

**MJF**  
ANNUAL  
REPORT  
**2016**



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	2
SUMMER CLERKSHIPS & PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FELLOWSHIPS	3
STREET LAW	4
FUNDRAISERS & ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY	5-6
REMEMBERING RICK PLUNKETT	7
MJF GOING FORWARD	8
VOLUNTEER STATISTICS	9
FINANCIALS	10
MJF INDIVIDUAL & ORGANIZATIONAL DONORS	11-12
MJF STAFF & BOARD OF DIRECTORS	13-14



# LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



To all of you who believe in MJF’s mission, thank you for another year of support! We could not do our work without you. For thirty-four years MJF has been increasing access to justice by providing law students with public interest and pro bono opportunities. Volunteer law students leverage staff and pro bono attorney time, allowing them to serve more clients and to focus their attention on more complicated cases. Two out of every three clients are turned away from legal aid programs because there aren’t enough resources to meet their needs. The need for MJF’s Law School Public Service Program is as great as ever.

The legal education landscape changed again this year with the combination of William Mitchell College of Law and Hamline University School of Law. One fewer law school and another year of fewer law students—not only from declining enrollment but also because nearly two hundred of Mitchell Hamline’s students are enrolled in the Hybrid Program and live outside of Minnesota—has challenged MJF to recruit sufficient law students to meet the need at legal services agencies.

We have been creative in our efforts to find volunteers. We have worked with the undergraduate students in Hamline University’s Law and Justice Society to recruit volunteers to work at legal services organizations and we have recruited admitted pre-Ls to volunteer during the summer before they start their law school careers. These undergraduate and incoming pre-Ls have so far logged over 650 hours of service. In addition to looking for more volunteers, we have created more single-day, one-off volunteer opportunities that meet student needs and schedules. In spite of the declining student population, students still filled over 1,100 placements.

Our sixteen summer clerks provided ten weeks of full-time assistance at legal aid programs across the state, from Bemidji to Mankato and the Twin Cities. These agencies were able to significantly increase their client services in the summer of 2016 thanks to the efforts of our summer clerks.

We remain committed to our mission of instilling an ethic of pro bono service in the law student community. With your support we will continue to do so.

Sincerely,  
Janine Laird



# SUMMER CLERKSHIPS

The Summer Clerkship Program is MJF's oldest program. Each year, MJF raises funds which are used to pay the stipends of law students who work full time at a legal service agency for the summer. During the summer of 2016, MJF funded twelve student clerkships in the metro area, and four in greater Minnesota:

- Maisie Baldwin: SMRLS Family Law
- Melissa Bumanglag: Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women
- Kristen Busch: 10th Judicial District Public Defender
- Paul Enger: LSNM Bemidji
- Alfredo Hwang: Anishinabe Legal Services
- Samuel Johnson: SMRLS Mankato
- Stephanie Jones: Mid-MN Youth Law Project
- Olivia Judd: Central Minnesota Legal Services
- Jackie Leffner: Innocence Project
- Jonathan Mansker: Mid-MN Disability Law Center
- Jordan Morris: Mid-MN Legal Aid Housing Discrimination Project
- Charles Nguyen: Neighborhood Justice Center
- Andrew Rothstein: Minnesota Center for Environmental Advocacy
- Tim Sanders: SMRLS RIMS
- Austin Spillane: Minnesota AIDS Project
- Yming Wang: White Earth Tribal Court

# PUBLIC INTEREST LAW FELLOWSHIPS

MJF student chapters at each law school also raise funds for students to fill summer clerk positions in public interest: the Public Interest Law Fellowship (PILF) at Mitchell Hamline and the University of St. Thomas and the Public Interest Clerkships (PIC) at the University of Minnesota. Each of the law school student chapters all have unique processes for selecting which PILF/PIC applications are funded, and they raise money in various ways, including silent auctions and chili cookoffs. During the Summer of 2016, ten fellowships were funded:

- Patricia Alonso Galera: Supreme Court of Israel
- Ellen Anderson: Legal Aid Service of Northeastern MN
- Peter Dotson: MN Assistance Council for Veterans
- Christina Espey-Sundt: United Nations US Protection Unit
- Benjamin Hargrove: International Justice Mission
- Sarah Inskeep: Second Judicial District Public Defender's Office
- Bailey Metzger: Gender Justice
- Rachel Molsberry: US Department of Health & Human Services
- Katie Rawls: Citizen Advocacy Center
- Marlee Torrence: ICWA Law Center



# STREET LAW

Street Law is a program of MJF in which law student volunteers teach legal rights, responsibilities and resources to middle school and high school students. Many of the classrooms where the students teach are in alternative learning centers and charter schools. Many of the high school students have been court involved and/or have not been successful in traditional school settings. During the spring of 2016, fifty law student volunteers participated in the program, teaching at sixteen schools.

Prior to teaching, the law students attend an intensive two-day training covering substantive areas of law, guidance about how to create a lesson plan, and how to teach in an interactive and engaging way. After training, the law students are given access to an online collection of resources and lesson plan examples to prepare for teaching.

MJF and the students have been fortunate to have the assistance of volunteer attorneys to assist with teaching. The attorneys provided insight into areas of law that are very technical, such as immigration. It was also exciting for the classroom students to meet attorneys and learn about their career path.

Street Law is a “win-win” program. The young people earn practical knowledge; at the same time, law students learn more about the law by teaching it to others.





## FUNDRAISERS

### Attractive Nuisance:

[A] person who has an instrumentality, agency, or condition upon his own premises, or who creates such a condition on the premises of another, or in a public place, which may reasonably be apprehended to be a source of danger to children, is under a duty to take such precautions as a reasonably prudent man would take to prevent injury to children of tender years whom he knows to be accustomed to resort there, or who may, by reason of something there which may be expected to attract them, come there to play. (Black's Law Dictionary, 3d ed.)

On Friday, May 13, 2016, MJF hosted its annual Attractive Nuisance Tour, a benefit concert to help local organizations provide

legal services to the disadvantaged. Each band featured at least one lawyer in it. Since 2003, the Attractive Nuisance Tour has raised money for Minnesota legal nonprofits the only way they know how—through maximum rock 'n roll!

ANT was held at the Crooked Pint Ale House in Minneapolis. The bands were: **4 Hour Parking**, **DC Higgs and Blue Volcano**, **Noisy Withdrawal** and **The Nuggets**. The money raised by ANT supports MJF's summer clerkship program.

On Tuesday, August 2, 2016, MJF hosted a Legal-ish Trivia Contest at Kieran's in Minneapolis, hosted by local actor and comedian **Tim Uren**. Twin Cities law firms fielded a dozen teams, but only one of them could take home the coveted Golden Gavel. The winners were **Phoebe Taurick**, **Ashley Geisendorfer**, **James Ortmann** and **Brendan Keenan**. Congratulations!



# ANNUAL AWARDS CEREMONY

On Wednesday, November 16, 2016, MJF hosted its Annual Awards Celebration, at which we honored outstanding individuals in the Minnesota legal community.

The winners of the 2016 Outstanding Service Awards were:

Direct Service Provider: **Bob Enger**,

Legal Services of Northwest Minnesota

Private Practice Pro Bono: **David Wilson**, Wilson Law Group

Advocate: **Ann Conroy**, Legal Services State Support

Law Student awards:

**Ashley Steinberg**, University of St. Thomas School of Law

**John Bruning**, University of Minnesota Law School

**Diane Galatowitsch**, Mitchell Hamline School of Law



*Vice President Walter Mondale and Marianne Short. Photos by George Byron Griffiths.*



Our keynote speaker at the Annual Awards Ceremony was **Marianne Short**, Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of UnitedHealth Group.

Marianne Short is the Executive Vice President, Chief Legal Officer and a member of the Office of the Chief Executive of UnitedHealth Group, the largest diversified health care company in the U.S. and #6 in the Fortune 500. She has over 35 years of courtroom and management experiences, including serving as the Managing Partner and an active litigation partner at Dorsey & Whitney, and as a judge on the Minnesota Court of Appeals for 12 years. She is active in the community and serves on numerous non-profit boards. She is an vocal advocate for pro bono service, and in 2015, the American Bar Association recognized UnitedHealth Group for demonstrating an exceptional commitment to providing pro bono legal services.

Ms. Short spoke on the topic of “Building Pro Bono as a Core Competency.” She was introduced by Vice President **Walter Mondale**.

The Annual Awards Celebration was attended by over 250 people, representing over twenty-five Minnesota law firms, schools and other organizations. The event raised over \$65,000 for MJF’s work serving low-income populations.

## REMEMBERING RICK PLUNKETT



Rick Plunkett, the founder of the Minnesota Justice Foundation, died on November 2, 2016. After a miraculous liver transplant two years before, Rick lived the “best two years of a great life” before passing in the arms of loved ones. Wife Carol, an early organizer for MJF, and children Alex, Katie, and Luke saw him through.

Rick’s genius, organizing skill and passion for social justice launched MJF in the fall of 1981 at the University of Minnesota Law School. Rick had been the past president of the Minnesota Public Interest Research Group, organizing University students behind social justice causes. He believed the same methods could balance the scales of justice for the underrepresented from a group of law students heading to lucrative practices. MJF, in its early days, is that story.

Invited by Rick and a committee of first year law students, Ralph Nader came to the University of Minnesota Law School. Nader told the aspiring lawyers that their profession was characterized by crassness—selling their services to the highest bidders,

without concern for social justice. What would the profession look like, he asked, if lawyers pursued true justice and not just fees?

Rick rallied the committee to respond to the Nader message. Discussion ensued on seminars, scholarships and other ideas. Rick proposed something he called “public interest clerkships.” He proposed that U law students, accepting highly-paid law firm summer clerkships, dedicate a percentage of their earnings to fund summer public interest clerkships. Law clerks at the U would pledge one percent of their summer earnings to support four summer clerkships.

The committee then signed up 250 student pledges: in all, one-third of the Law School pledged their 1%. So in the very first year, a volunteer committee with no paid staff brought one-third of the student body together to pledge to public interest clerkships—and in the middle of that was a guy who wore a black leather jacket, studied in the law library at all hours, and brought his dog to school. Rick Plunkett had all the tools to put Ralph Nader’s message to work in the Minnesota law community.

The first four clerkships were awarded to an environmental law practice, another devoted to the developmentally disabled, Legal Aid, and to Native Americans. To date MJF has supported over 600 clerkships and the student chapters have supported an additional 184. In the first few years of MJF, the support came entirely from law students; nothing came from institutions or philanthropy—that came later and in abundance. The University of Minnesota Law School leadership knew little about the movement but later came to champion it. It was, at its start, 250 law students that sought change, motivated by Ralph Nader’s speech.

Rick Plunkett’s wife, Carol Christenson, brought MJF to Hamline Law School in 1982. His brother-in-law Mike Christenson was one of its founding members. They stand today in awe of MJF and its pursuit of justice, and thank all of those who have joined the movement begun in 1981 by Rick Plunkett. As Rick noted at the 25th anniversary of MJF, it is all about a community of lawyers and students who care about justice. For those of us who know about where this all started, it is a lot about that brilliant law student who used his genius and organizing skill to change Ralph Nader’s speech and the Minnesota law student experience forever. -Mike Christenson





# MJF GOING FORWARD

“Never be afraid to raise your voice for honesty and truth and compassion against injustice and lying and greed. If people all over the world... would do this, it would change the earth.” -William Faulkner

MJF’s mission is to strive for justice by linking law students to pro bono and public interest work. We believe that our work enriches the lives of the clients served by the legal services agencies, strengthens the work done by the legal services agencies, and builds skills and a value of service in law students that will stay with them as they move into post-graduate positions.

## **Pre-L Programming**

In addition to remaining committed to the Summer Clerkship Program, the Law School Public Service Program, Street Law, the law school student chapters, and PILF/PICs, MJF has begun to reach students earlier every year.

During the week before their law school orientation, students can volunteer at a number of legal service providers in short-term, oftentimes group volunteer settings. These pre-orientation service projects (POSPs) are a great way to get an understanding of legal services organizations in Minnesota, to meet attorneys practicing in public interest, and to aid the organizations with projects that would otherwise not get accomplished.

In 2016, MJF worked with the law schools’ Admissions staffs to reach out to students who were interested in volunteering for the summer at legal service organizations throughout the Twin Cities. Agencies who are able to meaningfully engage students interested in the law partnered with MJF to get incoming 1Ls volunteering before law school. MJF plans to increase the number of students who will participate in summer 2017.

## **Mitchell Hamline New Initiatives**

MJF is a dedicated partner of the law schools, and we are happy to work with Mitchell Hamline on two new initiatives they have started this school year: the Mobile Law Network and their Lawyering Program.

The Mobile Law Network program uses a specially designed vehicle—nicknamed “the Wheels of Justice”—to transport students to support family law, criminal expungement, and health care brief advice clinics throughout the state. MJF has helped coordinate these trips on the Wheels of Justice and we look forward to continuing this partnership promoting access to justice throughout Minnesota.

The Lawyering Program is a class taught in the first year at Mitchell Hamline. Students in this class learn research, writing, and advocacy skills. In addition to the more traditional classroom experience, students are encouraged to get into the community and begin volunteering with legal services organizations. During the first semester, 70% of first-year students at Mitchell Hamline engaged with MJF on some level.

MJF enjoys being an active partner with all of the law schools, law students, and legal services organizations. We continue to look for new ways to strive for justice and improve the delivery of pro bono and public interest work to the community.



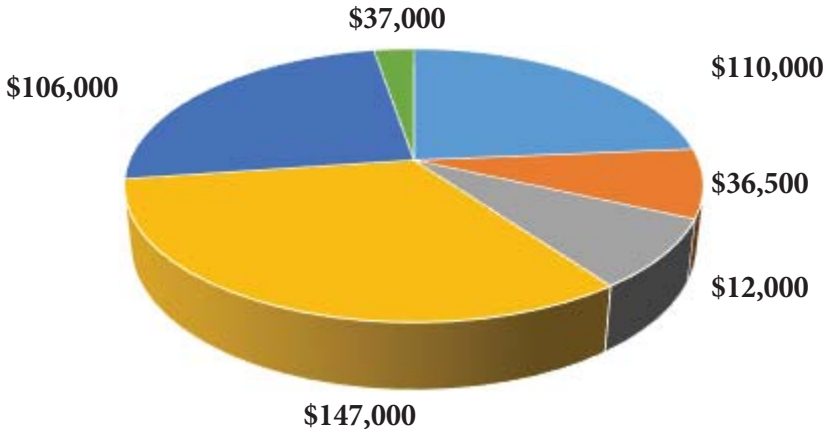
# VOLUNTEER STATISTICS

\*Updated 03/15/2017



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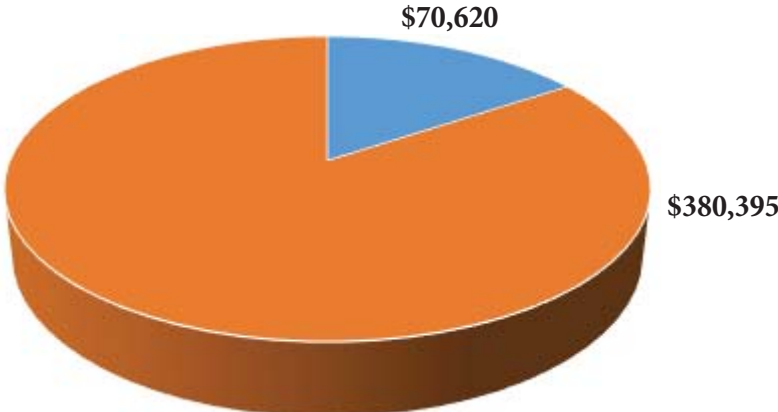
FY 2016 OPERATING INCOME



Total = \$449,693

- Law Firms
- Foundations
- Individuals
- Law Schools
- Government Grants
- Other Income

FY 2016 OPERATING EXPENSES



Total = \$451,015

- Management & General Expenses
- Program Expenses



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