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Law Clinic Celebrates Ten Years of Service

FORT WORTH, Texas – Providing free legal services to people who would otherwise be unable to afford representation gives the law school something to be proud of at all times, but the law clinic at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law recently took time to celebrate another accomplishment – ten years of service to the local community.

Past and present law clinic students, as well as several members of community organizations working in partnership with the clinic, gathered on Thursday, April 3, at the law school’s Bernie Schuchmann Conference Center for a cocktail reception and dinner honoring the work of the law clinic and its role in the community.

“I am so proud of our law clinic and the tremendous service it has provided over the last ten years,” Interim Dean Cynthia Fountaine said. “In addition to the numerous clients who have been served, our students have benefitted from the clinic as well, both educationally and professionally. Charlotte Hughart arrived when there was no clinic, and she has seen this program from the ground up. We are so fortunate to benefit from her knowledge and leadership.”

Opened in 1998 under Hughart’s direction, the clinic has grown from eight student workers and one faculty advisor to 24 students, three full-time faculty advisors, one secretary, one paralegal, and numerous volunteers. In the span of ten years the clinic has had over 500 student workers, and provided over 50,000 hours of *pro bono* legal services to indigent clients in the community.

“I’ve been really impressed with Fort Worth,” Hughart said. “The city has been really great to us, and we have been fortunate all the way around with students, faculty, and community.”

Through various sources of funding and outreach, the clinic has had several opportunities to collaborate with and build relationships with local organizations that provide services to people in need. A 2005 grant from the United Way originally created a three-way partnership between the law clinic, the United Way, and the Lena Pope Home, and the collaboration has continued over the years.

“The law school has been a leader in the community when thinking about how to deal with [social service] issues,” Executive Director of the Lena Pope Home Ted Blevins said. “This has been one of those collaborations that has just worked. The law clinic has demonstrated how you can do something right [in the community].”

Blevins shared stories with attendees about the relief he has witnessed in clients who have learned they would receive legal services from the clinic, free of charge. Those “remarkable” moments, he

said, are possible due to the efforts of the law clinic and of Texas Wesleyan University School of Law.

Representatives from community partners SafeHaven and the United Way were also in attendance on Thursday night, as was the Chair of the Texas Wesleyan Board of Trustees and members of the senior administration of the university.

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