have done throughout their lives. But the answer also seems to come from the culture at the school. As an institution, Cooley promotes and supports a culture that nurtures such dedication. Our faculty of former legal practitioners are encouraged to continue practicing law in service of others and in support of our students — students who are as hungry to learn and help others as the faculty is to practice law.

Cooley has always hired its faculty from the ranks of practicing attorneys. These lawyers don't simply walk away from the practice of law when they become full-time faculty members. They still yearn for the satisfaction that comes from serving a deserving client. It keeps them sharp in the classroom. It makes their teaching real. It causes their teaching to take a practical skills bent so students can learn not just the law, but how to practice law.

The faculty have steered their yearning to practice law toward *pro bono* clients. The benefits of that approach are legion: First, access to the legal system is provided to the most needy and worthy, including charities and charitable corporations, military service members, the homeless, the unemployed and underemployed, those facing foreclosure, children, wrongly incarcerated prisoners, the disabled, hurricane victims, land conservancies, veterans, juvenile defendants, and seniors. Second, when students can observe and participate in the practice of law for such clients, they are learning two lessons at once — how to practice law and how to help the deserving access our justice system. Third, students see their teachers helping others and learn from them the lawyer's obligation and commitment to giving back to the community. Finally, there seems to be no greater satisfaction for a law student (or a lawyer, for that matter) than that which comes from helping a deserving or indigent client. For law students, it's fun to practice law. But they are awed by the thanks they receive from and the life-changing impact on the grateful client, who has breathed a little easier because of their help.

When we speak of the free legal assistance that our students provide through their clinics, externships, and service, we reach an almost incomprehensible number of over 300,000 hours in 2009. That equates (at 40 hours a week) to 144 years of volunteer labor,



Habitat for Humanity



*Teen Court Awards Cooley's
President Don LeDuc*



Dégagé Ministries

or, when looked at another way, \$45 million worth of free legal assistance if it were billed at an average of \$150 per hour, worked in just one year. More important, when we calculate the number of hours of free legal assistance our students offer in the area of public interest — using the Equal Justice Works definition to include all clinic placements, judicial placements, state and federal agency placements, and positions taken in prosecutors, public defenders, Legal Aid, and other public interest law offices — our students logged in 2009 just over 200,000 hours, or over \$30 million worth of free legal public interest assistance.

Cooley faculty and students regularly contribute thousands of hours per year to such efforts through *pro bono* projects and through externships and clinics. In this document, though, we wanted to focus on the *pro bono* efforts our students have undertaken that do not

involve the awarding of academic credit: assistance offered by our faculty and students for no personal gain, not even clinic or externship credit. In 2009, our faculty and students logged over 16,000 such *pro bono* hours assisting those who would otherwise not be able to pay for or fund these services. They did this completely on their own time, for no personal reward except the satisfaction that comes from helping those in need. These 16,000 hours of *pro bono* work done for no academic credit or personal gain represent \$2.4 million (at \$150/hour) worth of free legal assistance offered in just one year.

Cooley Law School has no *pro bono* requirements for its faculty or students. Cooley has no formalized *pro bono* program. But by allowing faculty time to pursue *pro bono* interests and encouraging them to do so, and by covering the cost of malpractice insurance coverage for the faculty who practice *pro bono* law, Cooley has fostered an overwhelming commitment to *pro bono* service. Here are the not-for-credit projects we worked on in 2009.





Nancy Wonch



M. Anthony Flores

Advent House Ministries

Over the years Cooley Law School has established a very active relationship with Lansing's Advent House, 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 Supplemental Security Income application assistance. Students supervised by lawyers, including Cooley Professor Nancy Wonch, provide general legal advice and referrals, and help with letter writing and forms preparation for the indigent in Lansing. Since 2003, Professor Wonch has arranged for five to 10 Cooley students to provide *pro bono* services in various venues

throughout Lansing. For several years Advent House hosted a "Healthy Thanksgiving" event to provide patrons with a variety of health and other services including legal advice, as well as a nutritionally prepared Thanksgiving dinner. For many years Professor Wonch supervised Cooley students providing legal advice and serving dinner at this event. In 2009, six hours of legal counseling was provided *pro bono*.

Child Welfare Training Institute

For the past five years, Professor Anthony Flores has been involved with the Child Welfare Training Institute, an agency of the Michigan Department of Human Services. Professor Flores, Professor Lew Langham, and selected Cooley students, have trained Protective Services and Foster Care workers as a part of their curriculum. The eight-week training session

is held three to four times a year and includes about 170 trainees per session. Cooley students help Professors Flores and Langham prepare the trainees for their courtroom testimony by performing direct and cross-examinations of the child welfare investigators. The examinations include issues of child welfare supervision, child welfare investigation, and family preservation.

Since 2005, 1,900 to 2,000 people have been trained, including three sexual assault nurse examiners that Professor Flores trained for Great Lakes Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, in Detroit, Lansing, and Grand Rapids. In 2009, Professors Flores and Langham and their students logged approximately 570 *pro bono* hours.

Community Legal Resources Fair

Students work with Cooley faculty members to organize an annual legal resources fair for low-income citizens in the Oakland County area. We did not record hours worked for this project.

Cooley Clinics

Cooley's many legal clinics allow students to do actual legal work for indigents and receive school credit. However, many Cooley students and clinic faculty work hours in excess of what is required of them. We consider these extra hours — beyond what is needed to earn school credit — as not-for-credit *pro bono* work by both our students and faculty. Such *pro bono* assistance occurs at all of Cooley's clinics, including:

Family Law Assistance Program

This partnership between the Oakland County Bar Association, Lakeshore Legal Aid, and Cooley Law School coordinates private *pro bono* volunteer lawyers, Lakeshore and Cooley staff attorneys, and Cooley students to provide quality legal services to indigent domestic violence and family law clients in Oakland County.

In 2009, volunteer attorneys worked 392 *pro bono* hours and students worked 4,019 hours. Twelve students were required to bill 3,856 hours to earn credit, so a total of 163 hours were *pro bono*, (no credit). Thus, a total of 555 hours were provided *pro bono* by students and faculty.

Sixty Plus, Inc., Elderlaw Clinic

This general civil practice for clients age 60 and over allows students to handle their own case files. In addition, Sixty Plus intern teams are assigned an outreach project each term where they go into the community and speak to groups about the clinic's services and about specific areas of law relevant to seniors. Sixty Plus interns are required to bill 90 hours per term for their client casework, but most interns bill well over the required 90 hours. In 2009, 36 students billed 3,240 hours for credit, and 4,369 hours were provided *pro bono* (no credit).

Estate Planning Clinic

Estate Planning Clinic interns interview clients and draft and execute all client estate planning documents. They are required to bill 90 hours per term for their client casework, but most interns bill well over the required 90 hours. In 2009, 36 Lansing students billed 3,487.3 hours of legal service for credit but also provided 2,473 *pro bono* (no credit). The Estate Planning Clinic in Auburn Hills focuses on estate planning and probate law. In 2009, 27 students worked 2,549 hours, 2,430 of which was for credit, leaving 119 hours worked *pro bono*, (no credit).

Innocence Project Clinic

Interns review files of the incarcerated to determine whether DNA evidence may prove them factually innocent, and occasionally visit inmates at the prisons with their supervising attorneys. Innocence Project interns are required to bill 90 hours per term for their client casework, but most interns bill over the required 90 hours. In 2009, nine interns billed 810 hours for credit but billed a total of 1,671 hours, leaving 861 hours of legal service provided *pro bono* (no credit).

The Washtenaw County Public Defender Clinic

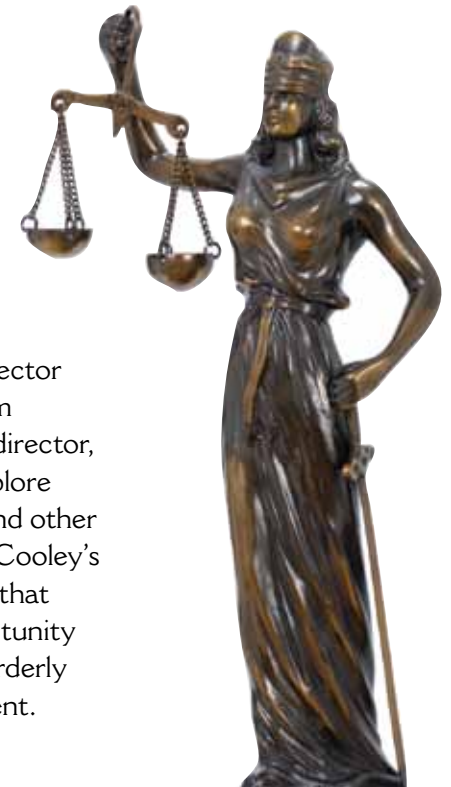
With classes in Lansing and the site work in Ann Arbor, student lawyers perform all public defender functions. In 2009, students worked beyond the hours required for credit and completed 826 *pro bono* hours (no credit).

Access to Justice Clinic

The Grand Rapids area Legal Assistance Center refers unrepresented persons who have more complex matters requiring the services of a lawyer to the Access to Justice Clinic, where a Cooley faculty director, staff attorney, and law students ensure that the clients receive competent representation in family law, landlord-tenant, and other consumer law matters in a general civil practice. In 2009, 25 students performed 2,821 hours of work, and were required to bill 2,250 hours for credit, leaving 571 hours provided *pro bono*, (no credit).

Public Sector Law Clinic

In a parallel access-to-justice program, Kent County refers legal matters involving systemic governmental issues to the Public Sector Law Clinic, a one-of-a-kind program in which a Cooley faculty member director, staff attorney, and law students explore ways to improve access to courts and other government services. This clinic at Cooley's Grand Rapids campus helps ensure that more individuals have greater opportunity to improve their lives through the orderly administration of law and government.





“Today at Dégagé Ministries it was bordering on awesome. We had two really engaged students and ‘clients’ waiting to see us. Every case was something I encounter on a daily basis (except) it was poor people who just needed an ear, a bit of advice, and, above all, a few moments of genuine respect. Today rocked and I got far more out of it than I gave ...”

MIKE DUNN, COOLEY ADJUNCT PROFESSOR





Chris Trudeau

Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan Case Preparation

Cooley students work with faculty to help criminal defense attorneys prepare cases for trial. Students work on all aspects of the case, from legal research to trial preparation. Hours were not recorded.



Tammy Asher

Cristo Rey Community Center

Professor Chris Trudeau has long been providing legal assistance to Lansing residents seeking help through the Cristo Rey Community Center. In 2009, approximately 90 hours of student opportunities were offered, which includes actual hours of client contact, and seven students assisted Professor Trudeau, who performed a little over 300 hours of *pro bono* work. Including student hours worked, that number jumps to around 350 *pro bono* hours worked. Since starting this program in 2006, Professor Trudeau's students and he have offered combined assistance of over 1,300 hours of *pro bono* service.



Alan Gershel

Dégagé Ministries

This soup kitchen serving a homeless population continues to provide counseling and interviewing opportunities for students. In 2009, 144 hours of opportunity existed for

students to be involved, and 63 students participated and filled 126 of those hours. 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. The efforts of faculty and students in 2009 totaled 198 *pro bono* hours worked.

The Eastern District Habeas Corpus Project

In order to address the backlog of *habeas corpus* petitions that have been filed in the U.S. District Court, Eastern District of Michigan, the Court has entered into a unique partnership with Cooley Law School. Students work with federal court magistrates and staff attorneys to prepare reports and recommendations on petitions for *writs of habeas corpus* filed by state prisoners in federal court. Selected law students review *habeas corpus* petitions and draft proposed opinions and orders for the assigned magistrate judge. The students are supervised by the Executive Magistrate Judge and Professors Tammy Asher and Alan Gershel. In 2009, two students performed 336 hours of *pro bono* legal service.

Eastern District of Michigan Federal Bar Association Foreclosure Assistance Program

Six Cooley students and one Cooley graduate attended and helped administer a two-day training program presented by the Michigan Poverty Law Program in February 2009 to train *pro bono* volunteer lawyers to represent *in pro per* litigants in foreclosure cases in state and federal court. Approximately 20 of these lawyers, including Cooley alumni, have volunteered to handle cases in federal court through the Eastern District of Michigan Federal Bar Association Pro Bono Committee, and Cooley students will be paired with volunteer lawyers who request a student *pro bono* law clerk.

As co-chair of the Eastern District of Michigan FBA Pro Bono Committee, Associate Dean John Nussbaumer worked with the District Judges Pro Bono Committee to recruit and train approximately 20 lawyers to handle *in pro per* lawsuits filed in federal court seeking to block foreclosure proceedings against Detroit homeowners.

Election Protection

Students work with Cooley faculty members to ensure compliance with state and federal election laws in city, county, and national elections. Hours worked on this project were not logged.

Federal Bar Association Law Day

As co-chair of the Eastern District of Michigan FBA Pro Bono Committee, Associate Dean John Nussbaumer helped organize a group of approximately 20 lawyers who provided free half-hour consultations to approximately 60 *in pro per* litigants in federal court on Law Day. Cooley students who helped out received certificates of recognition from the District Judges Pro Bono Committee for their service. Faculty and students put in approximately 52 hours of *pro bono* time.

Federal Bar Association Pro Se Handbook

Students worked with *pro bono* volunteer lawyers and Cooley faculty to research legal issues for inclusion in a *pro se* handbook for *in pro per* litigants in federal court. Hours were not recorded.

Federal Defender Office

Cooley students assist this office by preparing Sixth Circuit appellate briefs, handling client files after indictment, calculating the sentencing guidelines, working on pre-trial motions, handling

federal misdemeanor/ticket cases before a United States magistrate judge, and attending attorney/client meetings and court hearings. In 2009, two students worked 318 *pro bono* hours.

Ferguson Apartments

A nonprofit Dwelling Place site serving formerly homeless and disabled individuals, and the West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, serving the self-employed, became the Grand Rapids campus's third and fourth *pro bono* service locations in 2009. Legal services are offered to the members and residents two days each month by a rotating schedule of Grand Rapids faculty at the Chamber, and by Professor Sherry Batzer at Ferguson. Two students are encouraged to accompany and assist the faculty members each time they go, and this year all available slots were filled. Students and faculty, combined, did 121 hours of *pro bono* work for Ferguson Apartments and 106 hours for the Chamber.

Grand Rapids Teen Court

Teen Court is a diversion program for first-time youthful misdemeanor offenders between the ages of 11 and 16. Through an agreement with the Kent County Prosecutor's Office, families of youthful offenders can opt to avoid the traditional criminal justice system by agreeing to participate in Teen Court. The participants must agree to remain in school,



John Nussbaumer



Sherry Batzer



Tracey Brame



Florise
Neville-Ewell



Christine Church

attend street law workshops, complete community service, apologize to any victims, and attend a hearing at which a jury of their peers (local high school students) will deliver a disposition that often includes additional community service, restitution, and other forms of restorative justice. The project has received support from the local bench, prosecutor's office, and probation department in Kent County, and local leaders have welcomed the effort to reduce juvenile recidivism. Cooley faculty serve as volunteer judges along with local attorneys and judges. Cooley students serve as respondents' and victims' advocates, hearing observers, and jury monitors during jury deliberations. They also help the respondents complete their required orders for the Teen Court diversion from

prosecution. Many of them may also serve as academic mentors for the students and establish relationships with the teenagers that continue beyond Teen Court. East Kentwood High School offers the peer jurors for Grand Rapids Teen Court.

Housing Help

Throughout the metropolitan Detroit area, Cooley Professor Florise Neville-Ewell helps two large categories of participants in the real estate process — homeowners, including new homeowners, empty nesters, and foreclosure victims, and nonprofit developers who primarily build affordable housing within their respective communities. Through her *pro bono* program, Professor Neville-Ewell

provides people or organizations with basic information and fundamental tools and legal protocols regarding real estate and the real estate process so homeowners can avoid scams and foreclosure, and nonprofit developers can be made aware of mandatory steps to successfully complete their housing developments. She employs the “ten commandments of real estate” to isolate the most important items for each group, but emphasizes that each group needs a team of professionals to ultimately help them accomplish their real estate goals. Professor Neville-Ewell has worked directly with individuals from multiple churches (e.g., Corinthian Baptist Church in Detroit), with individuals through symposia sponsored by banks (Fifth Third), the Detroit Branch of the NAACP, The Heat and Warmth project (THAW), Oakland County town hall meetings (where she assists with housing and foreclosure issues), Michigan's Attorney General, and nonprofits through their leaders.

Hurricane Victims

Since 2007, over 200 Cooley students have traveled to New Orleans during their term break to partner with legal agencies involved with disaster relief legal work, shepherded by Assistant Dean Chris Church. Students have worked on probate issues involving homes in the lower Ninth Ward, helped clients clear titles to devastated homes, assisted with public defender cases in criminal courts, worked to clear the backlog of divorce cases, helped people obtain and maintain public benefits, helped people stay in their homes, and undertaken other related work. Students have learned first hand about the role of a lawyer in a community recovering from a catastrophe. One student said, “The Disaster Relief Legal Association has taken me from being the typical self-serving law student always looking for the next great résumé builder, to actually caring and not just ‘doing what looks good.’” In 2009, 16 students and two professors worked 720 hours, *pro bono*.

“
The Disaster Relief Legal
Association has taken me from being
the typical self-serving law student always looking
for the next great résumé builder, to actually
caring and not just ‘doing what looks good.’”

COOLEY STUDENT



Indigent Defense Case Development Sessions

Cooley Law School Professor Marjorie Russell runs case development sessions for lawyers representing indigent criminal defendants at Cooley's Lansing, Grand Rapids, Ann Arbor, and Auburn Hills campuses, and Cooley students participate in the working groups. The case development sessions employ the action methods for case preparation and trial presentation that Professor Russell has participated in developing over the last 15 years as part of the faculty of the Trial Lawyers College in Wyoming. This *pro bono* service in aid to the indigent defense community is expected to continue as long as there is a demand for it among Michigan lawyers. The participants act as a sort of focus group which helps the lawyer identify and understand the story of the case, the people involved, and what will be important to jurors trying to understand what happened and why. Sometimes clients are present, in which case some of the time is spent exploring their story in action, and helping them access information important to their defense. Frequently students who have attended the sessions continue to work with the lawyer, follow the case, attend court, and form mentoring relationships. Twenty-four indigent defense case development sessions were conducted at Cooley's campuses in 2009, 15 at Auburn Hills, six in Lansing, two in Grand Rapids, and one in Ann Arbor. Each session is three hours long. That created up to 72 hours of *pro bono* opportunity for each student who chose to participate. Up to 30 students could participate in any given session, resulting in a total of over 2,000 hours of opportunity for *pro bono* work during 2009. One hundred eighty students were involved, for a total of 540 hours of student *pro bono* work. Twelve lawyers attended as participants, for 36 hours of *pro bono* work. Five professors, including Professor Russell, attended as participants, for 12 hours of *pro bono* work. Professor Russell conducted all 24 sessions, for 72 hours of *pro bono* work. A total of 660 hours of *pro bono* work were performed in the

Indigent Defense Case Development sessions during 2009, and 24 lawyers and their clients were served.

Kent County Legal Assistance Center

In the past five years, 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 the legal forms and information to navigate the courts. Over 1,000 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. Most of the center's assistance is in family law matters, but the center also assists with landlord-tenant matters, criminal conviction expungements, consumer disputes, and a host of other legal matters commonly experienced by low-income residents who cannot afford an attorney.

Land Conservancies

Professor Gerald Fisher has been providing *pro bono* services for land conservancies and related groups in southeast Michigan for about 20 years. He has provided counsel on negotiating, drafting, and enforcing conservation easements, and on presenting and approving millages to purchase land for conservation; and he has served on Senate *ad hoc* committees, assisted



Marjorie Russell



Gerald Fisher



Frank Aiello



in drafting the Wetlands Act and model ordinance provisions, and presented seminars on local wetland regulation and conservation easements. Professor Frank Aiello oversees efforts to revise the model form of Conservation Easement used by land conservancies in Michigan, and has provided hundreds of *pro bono* hours in land acquisition transactions, including some currently in development. Each semester, one or two Cooley students assist Professor Aiello with each transaction. Examples of transactions include helping land conservancies acquire land and conservation easements against donated green space and other natural and undeveloped areas. Professor Aiello provided more than 30 hours of free legal service to the conservancy in connection with the transaction. Faculty logged approximately 90 *pro bono* hours offering this type of assistance in 2009.

Lansing Teen Court

One way to expose law students to real-life law is to develop a relationship with the local prosecutor's office that allows the law school to host the adjudication of criminal cases involving teenagers. The Ingham County Prosecutor's Office has such an agreement with Cooley Law School. That office screens and refers to the Lansing Teen Court, juvenile offender cases involving

youths ages 11-16. Local teenagers receive orientation and training and then act as jurors, while local judges and Cooley faculty preside as judges in the proceedings. The program provides teens with a diversionary program for relatively minor legal offenses, and allows other teens to not just see, but also decide, sentencing. The proceedings take place in Cooley's high-tech, state-of-the-art courtrooms. Cooley students serve as respondents' and victims' advocates, hearing observers, and jury monitors during jury deliberations. They also help respondents complete their required orders for the Teen Court diversion from prosecution. Volunteering as an advocate means holding the respondent accountable and guiding the first-time juvenile offenders through the steps in the juvenile diversion process, which takes approximately 90 days. Many of them also serve as academic mentors for the students and establish relationships with the teenagers that continue beyond Teen Court. In 2009, 41 students volunteered 2-3 hours per week and undertook legal work for approximately 75 percent of that time, totaling approximately 76 hours of *pro bono* work.

Legal Aid and Defender Association (LADA) Expungement Clinic

Professor Kevin Scott and three Cooley students participated in this clinic to help eligible southeast Michigan residents expunge from their criminal records offenses that carry less than a life imprisonment sentence. Together they were able to help 39 people take an important step on a road to a better life. LADA estimates that there are over 3,700 residents who qualify for the expungement program. In 2009, students and faculty offered 20 hours of *pro bono* assistance. Students also work with the Legal Aid and Defender Office to investigate housing discrimination complaints, but hours on this initiative were not recorded.



“Volunteering at Mel Trotter was a great experience. It was exciting to be able to help a bit. The chance to meet people, understand their issues, and work to help them through it is exactly the kind of thing I hope to be able to do someday in my legal career. Thanks again for the opportunity.”

CHRISTOPHER ACKLIN, COOLEY STUDENT



Macomb County Prosecutors Case Assistance

Students work with Cooley adjunct faculty members to assist Macomb County assistant prosecutors with “cold case” prosecutions. Hours were not recorded for this work.

Mel Trotter Ministries

West Michigan’s largest homeless mission, Mel Trotter Ministries in Grand Rapids offers free legal services every week, thanks in part to Cooley faculty, staff, and students. Cooley’s Center for Ethics, Service, and Professionalism and the Cooley Volunteer Corps administer the service, coordinating the schedules for the several 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. The Christian mission, located next door to Cooley’s campus, also houses a residential substance abuse program, women-and-children program, soup kitchen, occupational training programs, and other services. Two students are invited to accompany the attorneys during two time slots each week. This year, students and faculty provided 110 hours of *pro bono* service.

Nonprofit Incorporation Project

Students offer start-up legal services to charitable nonprofit corporations at Cooley’s Grand Rapids campus through the Nonprofit Incorporation Project. The project has served well over 30 organizations that offer a variety of charitable works such as taking disabled children hunting and fishing, showing inner-city children the path to become pilots, rehabilitating properties in decaying urban locations to anchor redevelopment, providing transitional services to Somali refugees, and providing education to the children of Niger. For the organizations interested in incorporating and obtaining 501(c)3 status, Cooley students lead

the meetings, complete the paperwork, and handle correspondence with the clients. Under the direction of Associate Dean Nelson Miller, 14 clients have been assisted, and more than 25 students have participated in the project. Students and faculty, together, logged 145 hours of *pro bono* service. Auburn Hills students also work with Cooley faculty members to provide legal assistance to nonprofit organizations.

Open Door Ministry

Initiated by students in Professor Nancy Wonch’s Professional Responsibility course as a student project, students supervised by lawyers now visit the Open Door Ministry shelter in Lansing once per month, for several hours, to provide general legal advice, referrals, letter writing assistance, and to prepare forms for the indigent in the Lansing area. Each session provides *pro bono* opportunities for two students. The Open Door Ministry of downtown Lansing says its mission is to provide sustenance, counseling, assistance, and love to those of God’s children who find themselves in difficult circumstances and with few places to which they can turn. Its primary focus is on emergency or crisis situations, but the response is tailored to the circumstances. Legal advocacy services have included providing basic legal advice, writing letters, and making referrals to other community and social services resources. As part of *Pro Bono* Month in October 2009 and continuing throughout 2009,



Kevin Scott



Nelson Miller



Cynthia Ward

Cooley students returned to the Open Door Ministry to provide additional *pro bono* legal advocacy services under the supervision of Assistant Dean Cynthia Ward. In addition to benefiting the individuals served, law students also benefited greatly from this volunteer opportunity as they were able to apply the knowledge, skills, and ethics they learned in the classroom to real life situations and serve those who are traditionally underserved. In just four months during 2009, 14 hours of opportunity for student *pro bono* work were scheduled, 15 students were involved, 59.25 hours of *pro bono* work were performed by students, and 23 hours of *pro bono* work were performed by Assistant Dean Ward and Professor Wonch, for a total of 82.25 *pro bono* hours worked and a total of 25 individuals served.

*P*roject Homeless Connect and Stand Down

These events occur annually to assist the homeless and veterans. At the Lansing campus, Professor Nancy Wonch recruits students to assist participants with legal issues under her supervision. These events create approximately 20 student opportunities each year. In 2009, eight hours were logged by faculty and 16 hours by students for a total of 24 *pro bono* hours. Cooley's Grand Rapids faculty and Grand Rapids area attorneys, accompanied by Cooley students, offered *pro bono* legal services at Project Homeless Connect, a supportive service fair held at VanAndel Arena, and at Stand Down, a similar event open to West Michigan veterans. Cooley faculty and students logged 45 hours of *pro bono* assistance at these two events in 2009.

*A*senior Pro Bono Outreach

This program kicked off during national *Pro Bono* Month in October 2009 to involve Auburn Hills students in the *pro bono* work of faculty and volunteer attorneys while providing a valuable

Opportunity Knocks

Shane, a second year Cooley law student, first pitched the idea of providing pro bono legal services through the Open Door Ministry to Professor Wonch's Professional Responsibility class a couple of terms ago. During an informal planning meeting with other students and Dean Ward, Shane reflected, "I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to work with the Open Door Ministry. I have met many great people there and have learned of many of the wonderful things that the Ministry does to help others. It has been a great learning experience for me and also satisfying in that I have the ability to help others in legal matters. Because it is both a great opportunity for law students to practice what has been learned and beneficial to those that we have helped, I hope that this work will continue beyond my time at the school."

In addition to serving pro bono hours at the shelter, Shane also volunteered to personally distribute flyers about the pro bono legal clinic to other Lansing area shelters. Dean Ward has come to rely on Shane's involvement in the Open Door Ministry and knows that he will continue to do a good job for the Open Door Ministry and the community it serves.





service to senior citizens facing many challenges in the Pontiac area. Two events were held in 2009 at the Ruth Peterson Senior Center in Pontiac with six faculty and staff members and one volunteer attorney (a Cooley graduate) assisting seven seniors with their legal issues by conducting client intake and referring the information to Family Law Assistance Program coordinator Professor Ashley Lowe and Estate Planning Clinic coordinator Professor Dustin Foster. Faculty offered 16 hours of *pro bono* assistance in 2009.

Service to Soldiers Legal Assistance Referral Program

Since 2007, Cooley's Service to Soldiers program has offered free legal assistance to eligible 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 statewide to service-members of E5 rank or below, and works cooperatively with other veteran and military assistance programs throughout Michigan. The program has allowed Cooley students, alumni, staff, and Michigan attorneys the opportunity to give back to those who have sacrificed so much for our country. Initiated by Cooley's Center for Ethics, Service, and Professionalism's Director

Heather Spielmaker, with assistance from the National Guard and JAG, Michigan soldiers on active duty and returning from war receive help with a variety of legal issues ranging from government disability determinations, to probate and estate planning, to reemployment. These soldiers receive free legal service through this referral program, which matches soldiers with Cooley Law School alumni and other attorneys who offer their specialized legal assistance to U.S. military personnel. The program was introduced in April 2007 and, since then, hundreds of deploying, deployed, and returning military personnel have received free legal assistance through the generosity of our participating faculty, alumni, and members of the legal community. Assistance has been offered in preparing wills and powers of attorney (POAs), and with handling family law issues, landlord disputes, insurance problems, and creditor/debtor concerns to over 3,000 returning service members, and over 600 have received free legal assistance. Another 200 military personnel have been re-directed to other programs and resources that better suit their needs.

In recognition of her work, the Legion of Merit was bestowed upon Heather Spielmaker by two-star Major General Thomas G. Cutler, Adjutant General, for establishing Cooley's Service to Soldiers Program. In his remarks, the General stated that Heather "evidenced outstanding leadership and service to the community by creating the Service to Soldiers program. Her actions reflect great credit upon herself,



Heather Spielmaker is awarded the Legion of Merit from Major General Thomas G. Cutler

Lawyers Help

A soldier suffering from PTSD had a mental break down and allegedly threatened to murder his parents after taking them hostage. The soldier's parents, who were concerned about his well-being despite their harrowing experience, contacted Cooley's Service to Soldiers program to see if that program could get him additional representation beyond his court-appointed attorney. They wanted their son to get the help he needed rather than go to prison. The program's administrator, Heather Spielmaker, contacted a Cooley graduate, nationally-recognized defense attorney Frank Reynolds. Frank agreed to assist the court-appointed attorney on the case, *pro bono*, and thus ensured that the soldier would get top-notch representation and the best chance for an outcome that would benefit him and society. War produces some very unsavory situations and our attorneys are willing to experience them with clients who can't pay, because they feel a debt to these brave men and women who have risked their lives and their mental stability to keep us safe.



Thomas M. Cooley Law School, and the United States of America." According to the National Guard, the Legion of Merit is awarded only once in a while in Michigan and is the fourth highest State Military Award a civilian or service member can receive after the Medal for Valor, the Distinguished Service Medal, and the National Guard Life Saving Medal.

Well over 140 Michigan attorneys, many of them Cooley alumni, stand ready to offer their *pro bono* services when called upon, as they have done since they signed up, to help our nation's brave defenders. They have helped service members of the U.S. Marine Reserves: 1/24 Alpha (Grand Rapids), Bravo (Saginaw), and Charlie (Lansing) companies; the Michigan Army National Guard 1461st Transportation Company (Lansing); the U.S. Army Reserve 415th Civil Affairs Battalion (Kalamazoo); the Selfridge Air National Guard Base; and National Guard units, including 177 Military Police ETT; Company C 125 Infantry & 63rd Brigade; HHC & Company A 1-125 Infantry; Company B 125 Infantry & Company F-237; 63rd Brigade 125/126; 126 Press Camp; 1-119th Field Artillery Battalion headquartered in Lansing with units in Port Huron, Alma, Albion, and Augusta; 1073rd Maintenance Company - Greenville; 46th Military Police Command - Lansing; 3/330th Regiment and 95th Division (IT) - Waterford. The program continues to grow and offer services as requested.

An important milestone in the reputation and breadth of the program came when the Service to Soldiers program teamed with the Michigan State Bar Foundation and the Michigan law firm Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn to write and publish *The Judge's Guide to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act (SCRA)* in April 2009. Written by volunteer



Charlie Palmer



Eileen Kavanagh



Emily Horvath

attorneys at Honigman and researched by a Cooley alumnus, this bench book was sent to every judge in the state using grant funds secured from the Michigan State Bar Foundation. This publication received a great deal of positive media attention and resulted in an invitation for Cooley faculty to speak at the annual district court judges' conference later that year.

Assisting with this program in various ways are 72 students who have offered legal briefings to small groups of deploying servicemen and women, conducted client in-take interviews, researched relevant case law, given presentations to groups of returning veterans and Vietnam-era veterans, drafted wills and powers of attorney under the supervision of licensed attorneys, staffed information booths, researched legal issues for inclusion in the *Judge's Guide to the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act*, and handled many of the administrative tasks necessary to maintain the program.

In fact, student volunteers contribute so generously to the administration of the program that the program's ongoing success has come to depend greatly on their labor.

The Service to Soldiers Program stretched to new heights, or rather distances, in July 2009 when it organized, through the leadership and direct support and involvement of Associate Dean John Nussbaumer, the swearing-in of Cooley Auburn

Hills graduate Miles Gengler via satellite while he was deployed in Iraq. Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly administered the lawyers' oath as Major Gengler's wife, children, parents, friends, and Cooley family looked on. The ceremony was televised and reported on across the country during the Independence Day holiday, and was even covered internationally.

The Service to Soldiers Legal Assistance Referral Program has received grants from the Michigan State Bar Foundation and the Ingham County Bar Foundation, and has also received monetary donations through fund raising efforts of the Cooley Inn of Court. Faculty members including Nancy Wonch, Charlie Palmer, Eileen Kavanagh, Chris Trudeau, Terry Cavanaugh, Emily Horvath, James Carey, Karen Truskowski, and Associate Deans Nelson Miller, Amy Timmer, and John Nussbaumer have volunteered to assist at reintegration workshops by interviewing military personnel to determine legal needs, writing wills and POAs, and presenting on legal issues, and by recruiting additional lawyers to work *pro bono*. In addition, the center's administrative assistant Kathy Lawrence regularly volunteers her time to attend these workshops and notarize every legal document created. In 2009, students and faculty provided soldiers with 254 hours of *pro bono* assistance.



Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly and Cooley graduate Major Miles Gengler

“*W*ar produces some very unsavory situations and our attorneys are willing to experience them with clients who can’t pay, because they feel a debt to these brave men and women who have risked their lives and their mental stability to keep us safe.”

HEATHER SPIELMAKER, DIRECTOR
CENTER FOR ETHICS, SERVICE, AND
PROFESSIONALISM





Gina Torielli



Daniel Matthews



Daniel Sheaffer

State Appellate Defender Office/ Detroit Crime Lab

A 2009 investigation and audit of the Detroit Crime Lab uncovered systemic problems in the way ballistics tests were conducted, and it became necessary to determine how many convictions may have been impacted by tainted forensic examinations. The State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) represents indigent defendants on appeal and had handled many of the files that required review. Given the potential number of affected cases, an informal agreement was reached between Cooley Law School and SADO whereby Cooley students help SADO review all case files to determine whether tainted evidence may have been used to secure a conviction. This file review includes reading trial transcripts, police reports, witness statements, expert witness reports, and other relevant documents. Cooley Professor Alan Gershel provided Cooley students with an overview of the applicable law and SADO attorneys provided additional training. The work is done in SADO's Detroit office and is supervised by Professor Gershel and a

SADO attorney. Cooley students reviewed guilty plea cases and letters written by defendants, and reviewed the cases that were "flagged" initially as a form of quality control. When that was completed, they then were involved in drafting briefs in the meritorious cases and, finally, will review paper files. In 2009, 11 students performed 281 hours of *pro bono* work.

Tax Assistance for Nonprofits

Professor Gina Torielli takes one or two cases a year assisting nonprofit organizations with their organizational and tax issues. In 2009, Professor Torielli and a student from her LL.M. tax exempt organization class worked on matters for a group in Oakland County supporting passage of a parks millage renewal, and also consulted on tax issues with a local land conservancy organization interested in a corporate reorganization. She estimates that she and her students clocked eight hours of *pro bono* work in 2009.

Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA)

This program offers students tax filing experience while helping low-income families file for much-needed refunds. Students work with Cooley Professor Dan Matthews to provide income tax assistance to citizens. In 2009, students and faculty logged approximately 130 *pro bono* hours of assistance. Launching in 2010 under the direction of Professor Dan Sheaffer in Lansing, and in conjunction with United Way in Grand Rapids, VITA programs in Lansing and Grand Rapids will also get off the ground and allow various student organizations to help supervise and support the program.

Volunteers of America Homeless Shelter

An alarming prevalence of mental and other disabilities exists among the homeless in Michigan. In an effort to get these residents the assistance they desperately need while offering hands-on experience for its students, Cooley has offered to teamup with the Volunteers of America (VOA) Homeless Shelter in Lansing to help the homeless apply for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) benefits. Clients need help completing the initial paperwork and checking back with government agencies to be sure progress continues on their



Amy Timmer



Terry Cavanaugh



James Carey

claims and appeals. In 2009, we presented to a veterans group at VOA to make them aware of our Service to Soldiers program and directed a few cases to *pro bono* attorneys, and under the supervision of Professor Mark Dotson, a student gave a presentation on the Michigan Driver Responsibility Act. The student spent about 12 hours preparing, and Professor Dotson spent about three hours supervising the student in that role for a total of 15 hours of *pro bono* service.

Washtenaw County Public Defender's Office Cases

Professor Lew Langham volunteers to handle felony cases for the Public Defenders Office and is listed on their web site as a volunteer attorney. In 2009, Professor Langham handled, solo, two jury trials — both capital cases for armed robbery and related charges — from start to finish. He also handled felony preliminary exam files, filed motions, and conducted interviews and jail visits, including a trip to the prison in Jackson to interview a witness, plea negotiations with the prosecutor, and case round discussions with the trial attorneys at the Public Defender's Office. He also prepared for several additional felony trials that settled on trial day or before. Professor Langham logged 440 solo

pro bono hours in 2009. Cooley students who helped Professor Langham with jury selection and input on aspects of the trial logged 32 *pro bono* hours.

In 2009, faculty and students logged 472 hours of *pro bono* work handling felony cases for the Washtenaw County Public Defender's office.

Conclusion

Cooley Law School is grateful to and proud of its students and faculty for their commitment to helping others through free legal work. We believe that *pro bono* service helps students develop their professional identities and we offer such opportunities as an essential part of our Professionalism Plan (cooley.edu/ethics). We hope that engaging our students in *pro bono* work will help them become ethical attorneys, committed to serving the under-served and to making such service a regular part of their lives as lawyers. And, we fervently hope that their definition of "success" will include helping others breathe a little easier.



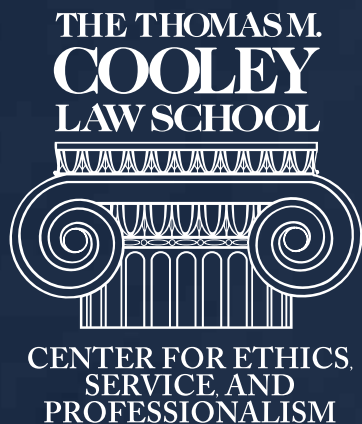
Mark Dotson



Lew Langham

Karen
Truszkowski





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