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Corporations And Their Law Firms Partner To Sponsor Equal Justice Works Fellowships

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EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS

At Equal Justice Works, we believe that the poorest and most vulnerable among us deserve the same access to justice and quality legal representation as more fortunate citizens. We have been thrilled to see the same commitment from our partnerships with more than 75 of the top law firms in the country and 24 of the Fortune 100 companies and their support

Equal Justice Works is the national leader in creating public interest opportunities for law students and lawyers. Collaborating with the nation's leading law schools, law firms, corporate legal departments and nonprofit organizations, Equal Justice Works offers a continuum of opportunities that provide the training and skills that enable attorneys to provide effective representation to underserved communities and causes. Equal Justice Works is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

David Stern has served as Executive Director of Equal Justice Works for the past 18 years, vastly expanding the size and impact of the organization. With nearly 30 years of experience in public interest law, David has helped develop Equal Justice Works into the nation's leading organization in creating public interest law. David was recognized as one of "The 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America" by The National Law Journal in its March 25, 2013 issue; by the White House in 2011 as a "Champion of Change" for his work fighting for equal justice for all; and as one of the "Greatest Washington Lawyers in the Past 30 Years" by Legal Times in 2008.

of Equal Justice Works.

For more than 20 years, Equal Justice Works has been creating postgraduate fellowships for extremely talented young lawyers to work on public interest projects to advance justice in underserved communities across the country. These fellowships have been privately funded by individual companies and law firms. The sponsors are able to select the fellows they believe are the best fit for their individual company or firm based on their issue areas of interest, geography, and potential for pro bono collaboration.

Several years ago, we came up with a new model: Let's encourage law firms and companies to come together and co-sponsor fellowships. Eureka! It has turned into our hottest idea. Companies such as Microsoft, Hewlett-Packard, Home Depot, Morgan Stanley, Pfizer Inc., Walgreens, and dozens of others have since agreed to co-sponsor fellowships, each with one of their outside law firms.

The beauty of these co-sponsored fellowships is that law firms and their corporate clients work together to select a project that appeals to both of them, select the fellow that brings substantive expertise to the legal issue, and select an issue where they see the potential of engaging their lawyers to do pro bono work with the fellow. Co-sponsoring a fellowship also provides an avenue for the law firm and corporate client to spend quality time with each other, developing a shared purpose and relationship. Bringing to bear the benefit of their combined



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legal expertise in the selection and support of the fellow, the sponsors feel the personal and professional satisfaction of knowing they are making a difference in the world.

More and more, we are discovering that law firms and corporations want to fulfill their interest in pro bono work and corporate social responsibility, and they are genuinely inspired by the Equal Justice Works Fellowship co-sponsorship model, which has grown sixfold since its inception five years ago.

The Equal Justice Works Fellowship program funds hundreds of young public interest attorneys who spend two years (and most continue on for years afterwards) representing people across the country with critical legal issues. These fellows provide effective representation to underserved communities and causes such as veterans' issues, home foreclosures, community economic development, immigration, civil rights, homelessness, access to healthcare, and domestic violence. They are often on the forefront of pivotal legal decisions that can impact hundreds, if not thousands, of individuals.

Here are just a few examples:

- **Goldman Sachs and Sullivan & Cromwell** co-sponsored 2010 Fellow Gina Clayton who represented mothers and families threatened with eviction from public housing due to the collateral consequences of contacts with the criminal justice system in New York City. Gina designed a series of clinics with the Neighborhood Defender Service of Harlem and Harlem Community Justice Center to provide free legal advice for New York City Housing Authority ("NYCHA") tenants. The clinics provided NYCHA tenants the opportunity to meet with volunteer legal professionals

For additional information about Equal Justice Works, please visit www.equaljusticeworks.org.

concerning their residential needs and to hear a Know-Your-Rights presentation.

- **The Verizon Foundation and DLA Piper** are co-sponsoring 2011 Fellow Leeja Patel, who is working to increase the legal services and resources available for immigrant survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking in the Bay Area South Asian community by providing culturally competent legal and educational services, working on legislative reform in the violence against women and immigration arena, and strengthening related community partnerships and collaborations. Leeja has collaborated with her sponsors on several pro bono projects, including a September 2012 U-visa clinic staffed by attorneys from Verizon and DLA Piper that helped immigrant survivors of criminal assault obtain much-needed legal status for themselves and their families.

- **Biogen Idec and Mintz Levin** are co-sponsoring 2012 Fellow Rajan Sonik, seeking to improve health and education outcomes of low-income children with sickle cell disease (SCD) by leading the first effort to understand and meet their interrelated medical, social, educational, and legal needs. Rajan is working with his sponsors to develop pro bono opportunities for involvement in policy work and legal research related to SCD.

- **Microsoft and Fenwick & West** are co-sponsoring 2013 Fellow Leo Flor to work on behalf of low-income veterans in Washington State. Leo is a former U.S. Army Captain who led a company of nearly 300 troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. After returning to the States, he attended the University of Washington School of Law, during which time he worked on behalf of homeless and vulnerable veterans. He met clients who had been in the same arenas in Iraq and Afghanistan and who now have a wide variety of civil legal needs. This fellowship will allow Leo to continue this important work and coordinate with Microsoft and Fenwick & West to develop pro bono opportunities.

And one of our favorite stories...

- **Hewlett-Packard and Morgan Lewis & Bockius** co-sponsor 2011 Fellow Camille Pannu, who works with community-based organizations to establish green jobs, foster economic empowerment, and build democracy in rural San

Joaquin Valley communities of color through the provision of comprehensive legal services. Camille is the second of three fellows co-sponsored by HP and Morgan Lewis. Camille partnered with former Fellow Julia Wilson, now Executive Director of OneJustice, to coordinate a OneJustice "Justice Bus" trip to bring attorneys from HP and Morgan Lewis to assist her clients in the Valley.

In July 2012, Camille, Julia, Equal Justice Works AmeriCorps Fellow Candace Chen, and lawyers from HP and Morgan Lewis took the bus several hours from San Francisco and Palo Alto down to the San Joaquin Valley, one of the nation's most environmentally and economically devastated regions. They conducted a day-long transactional legal clinic for the people of this community and began to help them transform their lives. "My co-sponsors are playing an amazing role in helping to transform the state," said Camille.

Fourteen HP and Morgan Lewis transactional attorneys with a wide range of specialties provided legal advice to help local businesses and community groups with issues ranging from intellectual property and corporate governance, to leasing and building compliance requirements, to compliance with California and federal environmental laws.

"Those are conversations that those lawyers have all the time back at HP," said Amanda Smith, Pro Bono Partner at Morgan Lewis & Bockius. "But here, they are using those skills to help these community organizations get off the ground, to help them help others."

"Co-sponsors get the satisfaction of mentoring and working with a young lawyer who is incredibly entrepreneurial and whose project is at the cutting edge of legal work and community work, which means they also get to do cutting-edge pro bono work," said Julia.

Bruce Ives, Vice President and Deputy General Counsel of HP, put it this way: "We get two things out of it. First, some perspective. Every day I go to work in Silicon Valley where we do our corporate work. We don't realize what a bubble we're in. The second thing we get is inspiration. The community group I worked with included a grandmother, a homemaker, and a retired forklift operator. These are now the officers of a community organization working to bring

fresh fruits and vegetables to their communities and teaching people the lessons of entrepreneurship."

"This opens up a whole range of opportunities," said Ives. "We have contributed hours, we have contributed dollars, and we have even contributed equipment, but when you sponsor a fellow, you make a strategic investment in resources that will go into a community for years and really start to turn things around."

Last year alone, OneJustice organized 27 trips, engaging almost 300 volunteers in serving more than 550 low-income individuals and their families living in rural and isolated areas of the state. "It's been so inspiring to see Equal Justice Works fellows take this idea, incubate it, and grow it into something that is now national," said Julia.

Stories such as these are taking place all over our country, increasing the number of people we can help exponentially.

When you invest in an Equal Justice Works fellow, you set off a chain reaction. What begins as a single seed grows into a network of permanent support that helps bridge the justice gap all across the nation. Of the more than 1,300 fellows that we have funded during the 20 years of our fellowship programs, 80-90 percent remain in public interest work to this day.

For those of us who care about access to justice, there is a crisis in our country. While our country's credo is "Justice for All," 80 percent of low-income people and a growing number of middle-income people face serious legal needs without the means to hire a lawyer.

There is no shortage of law students and recent graduates who stand at the ready to roll up their sleeves to work on behalf of needy communities. Each year, we see hundreds of incredibly talented recent graduates applying for our fellowships – bright legal minds with excellent ideas for how to help people in need. We turn away six out of seven due to lack of funding.

The good news is that a growing number of our country's corporations and law firms share our vision and our commitment to equal justice, and they are joining forces to sponsor more and more of these fellowships.

Join us!