

Economic Reality + Court Needs = Fellowship

By Martha A. Fisher

THE FIRST JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF Pennsylvania is located among some of Pennsylvania's finest law schools. This beautiful city, rich with culture and history, attracts law school students from across the country, and each year graduates energetic lawyers yearning to practice. Here's where dreams also meet reality: businesses have downsized and law firms have suspended hiring. Yet courts are facing increased caseloads. For many graduates, dreams slip away as they contemplate turning to other jobs.

Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge Lisa M. Rau realized the predicament of graduating students. She also had a full understanding of the burden facing the courts as judges complied with judicial efficiency systems. Judge Rau started thinking creatively. What if these recent graduates would come to the First Judicial District as an unpaid fellow, learn how to be a law clerk and assist the existing staff with pressing caseloads? What if judges were willing to train these law clerks, benefit from their assistance, knowing at any time they could find a paying position?

With the support of then President Judge Pamela Pryor Dembe and Administrative Judge D. Webster Keogh, the Judicial Fellowship program was launched in the Spring of 2011. Initially, Judge Rau contacted schools in the immediate Philadelphia vicinity: Temple University Beasley School of Law, University of Pennsylvania Law School and Drexel University Earle Mack School of Law. By

the end of the first season, seven area law schools were involved, including Villanova University School of Law, Widener School of Law, Rutgers School of Law-Camden and Penn State Dickinson School of Law. In the next year, 38 judges joined the program and 30 graduates participated. Of the 30 fellows, 88 percent went on to find paying jobs in a year or less, 25 percent of whom were hired as paid law clerks for the courts.

Now in its fourth year of existence, the program has gained the continued support of Administrative Judge John W. Herron and current President Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper. "The Judicial Fellowship program provides benefits to both the graduate and the courts," noted Judge Woods-Skipper. "The graduate gains marketable experience and the courts gain the assistance of qualified and motivated young lawyers. I am so proud of this partnership and the wisdom of Judge Rau in helping to fill the void of this economic depression; this is a win-win for all involved."

Some notable success stories have evolved. Shannon Cunningham, a 2011 graduate, had part-time work at a Philadelphia firm. She applied for and received a fellowship with Judge Marlene Lachman, while keeping her part time job. Within several months, she received a full-time paid clerkship with Judge Sandra Mazer Moss. She started monthly brown-bag luncheons for other fellows so they could exchange experiences, leads, and interview tips. In 2013, Shannon was hired by a law firm in Philadelphia. She



Judge Lisa M. Rau

recalls, "When I look at my journey since law school graduation, I can't imagine what it would have been like without the judicial fellowship. We are like family." Natalie Young, a former fellow hired as a law clerk, now runs the luncheons.

Fellow Jessica Shawaluk heard about the program through Temple Law School's career services. While searching for a job during the summer of 2011, she applied for and received a fellowship. Several months later she was hired by a law firm who valued the experience she had gained as a fellow. Within one year, her firm was seeking to hire another associate. Another fellow was hired into Jessica's firm and the two associates currently still work there. Jessica stated, "I can't imagine where I would be today if it wasn't for the fellowship program. I am so grateful that Judge Rau has taken the steps to initiate such a program and keep it in place."

What if these recent graduates would come to the First Judicial District as an unpaid fellow, learn how to be a law clerk and assist the existing staff with pressing caseloads?

The Judicial Fellowship Program is vibrant and growing. The program now accepts applications on a rolling basis. To date 152 graduates have participated, and 23 fellows are active. Fifty-five judges are participating; and 30 positions are open. The fellows come from 30 different law schools. Of the 113 Fellows who have moved on from the program, 98 left having obtained paid employment during the fellowship. Thirty-one of those fellows have gone to law firms, 32 to judicial clerkships, 14 to government jobs and 37 to other work. "This mini-clerkship provides experience to recent grads while judges benefit from new legal talent. The mutual selection process is key: fellows apply to individual judges and judges select their own fellows," said Judge Rau.

Martha A. Fisher is legal counsel in the Human Resources Department of the First Judicial District of Pennsylvania.

LAWYER LAWYER REFERRALS

For details on placing a Lawyer to Lawyer referral ad, contact Lana Ehrlich at 215-557-2392 or lehrlich@alm.com.

FLORIDA ATTORNEYS

Personal Injury Law Firm

Referrals Welcome
(561) 266-9191

Personal Attention Family Owned Trial Attorneys



2160 W. Atlantic Ave.,
Delray Beach, FL, 33445
561-266-9191
aronberglaw.com

COLLECTIONS & ENFORCEMENT OF JUDGMENTS

Drew Salaman

30 year lecturer/course planner
Pennsylvania Bar Institute

"He wrote the book"

Contingent Fees Available
Salaman Grayson, P.C.

The Judgment DoctorSM

100 South Broad Street
Philadelphia, PA 19110
(215) 568-7575
drew@salamangrayson.com

TAXPAYER REPRESENTATION

- IRS Audits & Examinations
- IRS Collection--Liens, Levies & Seizures
- Offers In Compromise & Installment agreements (Full & Partial Payment)
- IRS Appeals/U.S. Tax Court
- Refund and Abatement Actions
- State and City Tax Disputes

JOSEPH R. VIOLA, P.C.

THE PUBLIC LEDGER BUILDING, SUITE 940
150 SOUTH INDEPENDENCE MALL WEST
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19106-3410
(800) 305-4926 • (215) 825-5080
jrviola@comcast.net
www.jrviola.com

NURSING HOME ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Bedsore, Falls, Dehydration/ Malnutrition, Unexplained Injury or Death, Wandering, Medication Errors, Failure to Thrive

Experience and Committed to this Specialized Litigation.
Author and lecturer.
Litigating throughout Pennsylvania.
Referral fees protected.

Call Marty Kardon
215-568-5885
Kanter, Bernstein and Kardon, P. C.
1617 JFK Blvd., Suite 1150
Philadelphia, PA 19103
kardon@kbklaw.com
www.kbklaw.com

AIR CRASH LITIGATION

The Wolk Law Firm
(215) 545-4220

- Our practice is limited to aircraft accident litigation for plaintiffs.
- We are Airline Transport and Type Rated jet pilots.
- We are Flight Instructors.
- We are aviation legal writers and lecturers with nationwide litigation experience.

www.airlaw.com