

Mr. Dan Ruben
Executive Director, Equal Justice America
13540 East Boundary Road
Building II, Suite 204
Midlothian, VA 23112

31 August 2013

Dear Mr. Ruben,

My summer as an Equal Justice America Fellow, working with the Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers and Veterans was an incredibly rewarding experience. I am very grateful to EJA because without your generous support, I would not have been able to serve in this capacity.

The Clinic for Servicemembers and Veterans was a great place to spend my EJA Summer Fellowship. The Clinic practices heavily in family law and I had the opportunity to work on a number of family law matters. These cases were a new and exciting experience for me because they required getting directly involved in the lives of my clients. I became familiar not only with the legal challenges the client was facing, but I also became personally invested in their lives. This was challenging in that it required managing emotions and expectations in a way that I had never experienced before. Still, it was refreshing to see the direct impact that my work was having in the lives and futures of actual people. They were truly appreciative for the assistance that we were providing.

Perhaps my favorite case from this summer was working with a local homeless veteran. Having lived in the Arlington, VA area his entire life, this man served his country nobly in Vietnam. After falling on hard times and bouncing from job to job, he began living out of his car. While he had come to accept his new lifestyle, he was accustomed to using the public showers at the local high school pool. One day, the police arbitrarily started harassing him and eventually issued a ban forbidding him from entering the shower property. He contacted us and we worked all summer to restore his access to the pool. This was particularly challenging because the client had severe social anxiety and difficulties communicating with others. The client had burned a lot of bridges with police officers, local officials, and others because of his lack of social skills. The hardest part of representing this client was getting people to see past his rough exterior and to realize that he too was a person, deserving of understanding and respect. While the case was a struggle, it made the end result so much sweeter.

The project that I am most proud of from this summer was the Clinic's initiative to establish a Veterans Treatment Court in Northern Virginia. As the country begins to heal from over a decade of war, we must confront the reality that many of our veterans are suffering from combat-induced mental illness such as post-traumatic stress disorder and traumatic brain injury. A new movement, based on the popular drug treatment court model, proposes diverting veterans with treatable mental health conditions out of the traditional criminal justice system and into a program of judicially supervised treatment. These diversion courts are producing phenomenal results in hundreds of jurisdictions across the country by increasing public safety, saving taxpayer dollars, and giving our combat veterans the opportunities that they deserve. This summer, I

spent countless hours researching these courts and have begun working with community partners to explore the feasibility of establishing such a court in our Northern Virginia community. In addition to learning a great deal about diversion courts, combat related mental illness, and the politics inherent in state court administration, I'm also very excited about the strides we have made towards making this court a reality for our community.

This summer was a wonderful opportunity that I will never forget. I cannot express my gratitude to Equal Justice America enough. I will be forever thankful for this opportunity.

Sincerely,

J. Justin Collins
2013 EJA Summer Fellow
George Mason University School of Law
Anticipated Graduation: May 2014



id Veterans

3301 Fairfax Drive, MS 1G3, Arlington, VA 22201

VIA EMAIL

October 22, 2013

Dan Ruben
Executive Director
Equal Justice America
Building II, Suite 204
13540 East Boundary Road
Midlothian, Virginia 23112

RE: Summer 2103 Fellowship (J. Justin Collins)

Dear Mr. Ruben:

I want to thank you again for providing J. Justin Collins with a Summer 2013 Fellowship which allowed him to work as a Fellow for the Clinic for Legal Assistance to Servicemembers and Veterans at George Mason University School of Law this past summer.

Mr. Collins' performance as a CLASV fellow was nothing short of inspiring. No task too small, no obstacle too large. He has successfully represented a variety of clients in a zealous and professional manner, achieving each goal that has been set for him with dedication and a "can do" attitude. For example, Mr. Collins was assigned to assist a homeless veteran regarding a no trespass order. First, Mr. Collins determined through thorough research of convoluted administrative regulations that the order had been wrongfully issued. He then began to reach out to the stakeholders in the matter to determine the facts surrounding the issuance, through which he determined that the facts upon which the Order were based were fragile at best. He drafted a letter to the primary stakeholder requesting that the Order be lifted. Upon receiving no response, he drafted a Petition to ask the local court to issue a declaratory judgment finding that the Order was illegally issued and sent it to the stakeholder's then identified counsel. Upon review of the Petition, stakeholder's counsel initiated negotiations and Mr. Collins began a series of conversations and negotiations to effect the lifting of the Order, skillfully negating the necessity of filing the Petition with the Court. During this time he also kept in regular contact with the client apprising him of the situation and the negotiations, and when the time came, of the grounds upon which the stakeholders would agree to the lifting of the Order. Although under my direct supervision, Mr. Collins performed each of these tasks with little guidance, as it was unnecessary because he immediately grasped the legal and factual issues present and required little guidance to achieve the desired outcome.

Additionally, on a currently pending matter involving the retirement of an active duty servicemember for physical disabilities, Mr. Collins has displayed unshakeable determination and dedication. He has spent countless hours combing through records and gathering evidence to present a matter to an administrative board that would have left even a seasoned attorney overwhelmed. Yet, he is

energized by the challenge not only because of the gravity of the situation, but I believe because of his commitment to serve those that serve us.

Last, but not least, mundane or not, Mr. Collins' performance of the tasks and matters assigned to him are performed with skill and evidence the pride he takes in his work. He handled his assigned matters with compassion and zeal, his tireless efforts for his clients demonstrate in spades that he will make an intelligent and thoughtful attorney.

Again, thank you for providing him with this opportunity. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laurie Neff". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "L" and "N".

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Cc: J. Justin Collins