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Students Explore Public Service Opportunities

FORT WORTH, Texas – With an aim to introduce law students to summer and career opportunities in the public service sector, panel discussions, guest speakers and an information fair filled the days of Public Interest Week at Texas Wesleyan University School of Law, Feb. 16-19.

Representatives from dozens of public service organizations around Texas took part in the annual event, including more than 40 attorneys representing 29 organizations at the eighth Equal Justice Day on Feb. 18.

Panel discussions took place early in the week, and guest panelists answered student questions and provided insight on the type of work attorneys experience in the public service sector.

2L Roxanna Manoochehri, who serves as president of the Texas Wesleyan Law Fellowship, said the week's events provided multiple opportunities for students to learn about the benefits that can be gained and provided through public service work.

"Public Interest Week was a great success this year," Manoochehri said. "The purpose of the event was to expose students to the wide variety of work encompassed by public interest law. Our guest speakers showed everyone how important the work they do is to underserved communities.

"Equal Justice Day provided students with an opportunity to find out more about summer opportunities offered by the agencies. With the help of Fellowship awards, Texas Wesleyan law students will be able to help these agencies by providing much-needed assistance. It is so important that we learn and explore these possibilities as law students before we launch into our legal careers."

Assistant Dean for Student Affairs Patti Gearheart Turner said that the benefits of the week's activities are beneficial for everyone involved.

"Equal Justice Day provides an informal forum for law students and attorneys who practice in public interest law, to discuss internship and volunteer opportunities available to law students," Turner said. "Students are exposed to a vast number of public interest law opportunities and learn specifics about practicing law in each area. The participating attorneys consistently make positive comments about Texas Wesleyan law students and seem to be truly committed to providing great legal experiences for our students."

Panelists and speakers for Public Interest Week included Chris Mansour of Human Rights Initiative of North Texas; Dallas County Public Defender Michelle Moore; Dallas County Public Defender Susan Anderson; Federal Public Defender Jerry Beard; Federal Public Defender Matthew

Belcher; Judge Ellen Smith of the Tarrant County Juvenile Justice Center; Cynthia Gustafson of Legal Aid of North West Texas; and attorney and chair of the Dallas Sierra Club Wendall Withrow.

Equal Justice Day participants included ACLU of Texas – Greater Fort Worth Chapter; Advocacy Incorporated; Baby Moses Project; CASA of Tarrant County; Catholic Charities of Dallas, Inc.; CLEAT; Dallas County District Attorney’s Office; Dallas County Public Defender’s Office; Dispute Mediation Services Inc. – Dallas; Dispute Resolution Services – Fort Worth; Federal Public Defender Northern District of Texas at Fort Worth; Federal Public Defender Northern District of Texas at Dallas; Fort Worth Teen Court; Human Rights Initiative of North Texas, Inc.; International Rescue Committee; Legal Aid of Northwest Texas – Fort Worth; Legal Aid of Northwest Texas – Denton; Legal Hospice of Texas; Office of the Attorney General – Child Support Division; P.L.A.Y.; Safe Haven of Tarrant County; State Counsel for Offenders, Texas Dept. of Criminal Justice; Tarrant County Family Drug Court; Tarrant County Probate Courts #1 and #2; Texas Wesleyan Innocence Project; Texas Wesleyan Law Fellowship & Access to Justice; and the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

For more information about the Equal Justice Program, visit the web page or contact Roxanna Manoochehri at rmanoochehri@mail.txwes.edu.

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