

Lynn Bartkowiak

August 26, 2012

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

Dear Mr. Ruben:

Through the support of an Equal Justice America fellowship, I had the opportunity to work at Lakeshore Legal Aid Counsel & Advocacy Law Line (CALL) this summer. The internship allowed me to learn and grow in ways I never anticipated and I am very grateful for the funding I received through EJA.

CALL is a hotline associated with Legal Services of Northern Michigan, Legal Services of South Central Michigan, and Legal Services of Western Michigan that assists hundreds of low-income and elderly clients each week. When clients call in, they speak to an attorney who evaluates their legal issue and provides legal advice over the phone. Following the phone call, the attorney may send additional instructions or pro se materials to the client or contact other parties on the client's behalf. Especially urgent or complicated cases are referred to local legal aid offices if enough resources are available.

The majority of my work focused on cases that required additional action beyond providing legal advice by phone or mail, but were unable to be addressed by local legal aid offices. I routinely negotiated settlements with opposing parties and counsel; reviewed contracts and other legal documents, offering my opinion of the clients' legal issues to supervising attorneys; drafted pleadings and pro se materials; collaborated with government and social service agencies on behalf of clients; and performed legal research.

The most interesting case with which I assisted involved a low-income young man in his 20s who never received a birth certificate and needed one as soon as possible. Although he was born in the United States, he fell through the cracks due to the unconventional nature of his birth and subsequent mishaps with state agencies. In order to assist him, I had to research the delayed registration of birth process of a different state and guide the client through the application procedure. The most complicating factor was the fact that he was born in an OB/GYN office instead of a hospital. As a result, the only documentation of his birth our client possessed was a memo from the 1980s signed by the OB/GYN confirming that he was born in the office and a filled-out—but unsigned—birth certificate application

that was never filed. After numerous phone calls, I discovered that all of the medical records from our client's birth had been destroyed, so our only option was to track down the OB/GYN (who no longer practiced in his former office) and request that he sign an affidavit verifying our client's birth. After composing an affidavit and making numerous phone calls, I finally reached the OB/GYN, who agreed to verify that the memo accurately stated that our client was born in his office. After I assembled the necessary forms and documents, our client was able to complete the application procedure. I'm still waiting to hear whether our client was successfully able to receive a birth certificate.

More routinely, I negotiated deals between low-income clients and landlords. In one case, the landlord unlawfully locked a client out of her apartment due to unpaid rent and utility bills. Regardless of the circumstances, self-help evictions are always illegal in Michigan. I communicated with the landlord, alerting her to the fact that her actions were unlawful and negotiating a payment plan so that our client could remove her belongings on a designated day. Consequently, our client was able to retrieve most of her belongings on the day she requested, and she may have filed in Small Claims for the few belongings that were lost or damaged during the lock-out.

My favorite clients were an elderly couple whose electricity was shut-off in June due to thousands of dollars in unpaid arrears. Because our clients disputed the amount, I repeatedly contacted the electricity provider in order to obtain a history of the couple's account. After many frustrating phone calls and an intervention by the Michigan Public Service Commission, I finally received word that DTE would send the clients' records so that our office could review them. Due to the frequency of our calls, the wife consistently recognized my voice on the phone and often exclaimed, "Lynn, sweetie, how are you doing!?" when I called. Although the process has been frustrating, it has been a pleasure to get to know the couple's personalities and background. Just last week, the wife said to me, "I don't know anything about you, Lynn, but you are a blessing from God. We never could've handled this without you." At this point, we have not resolved the couple's issue, but we hope to resolve the problem in the near future.

In sum, the highlight of my experience with CALL has been working directly with the clients on a daily basis. I loved getting to know each of them and assisting with the often-complicated legal problems they were facing. Many of my clients were undereducated or uneducated, and it was a blessing to provide help to individuals who were unable to address the issue before them without my assistance.

Thank you, Equal Justice America, for providing the funds that made this internship experience possible. I have grown so much this summer and I truly appreciate the incredible opportunities the fellowship provided.

Sincerely,

Lynn Bartkowiak
Wayne State University, May 2014

LAKESHORE LEGAL AID'S
COUNSEL & ADVOCACY LAW LINE
ATTORNEYS AND COUNSELORS AT LAW

16130 Northland Drive
Southfield, Michigan 48075
Local (248) 569-9658 Toll Free (888) 783-8190
Fax (248) 569-9980

Friday, August 31, 2012

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

Re: Lynn Bartkowiak

Dear Mr. Ruben:

This summer, we had the great pleasure of employing Lynn Bartkowiak as a legal intern in our office. I am writing to express our respect for Lynn's legal acumen and work ethic, and to thank you for so graciously providing the financial support she needed to make her work here possible.

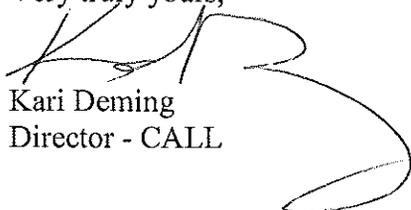
CALL is a nationally-recognized, attorney-staffed telephone advice, brief service, pro se and referral system serving low-income and senior people throughout much of Michigan. Our environment is extremely fast-paced and constantly challenging, and our mission is to provide near-immediate, high-quality services on vastly wide-ranging civil law issues. Our law student interns enable us to stretch our scarce resources, thus expanding access to justice within our client community.

As a legal intern, Lynn was responsible for providing quick, concise and comprehensive support to our attorneys. Specifically, Lynn researched points of law, reviewed pleadings, negotiated settlements with opposing parties and counsel, engaged with government and social services agencies on behalf of clients, and drafted correspondence and self-help pleadings.

Throughout her time here, Lynn impressed me with her work ethic, diligence, quick grasp of apparent and underlying issues, and ability to craft practical resolutions. She handled each matter assigned to her in an efficient, independent and timely manner, while also being open and willing to seek feedback where appropriate. She is motivated by a good heart and a touch of righteous indignation, and treats each person with respect and dignity. She is a true pleasure.

Happily, Lynn will be continuing on with us throughout the fall. I have no doubt that she will continue to shine as she learns and grows in the legal profession, and that will become a highly qualified and successful non-profit lawyer. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly at 248-443-8068 x231 for any further discussion.

Very truly yours,


Kari Deming
Director - CALL