Director’s Welcome

Welcome to the inaugural edition of VLC Dispatch. As we mark the one year anniversary of the Veterans Law Center on Veterans Day, November 11th, I’m filled with gratitude for the past year and brimming with optimism for the upcoming one.

It has been an extraordinary pleasure to play a role in the creation and upkeep of the Veterans Law Center. Reflecting upon the 100 veterans who have visited the center, our robust roster of volunteers, and the generous support from the community, it is abundantly clear each of you has contributed to the center’s success. Whatever your role, thank you!

For me, an ongoing source of inspiration for this project is my dad, who passed away three years ago. Robert T. Sather was drafted at the tender age of eighteen and served in the Army at the end of World War II. Through the years, he frequently entertained me with stories about his Army days, always marveling that “a poor and simple country boy from northern Minnesota” was given such an extraordinary opportunity. From the comical difficulties he experienced during basic training at Fort Knox to the harsh realities he witnessed in Europe during his tour, he appreciated it all. The Army gave him the chance to travel, and meet different people, and most importantly, his college education. Continued on page 6.

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VLC Celebrates One-Year Anniversary

Lieutenant Colonel Kevin Hood and Attorney Dan Rottier of Habush, Habush & Rottier attended the grand opening of the VLC, which is funded in part by a gift of the firm.

In November 2012, the University of Wisconsin Law School Pro Bono Program, in partnership with the State Bar of Wisconsin, Dane County Veterans Service Office, Dane County Bar Association and Porchlight, Inc., celebrated the official launch of the Veterans Law Center (VLC). Since then, the VLC has served 100 veterans and their families on a walk-in basis at Madison’s City-County Building and Porchlight, providing brief legal advice, information and referrals on civil legal matters as well as information about local,
state and federal military benefits available to veterans.

The clinic has been a great success not only with the clients, but also with the volunteers. The VLC has trained and worked with over 50 attorney volunteers, 13 paralegal volunteers, as well as 116 law students. Most attorneys and paralegals volunteered on an individual basis while the law firms of Axley Brynelson and Hupy and Abraham sponsored entire VLC sessions. Session sponsors fill all of the volunteer attorney and paralegal slots for their chosen session, with law students provided through the UW Law School Pro Bono Program.

All of the pro bono work done by our volunteers would not have been possible without a Pro Bono Initiative grant from the State Bar as well as generous gifts from Habush Habush & Rottier and Zion Lutheran Church. Donations help fund the operational costs of the clinic, as well as materials to continue volunteer recruitment and training. For more information on how to make a donation or volunteer your time please visit our website at http://law.wisc.edu/probono/veteranslawcenter or email us at veteranslawcenter@law.wisc.edu.

Q&A with VLC’s New Administrator, Davis Runde

Q: Please, tell us about yourself.
A: I recently graduated from UW-Madison with a degree in Legal Studies and aspire to attend law school next fall. In addition to my VLC work, I am working for AmeriCorps and the Schools of Hope Project in the Madison Metropolitan School District. I work as a Tutor Coordinator focusing on literacy and math in the Elementary Schools, specifically Kennedy and Lake View Elementary.

Q: So how did you get involved with the VLC?
A: I worked for the Law School last year in the Mediation Clinic as a Case Manager, which I loved. Through that work, I became familiar with Ann Zimmerman and Jonathan Seok’s involvement in the VLC. As such, Ann contacted me about the possibility of becoming the new administrator for the VLC, a commitment of about 15-20 hours per week. The opportunity was created to share Karen McKenzie’s workload given that Karen was attending law school. The position sounded perfect for me so I jumped all over it and, as they say, the rest is history. Continued on page 6.

Retrospective: Opening a New Legal Clinic for Veterans, Attorney & Paralegal Coordinator Karen McKenzie

It’s hard to believe that it has only been a year since the Veterans Law Center opened. I have never been involved with the opening of a legal services clinic before, and perhaps that inexperience was a good thing.
Volunteer Recruitment
I met Ann Zimmerman through my work with the Madison Area Paralegal Association (MAPA). At the time, she was looking for a paralegal volunteer to help recruit and schedule attorney and paralegal volunteers, and asked me advertise this opportunity to MAPA members. Instead, I volunteered for the position and immediately started the recruitment efforts. Continued on page 6.

Meet the Student Coordinators, Andrew Brooks and Dan Rock

My name is Andrew Brooks and I'm one of the student coordinators here at the Veterans Law Center. I am currently a second-year student at the University of Wisconsin Law School. I served in the Kentucky Army National Guard from 2007 to 2008 as a Combat Medic in an artillery unit. I attended the University of New Orleans where I earned my Bachelor's Degree in history. My focus at the Law School is in Labor and Employment Law.

I heard about the Veterans Law Center before I even came to Wisconsin and I wanted to get involved as quickly as possible. I had the honor of being among the first set of student volunteers to go through the VLC. As a veteran, I work with students and veterans to help bridge the social gap that sometimes exists between the two groups. I've been overwhelmed by the amount of interest law students have expressed in the VLC. It seems to me that a large part of that interest comes from students' personal relationships with those who have served. Of our group of students that went through training this fall, I would say over half of them indicated they knew someone who served.

Of course, none of the work at the VLC would be possible without the support of readers like you. We have been blessed with gracious and enthusiastic support from the very beginning. Thank you to everyone who has helped us get this far and I hope we can count on your continuing support for years to come.

Thank you for your interest and assistance with the Veteran’s Law Center. My name is Danial Rock and I am one of the two student coordinators of the Veterans Law Center. I am currently a third-year law student, and also an active-duty Marine.

I graduated from Marquette University in 2005 with a degree in finance and economics. In 2006, I was commissioned as a second lieutenant and then served five years as an intelligence officer, deploying to Iraq in 2009 and on an aircraft carrier supporting operations in Iraq and Afghanistan in 2007. In 2011, I was selected by the Marine Corps to attend law school. In addition to law school and the Marine Corps, I have been married for seven years.
and have two wonderful children. My son, Grayson, is three years old and my daughter, Molly, is one.

After law school, I will attend Naval Justice School before becoming a judge advocate. After Naval Justice School, I will perform a variety of legal duties in the Marine Corps, which range from providing advice to commanders on international and criminal law, to legal assistance for Marines and their families.

The Veterans Law Center has given me the opportunity to give back to the law school, help my fellow veterans receive important legal assistance, and assist other law students in gaining practical experience while they work at the center. I was fortunate to be a student coordinator during the planning and establishment of the VLC, and I have been overwhelmed with the support the VLC has received from the law school administration, my fellow law students, and the community at large. When I graduate in May, I hope to leave behind an organization that can continue to assist the community’s veterans in future.

VLC Featured Volunteer, Attorney Erin Keesecker

Erin Keesecker is an attorney specializing in Business & Commercial Litigation at Whyte Hirschboeck Dudek S.C. She volunteers a couple of times per year at the City-County Building. We asked Erin why she volunteers at the VLC...

I recently learned that there are over 418,000 veterans who reside in our state, and that the veteran population will only increase over the next few years as thousands of additional service members reenter civilian life from the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Volunteering with the VLC is just one small way that I can give back to the men and women who have served our country. My goal as a volunteer at the VLC is to alleviate some of the challenges that veterans face here at home. Although my volunteer work is a very small gesture, I hope that it portrays the gratitude and respect that I have for our veterans.

VLC Advisory Board Update

The Veterans Advisory Board (VAB) is the body that advises the management of the Veterans Law Center (VLC). Its purpose is to provide suggestions about how VLC can maintain and improve program operations as well as gain additional community partners. VAB membership consists primarily of community stakeholders who have helped support the VLC and its mission since its inception. We are grateful for their dedication and support.

The VAB meets biannually, with its most recent meeting held on June 13th, 2013. Board members engaged in a lively discussion about how to connect center clients in need of full representation with attorneys, including some VLC volunteers, who are willing to take their cases. Please see the related article, “Extended Representation for VLC Clients” for the board’s decision on the issue.
If you are interested in either attending a future Veterans Advisory Board meeting or joining the Board, please contact Ann Zimmerman at amzimmerman3@wisc.edu.

**VLC Advisory Board Members**
- Dan Connery, Dane County Veterans Service Office
- Robin Ellen Frisch, UW – Madison EPCS
- BJ Ganem, Semper Fi Fund
- Jason Johns, Wisconsin Legislative Strategies
- Ben Kempinen, UW Law School
- Kevin Magee, Legal Action of WI-Madison
- Marsha Mansfield, UW Law School
- Steve Schooler, Porchlight
- David Segall, Lawton & Cates, S.C.
- Ed Zapala, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Ann Zimmerman, UW Law School

**Extended Representation for VLC Clients**

At times, a veteran visiting the Veterans Law Center needs more help than can be provided during a short counseling session. Some of our volunteer attorneys have inquired whether and how they can continue to help the client outside of the VLC. The Veterans Advisory Board decided the best option for VLC volunteer attorneys to provide extended representation to VLC clients is to volunteer their services through an existing Wisconsin State Bar program called Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (LAMP). This decision was memorialized and distributed in the letter on page 8 to our volunteer attorneys in August.
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When my dad became ill with Alzheimer’s and no longer remembered his Army days, he continued to reap the benefits from his brief period of service, including long term medical care assistance, and ultimately, military funeral honors.

Although my dad’s military experiences were wholly positive, he was keenly aware that other service members were not nearly as fortunate. He earnestly spoke to me on numerous occasions about the grave mental and physical sacrifices made by other service men and women, and he frequently wrote modest checks to military charitable organizations like the Blinded Veterans Association and Paralyzed Veterans of America. Being a part of this initiative is a way for me to honor my father’s memory and continue his legacy of helping veterans.

What inspires you to be involved in the VLC? I’d love to hear your story. Email me at amzimmerman3@wisc.edu.

Davis Runde, continued from Page 2

Q: What has your experience with the center been like so far?
A: Overall, it has been very positive, and I have enjoyed the people I have met. Although the work I am doing is administrative, it still is rewarding just knowing that I am part of such a great project. Further, my work with the VLC is a great opportunity to gain real experience within the legal field and help solidify my desire to become a lawyer. The beginning was really stressful and I felt lost at times but now I couldn’t be happier with it!

Q: Where do you want to go to law school?
A: I definitely want to stay in the midwest area, and I am applying to many of the schools in this area. But, Madison is my top choice at this point. I love this city and the Law School community. Granted, I am probably a little biased since I have worked for the Law School and gained connections that way. But, yes, I would love to go to school here.

Q: Do you have any idea of what type of law you would want to practice?
A: When I worked for the Mediation Clinic, I became certified as a mediator, and mediated small claims cases at the Dane County Courthouse. I really enjoyed that, so currently my focus is on Alternative Dispute Resolution and mediation.

Q: What are your interests and hobbies?
A: I am really into sports; I played hockey and lacrosse in the past and I am trying to break into coaching for the local high schools. I also really love videography, and enjoy making short films about trips I take or fun things, like the Farmer’s Market.

Retrospective, continued from page 2

The initial task was raising awareness with attorneys and community members about the legal needs of low-income veterans. I spoke at a Dane County Bar Association Monthly Luncheon and testified at a Wisconsin Access to Justice hearing. I also spoke to the Paralegal Association of Wisconsin and wrote articles regarding the VLC in the paralegal association newsletter, Compass. Additionally, I contacted all the paralegals and attorneys that I work with on a regular basis in the insurance defense business, and the result was fantastic.

Hupy & Abraham as well as Axley & Brynelson agreed to staff the clinic as sponsors. Paralegals Elaine Jensen, Jane
Crandall, Becki Below, Jeannine Black and Molly Mack were key players in this regard, and over 50 attorneys and paralegals attended the initial training session at the Dane County Courthouse in October, 2012.

Staffing
After recruiting enough attorney and paralegal volunteers to staff the clinic, we still needed a VLC administrator to manage the center’s operation. Working out of borrowed space, it was critical to have someone available to attend most, if not all, the clinics. I jumped at this opportunity to continue my involvement with the clinic and was made the VLC Administrator.

Crafting the Schedule
Fortunately, all of the volunteers were flexible with their schedules, since coordinating over 50 attorneys into one schedule is very complicated. Further aiding my scheduling duties, the attorney attendance rate has been 98.2%. If not for working with such a professional group of people, each one of them really wanting to help veterans, scheduling would have been impossible.

Veterans Assisted
Thanks to our incredibly talented volunteers, the VLC was able to help over 60 veterans in the first eight months of operation, with an 80% resolution rate on legal issues, and a 100% satisfaction rate. In mere months the VLC has seen cases related to family law, consumer credit, foreclosure, employment law, discrimination, landlord tenant, and child support. The law students were invaluable to addressing such a wide range of topics, conducting legal research and identifying other relevant resources.

Summer Equal Justice Works Internship
As a law student at Thomas M. Cooley, in Grand Rapids, I found a new way to contribute to the VLC. In the spring, I was offered an internship with Equal Justice Works (EJW). EJW places law school students in legal service programs to assist economically disadvantaged individuals, and I was placed at the VLC. My internship was two-pronged. First, I focused on community outreach to raise awareness about VLC services. Second, I helped the Wisconsin State Bar to coordinate a way to connect VLC clients with VLC attorneys willing to take cases outside of the VLC sessions. Since the VLC operates on a limited scope basis, we needed to develop a way to put interested attorneys together with clients who needed extended legal services. (See page 5, Extended Representation for VLC Clients for more on this topic.)

The success of the VLC would not have been possible without our student, paralegal and attorney volunteers; the veterans who had the courage to share their personal legal issues with people they had never met; and the organizations that donated time and money- Habush, Habush & Rottier, the Wisconsin State Bar, Hupy & Abraham, and Axley & Brynelson.
Dear Attorney Volunteers:

First, thank you for your ongoing commitment to the Veterans Law Center (VLC), which makes limited legal representation available to veterans on a pro bono basis. According to VLC statistics, 80% of the veterans who have attended a session have been able to resolve their legal issues while at the VLC. Even so, some of the issues are not resolved in the limited time available.

As some of you are aware, VLC has had clients with meritorious cases that would benefit from more extended legal help. Some of you have indicated a willingness to provide extended representation to certain VLC clients on a pro bono basis. At this time, however, the Veterans Law Center doesn’t have the staff to maintain a direct representation intake and volunteer referral system, and we don’t want to confuse clients or undercut the limited scope representation agreement that is used at VLC.

The VLC advisory board recently examined these issues in depth and concluded that there are already programs in existence for veterans to obtain pro bono direct representation. Therefore, we think the best option for VLC volunteer attorneys to provide extended representation to VLC clients is to use an existing Wisconsin State Bar program called Legal Assistance for Military Personnel (LAMP). LAMP organizes and reviews requests from active and veteran military service members for pro bono direct representation and forwards case summaries to a list of attorney members who may be willing to take on such a case. Clients submit their requests via an online form maintained by the State Bar at www.wisbar.org/lamp. Attorneys wishing to volunteer through LAMP and receive the case summaries can sign up online - you just need to be an active member of the State Bar. The volunteer form is on the member side of the State Bar’s website at www.wisbar.org/probono-volunteer.

If you’d like to connect with a VLC client through LAMP to potentially provide extended pro bono representation, please direct the client to list your name and state bar number in the online request form, which can be completed with your assistance during the VLC session or afterwards by the client. To avoid any confusion about the limited scope representation offered through VLC, though, please make it clear to the individual that any additional assistance you provide through LAMP or another program is not being provided through VLC and is pursuant to a separate client engagement letter or retainer agreement that is finalized outside VLC.

If you have further questions on these matters, please contact Jeff Brown (jbrown@wisbar.org) or myself (kmckenzie@wwplaw.net). Once again, we thank you for volunteering your time and expertise on behalf of veterans and their families.

Very Sincerely,

Karen McKenzie, RN
Equal Justice Works Summer Corp Legal Intern, VLC
Attorney/Paralegal Coordinator, VLC