



# AGGIE LAW EXPERIENTIAL News

CONTENTS

Immigrant Rights Clinic Director on Forefront of Helping Immigrants.....1,10

Low Income Tax Clinic Partners with United Way .....2,11

Advocacy in Action.....3,11

Jeff Slattery Joins Aggie Law to Lead Intellectual Property Clinics.....4

Clinic Q&A with Melissa Rust.....5

Externship Programs.....6

Residency Externship Program in Public Policy.....7

Aggie Law Welcomes Amber Baylor as Director of Criminal Defense Clinic.....8

Former Student Spotlight: Brook Bell.....9

New Community Development Clinic in Spring 2018.....12



## Immigrant Rights Clinic Director on Forefront of Helping Immigrants

When Sara Beltran-Hernandez, a Salvadoran asylum seeker, collapsed in immigration detention and was hospitalized with a brain tumor last spring, Professor Fatma Marouf sprang into action. Collaborating with Amnesty International, which drew national media attention to the case, the Immigrant Rights Clinic filed a writ of habeas corpus and a bond motion to get Sara released from detention. Students are now working on Sara’s Fifth Circuit appeal and a motion to reopen her case.

Najmu Mohseen (‘18) is one of the

students fighting for Sara to remain in the United States. “Being able to work on a real person’s asylum case as a law student has been an invaluable experience,” she said. “While learning about immigration law through classes is great, having hands-on experience helps reinforce the important role that lawyers play.”

Marouf explained that Sara’s case shows how immigration priorities have changed. “She shouldn’t be a priority for removal,” Marouf said, “she is a mother of two young children with no criminal history and critical medical needs. Fighting her

deportation is the humanitarian thing to do.”

### Clinic student wins remand from 5th circuit

Elizabeth Anderson (‘17), who enrolled in the clinic last spring, won a Fifth Circuit appeal involving an asylum seeker from Mexico. The client had represented herself in the earlier proceedings, so there wasn’t much of a record. Anderson spent weeks doing legal research and identifying weaknesses in the decision being challenged.

*(Continued on page 10)*

# Low Income Tax Clinic Partners with United Way

Texas A&M Law started its **Low Income Tax Clinic** this Spring, helping taxpayers resolve various types of problems, such as responding to an IRS audit or settling outstanding tax debts that the taxpayer can't afford to pay. Bob Probasco, an experienced tax lawyer/CPA and member of the governing Council of the State Bar Tax Section, joined Texas A&M Law as the clinic's inaugural director.

"Students work directly with the IRS to solve those problems and, if that doesn't succeed, we can challenge the IRS in Tax Court," said Probasco.

"Hearing from the IRS terrifies most people," Probasco said. "They find our tax system difficult to navigate by themselves but cannot afford quality professional help. Our priority is to make the system work better and get better results for taxpayers. When taxpayers are well-represented, that also makes the system work better for the IRS and the Tax Court."

The clinic is off to a great start, serving a growing number of clients throughout Fort Worth, Dallas, and surrounding communities. But Probasco wants to

increase the clinic's impact even more, in part by working with other organizations. The first success was a partnership that Program Coordinator Carlos Rocha established with the United Way of Tarrant County.

For many people with annual income at or below \$55,000, the agency's VITA program (Voluntary Income Tax Assistance) is often a first stop. With 16 locations throughout north Texas, VITA prepares thousands of low income tax returns each year. But what happens after the income tax return is filed? What if they are audited by the IRS or can't pay their taxes? Who can help them navigate those issues?

VITA Volunteer Coordinator Pennie Clayton said it all comes down to community partnerships. "For our clients needing additional tax assistance, the



*Bob Probasco, Director,  
Low Income Tax Clinic and Senior Lecturer*

partnership with Texas A&M Law makes all the difference," she said. "Now, instead of sending individuals to the IRS, we can offer the assistance of the **Low Income Tax Clinic**, where someone can walk them through the process and make it less burdensome," she said.

"It's a natural partnership," Rocha said. "Volunteers at United Way's VITA sites prepare tax returns but are not prepared to address problems that

*(Continued on page 11)*

*“These other organizations have the same basic mission as ours – to help Texans solve their problems. When we work together, we can help more people collectively than we would individually.”*

Director Bob Probasco,  
on collaborating with other organizations to increase the clinic's impact.

*VITA Volunteer Coordinator  
Charlene Hurst helping a client  
navigate tax law with a smile.  
Photo courtesy  
Pennie Clayton, United Way.*





# ADVOCACY IN ACTION

## Family Law & Benefits Clinic

Under the auspices of Texas A&M University, the opportunities for a TAMU Law School student to gain first-hand experience regarding the practice of law has expanded exponentially! However, there is one clinic that has been a mainstay at the law school and a pillar in the Tarrant County legal community for almost two decades. Founded in 1998, initially named simply the Law Clinic, the now **Family Law and Benefits Clinic** has expanded from one supervising attorney to a Director and two supervising attorneys. The **Family Law and Benefits Clinic** has handled over a thousand cases since its inception. These cases include the representation of victims of family violence, children who have been or are at-risk of being abused or neglected, social security disability applicants, in addition to now serving veterans in an array of legal matters.



*Professor Celestina L. Contreras*

Professor Celestina L. Contreras, current director, began employment with the clinic in January 2003, handling primarily family violence cases referred from local shelters. Her previous 13 years of experience representing these victims while an attorney at Legal Aid offices in Austin and in Dallas gave her the legal knowledge and expertise to not only help these victims but also impart her knowledge to students who learned first-hand how to litigate these types of cases.

Professor Karon Rowden, one of the supervising attorneys, began her work at the **Family Law and Benefits Clinic** in 2005, taking over the representation of victims of family violence while Professor Contreras began the representation of litigants who needed assistance protecting children in child abuse or neglect cases. Professor Rowden had also gained extensive experience while working at the Legal Aid office in Fort Worth. She had been a prior clinic student handling primarily social security disability cases for four semesters before graduating from Texas Wesleyan University School of Law



*Professor Karon Rowden*

in 2001. Her legal experience and her prior work in the clinic as a law student gave her the expertise needed to not only serve our clients but more importantly, the insight to relate to our students and help them learn how to practice law.

Attorney Lynn Rodriguez is the newest member of our clinic but her legal experience abounds. She is also a Wesleyan Law school graduate (Class of 2004), who spent four semesters in the clinic, gaining experience by not only representing our social security disability clients, but also by handling cases representing the caregivers of children who have been or were at-risk of being abused or neglected. After her graduation from law school, she became a Law Fellow in the clinic for over two and one-half years. Thereafter, she became a partner in the Law Office of Ganoza & Rodriguez for 8 years, primarily handling family, probate, real estate, social security, and other civil law cases. She came back to the clinic to work on our Veterans Project, helping our veterans on a variety of legal issues. The story of one of her veteran clients, James, is set out on page 11. That



*Attorney Lynn Rodriguez*

story is an example of how the Veterans Project of the **Family Law & Benefits Clinic** helped a veteran gain peace of mind in his last weeks of life.

Students can be assured that their enrollment in our clinic will expose them to true life legal issues where they can meet one-on-one with their clients. Students will advocate for these clients as first chair in court, in the mediation room, and even in hospitals or homes. Students will take care of legal needs that the client would not be able to obtain due to their income level. Our students are able to make justice accessible to these clients and at the same time, learn the basics of becoming an attorney. The experience students gain in the clinic will also help them prepare for the bar exam. Through their cases, students are exposed to practical application of theories in civil procedure, family and administrative law, evidence and trial preparation. A good clinical experience helps build a better prepared, newly-licensed lawyer.

# Jeff Slattery Joins Aggie Law to Lead Intellectual Property Clinics



Bringing his considerable experience representing the intellectual property interests of artists, musicians, filmmakers, writers, and other creative entrepreneurs, Jeff Slattery has joined the faculty of Texas A&M University School of Law, where he will direct and teach in the school's IP clinical program.

A native Californian, Slattery pursued his J.D. at UC Hastings following undergraduate study at Berkeley. He credits the decade before starting college – during which time he traveled the world as a performing artist and music industry professional – for piquing his interest in the field of IP law.

“I learned the value of copyrights, trademark rights, and protection of them under contract as a teenager working in the UK club scene.”

He continued: “My friends and I made some great music together, only to have it taken away as the result of a contract entirely favoring a record label. When one of the most talented songwriters I've met said, ‘That's it, I'm done’ and gave up the craft entirely, I knew it was time to take the legal side of music and art very seriously.”

“Years later, I was working with a funk band here in the US and spotted a dangerous provision. I brought it to the attention of the lead singer, who

*“When one of the most talented songwriters I've met said, “That's it, I'm done” and gave up the craft entirely, I knew it was time to take the legal side of music and art very seriously.”*

said ‘Slattery, you're just a DJ. Get to the back of the stage.’ I knew in that moment I had to become an attorney if I really wanted to make a difference.”

That passion is alive and well in Slattery's life even now. As a professor, he spends his days mentoring law students in their pro-bono service to the local arts community. By night, you may find him taking the stage as bassist or front man for a local band, or teaching salsa dancing lessons at your favorite club.

“Artists of all kinds need to know so much about the law in order to protect their interests, and can rarely afford to pay typical attorney rates. From copyright and trademark to business and contract law, it is only through pro bono and low-cost services provided by an ever-increasing pool of attorneys that we can ensure continued creativity in our local communities. The need is too great for just one or two lawyers to meet, but if a larger number of attorneys make it a small part of their practice, we can make all the difference we need, bringing a richness and vitality of culture to the places we choose to live and work.”

Under Slattery's leadership, the IP clinical program will build on existing patent and trademark services, helping not only technology-focused entrepreneurs and more traditional small businesses, but expanding into art and entertainment law, bringing copyright and publicity rights into the picture.

“I am here to increase the breadth of coverage for our IP clinical programs, in terms of community needs we can serve and the student interests we can satisfy. Art, entertainment, and technology are not only important vehicles of human expression, they are exciting and engaging areas for students to hone the sort of skills needed to succeed as an attorney.

In sum, the goal of the IP clinical program is to serve the community while providing our students the opportunity to actually practice law before graduation, learning skills that are both marketable and intrinsically useful. Whether the future entails working in a law firm, government post, or an office of general counsel, or starting up a solo practice, the work our students do in the IP clinical program will prepare them well.”



Photos courtesy Jeff Slattery.





*Melissa Rust*

# Clinic Q&A with Melissa Rust

## *Aggie Law and the Innocence Project*

who were wrongfully convicted and to learn about all the legal work that goes into gaining freedom for those individuals. We are blessed at A&M to have an opportunity to work with such an amazing organization as the **Innocence Project** of Texas and with a fantastic attorney like Michael Ware. I am currently interning at Parker County Attorney's Office with attorneys that prosecute misdemeanor crimes. I believe that my work with the **Innocence Project** has taught me the importance of pursuing justice and not convictions. I know that will serve me well in my career as a prosecutor (if I am so lucky).



*Megan, Catherine, and Melissa with Michael Morton and spouse. All photos courtesy Melissa Rust.*

**Q:** What piqued your interest about clinics?

**A:** While Law School is incredibly busy and time consuming, there really is no substitute for hands on learning. Clinics are a great way to get experience with "real world" cases while still getting those much needed credit hours. Also, the clinics offer a great learning environment, one where you are guaranteed to work under a supervising attorney who is eager to teach. One of the main reasons that I chose Texas A&M School of Law was because of the 30 hour pro bono requirement. I think that it is so important to serve your community. I feel like the clinics are another piece of that same idea of serving our community.

**Q:** What made you choose to work with the **Innocence Project**? How did it better prepare you for your career?

**A:** I am 100% interested in pursuing a career working in criminal law. Ideally, I want to be a prosecutor once I graduate and pass the Bar. Because the duty of a prosecutor is to do justice, I feel that it is extremely important to educate myself on cases where justice was not done and innocent people were sent to prison. It is vital to understand where the mistakes happened and learn how to avoid making those same mistakes in my career.

one on one time with great supervising attorneys who are excited to mentor students. Additionally, the diversity of our clinics ensures that students can find one that fits their interest.

*“The clinics offer a great learning environment, one where you are guaranteed to work under a supervising attorney who is eager to teach.”*

**Q:** Why should students prioritize Aggie Law Clinics?

**A:** There is only so much that can be gained in the traditional classroom setting. The clinics allow for a smaller class size where students are able to get more



*Spring 2017 Innocence Project students pictured with two of the San Antonio Four Exonerees and Amanda Knox from the Innocence Network Conference. Left to Right: Catherine Wirth ('18), Melissa Rust ('17), Anna Vasquez (San Antonio Four), Amanda Knox, Cassandra Rivera (San Antonio Four), Megan Reed ('18), Michele Moss ('17), and Caitlyn Ashley ('18).*

Additionally, it is simply amazing to be able to talk with men and women

# Externship Programs

“It was an incredibly affirming experience; the hands-on application of what I’ve learned in school both motivated me and reminded me exactly why I’m here. In addition to the fantastic work experience, it afforded me the invaluable opportunity to work alongside and build relationships with lawyers who are doing the kind of work I plan to do after graduation.”

-Sarah Pricer, ('20), Dallas County Public Defender's Office

A top-notch legal education extends beyond textbooks and lectures. Opportunities to apply knowledge through practical experience is a vital part of learning, and the Externship Program affords students these opportunities.

**The General Externship Program** provides students the opportunity to gain meaningful and substantive legal and law-related experience under the supervision and mentorship of practicing lawyers and judges. As part of the program, students:

- Earn 2-4 p/f credits while applying their academic learning to real-world legal issues and cases, and gaining valuable insight into the host organization's operations;
- Develop skills, substantive knowledge, productive working relationships and explore career interests; and
- Engage in self-directed and reflective learning under the supervision of faculty and field supervisors.

We work with many organizations including government entities, public interest organizations, courts, in-house legal departments and select law firms. Past participants include:

- U.S. Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Texas
- U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission
- Tarrant County District Attorney's Office (as well as several area City, County and District offices.)
- Attorney's Offices offering criminal prosecution experiences.
- Legal Aid of Northwest Texas
- Parkland Health & Hospital System
- Supreme Court of Texas

Students are required to secure their own



Aggie Law's Anna Amiot ('16) at the Joint Reserve Base.

placement, but the Externship Director will assist in identifying opportunities, and organizations actively seeking externs. *The deadlines for applying and receiving approval to enroll are: Fall-Aug. 1; Spring-Dec. 1; Summer-May 1.*

**The Residency Externship Semester-in-Practice** program provides students the opportunity to apply classroom learning through a semester-long immersion experience in approved legal and law-related settings such as appellate courts, government agencies, non-profit organizations, and in-house legal departments. Through this program, students can pursue extensive professional and practical experience in diverse subject-areas and in diverse geographical locations.

Students who participate in the program work full-time at their placement over the course of 12-14 weeks. They may also choose to complete an independent study project related to the externship if they secure a sponsoring faculty member to supervise. Weekly reflections and other self-assessment activities are an integral part of the program and students participate in an extern class seminar or regularly scheduled tutorial meetings with

the faculty supervisor.

Students who have completed 45 credit hours, Professional Responsibility and have a minimum 3.0 GPA can apply. Students secure their own placement, but the Extern Director will assist in identifying possible opportunities. Students do not need to have their placements secured at the time of application and applying does not commit them to the program. *The deadlines to apply are: Fall-Mar. 1; Spring-Sept. 1.*



Cecily Becker, Externship Program Director

For more information about externships, please email [cbecker@law.tamu.edu](mailto:cbecker@law.tamu.edu).





## Residency Externship Program in Public Policy

*We...really enjoyed having Stuart [Campbell, REP-PP 2017] join us this semester. He's been a wonderful addition to the team, and we have no doubt that he'll thrive in his legal career (that hopefully tilts toward public policy)!!*

*-George Gooch, CEO, Texas Health Services Authority*

The Texas A&M Residency Externship Program in Public Policy (REP-PP) gives law students the opportunity to put their legal skills and Aggie values to work in leading governmental and public sector positions in Austin, Texas, and Washington, D.C.

Texas advocacy and regulatory bodies, REP-PP students explore policymaking through a one-of-a-kind seminar in their host cities led by a policy expert. They also have small group meetings with representatives of all aspects of the policymaking process, including Members of Congress and the Texas legislature, representatives of the State and Federal Executive branches, and the state and federal judiciary.

lawyers and policymakers. The skills, networking, and understanding of policymaking afforded by this program also translates into employment after graduation. Graduates of the program already are working as federal judicial clerks, assistant district attorneys, counsel for federal agencies, and as legal counsel in the U.S. House of Representatives.

*Policy work in D.C. is its own animal - everyone... is plugged in responding to minute-by-minute changes in the political climate. It was exciting to be putting skills I learned in law school to work in such a highly charged environment.*

*-Mitch Monthie,  
REP-PP 2016*

REP-PP students are placed in positions of direct policymaking and learn directly from state and national policymakers. In addition to their exciting placements such as committee and personal offices of the U.S. House and Senate, the U.S. Department of Justice, the Texas legislature, and

*We had great presenters during the semester. Meeting Jesselyn McCurdy of the ACLU and Nkechi Taifa of the Open Society Foundations and seeing how passionate these women are about what they do was very refreshing.*

*-Kia Pichon,  
REP-PP 2016*

These experiences are enhanced by direct support from and participation in the local Aggie Network chapters in the host city, including the opportunity for individual mentorship from Aggie



*Lisa Rich, Director, REP-PP*

For more information about the Residency Externship Program in Public Policy, please contact [larich@law.tamu.edu](mailto:larich@law.tamu.edu)

*The Criminal Defense Clinic at Aggie Law will integrate new models for defense work, namely a holistic community based approach.*

A portrait of Amber Baylor, a woman with curly hair wearing a red top, smiling and leaning against a stone wall. The background shows a city street with buildings and a yellow taxi.

**Amber Baylor**

*Associate Professor & Criminal Defense Clinic Director*

## Aggie Law Welcomes Amber Baylor as Director of Criminal Defense Clinic

The expansion of TAMU Law's clinical program includes the new **Criminal Defense Clinic**. Professor Amber Baylor, a former public defender and graduate of New York University School of Law, is its director.

Professor Baylor began her legal career as a trial attorney for Federal Defenders of San Diego. Her initial assignment affirmed her decision to represent criminal defendants.

"The first time I sat in on an arraignment, I was shocked to see that the vast majority of people who showed up in court were people of color, and people with very little resources," Baylor said. "It sparked my interest in community defense, and compelled me in a way other law school classes hadn't."

In her work with Federal Defenders of San Diego, Baylor turned that passion to purpose, helping those facing charges without the means to afford an attorney.

"Most cases involved people facing border-related-immigration charges," Baylor said, adding that while the

formality of federal court made for great experience, she missed the in-the-trenches element of her own law student clinic days.

That led her to the Neighborhood Service of Harlem, where Baylor said she was able to take things beyond traditional defense related work.

"We integrated our work with the needs of the community, from training sessions for high schoolers about knowing their rights to collaborating with social workers and other attorneys on family and housing matters," she said. "It's a wonderful avenue to work beyond the hardened lines that often dictate traditional legal practice. In a clinic atmosphere, you are able to see people as individuals with complex needs. Once you understand what's really happening in the community you are serving, you can begin to influence that for the better."

Bringing that to bear at Aggie Law means students can expect to be on the leading edge of new models in criminal justice reform.

"The **Criminal Defense Clinic** at

Aggie Law will integrate new models for defense work, namely a holistic community based approach," Baylor said. "That starts by identifying and matching needs outside the criminal court with the appropriate sources. It includes awareness and education about the consequences of going through the system. It also encompasses a broad base of legal specialty areas, including family law, housing and immigration."

"One such model is participatory justice," she continued. "Students who enroll in the clinic can expect a deep dive into this method, a way for family members heavily affected by the criminal justice system to play a role in their loved one's defense. Family members might help collect records and help in an investigation that would otherwise isolate them, all while destigmatizing their own experience."

Professor Baylor will teach Criminal Law to 1Ls in the spring 2018 semester. However, she will return to teach the **Criminal Defense Clinic** in the Fall of 2018. For more information about the **Criminal Defense Clinic**, please contact Professor Baylor at [amber.baylor@law.tamu.edu](mailto:amber.baylor@law.tamu.edu).



# FORMER STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: BROOK BELL

## Brook Bell, Public Probate Administrator for Tarrant County

*“My clinic experience was invaluable in establishing my representation of low-income clients. It sensitized me to their situation and the need in our community for access to legal assistance.”*

Any given weekday finds Brook Bell ('16) managing small estates at the Tarrant County Courthouse. In November 2016, Bell was appointed as the Public Probate Administrator for Tarrant County – the first and only full-time Public Probate Administrator in Texas. To date she has already filed nearly 80 cases.

The small estates that Brook helps to process through the Probate Court are small estates that have no funds or suitable heirs to handle the estate affairs. Bell's work requires equal parts compassion and tenacity since she has to work alongside family members, claimants, and financial institutions. Brook attributes part of her success to her experiences while in law school. She honed her skills and confidence through work experience with a solo practitioner and in the **Wills and Estates Clinic**. However, it was her clinic experience that helped her to build a career in promoting justice through our courts.

*“Sitting down and counseling clients in the clinic gave me confidence and eased my nerves as a new attorney.”*

“My clinic experience was invaluable in establishing my representation of low-income clients,” Bell said. “Not only did I come out of law school more competent and confident in front of clients and in the courtroom, but I could now be a better advocate for social justice in our community. As an added bonus, the research, drafting, and client interaction was a huge help on the essay and MPT portion of the bar exam!” Bell encourages students not to underestimate how such experiences can help leading up to and after graduation. “It will set you apart from the crowd,” she said.

Less than one year on the job, Bell's performance is already turning heads. Texas Comptroller of Public Accounts, Glenn Hegar (TWU '93), has taken notice. Based, in large part on Brook's success, discussions are underway to implement additional public administrators in statutory probate courts in Texas.

“I honestly cannot say enough about the valuable experience you will receive by participating in a clinic,” Bell said. “Apart from the obvious real life application of classroom knowledge, it molded me for the career that led me to law school in the first place.”



*Brook Bell, Public Probate Administrator for Tarrant County.  
Photo courtesy Brook Bell.*

“While it might sound trite, I chose law school to be an example to my girls and make a difference in my career,” Bell said. “Now, I have a career that allows me to help others, making sense of a system they'd otherwise find difficult to navigate.”

Professor Monica Benson (TWU '05), one of the supervisors of the **Wills and Estates Clinic** and Brook's former instructor, is currently collaborating with Brook to determine ways to incorporate Probate Court work into the existing clinic. “We, at the **Wills and Estates Clinic**, are excited about the possibility of expanding our clinic from estate planning into probate, and look forward to a collaboration with Brook Bell as Public Probate Administrator,” said Benson. “This is a tremendous opportunity for our students to expand their practical, marketable skills.”

*(Continued from page 1)*

After the clinic filed the opening brief, the government agreed to remand the case.

“Professor Marouf helped guide the process, but the bulk of this research and writing is on us,” Anderson said. “And I love that about the clinic experience. Sure, there’s coaching, but in the end, you are the one diving in, learning to think like a lawyer and finding the strengths and weaknesses of your own cases.”

Anderson explained that, as a result of the Fifth Circuit decision, the client will have another chance to obtain evidence to support her claim.

As an advanced student in the clinic, she is now working on an appeal involving a transgender client who was pro se before the immigration court. “You can really see what a difference an attorney makes,” Anderson said.

## **Marouf’s work outside the clinic**

Separate from her Clinic work, Marouf has been actively involved in

### ***Facts of the case:***

- An asylum seeker from Mexico whose life was repeatedly threatened after she witnessed a crime.
- Numerous complicated legal issues presented in an opening brief prompting remand.
- Resulted in client protection under the Convention Against Torture.



*The director of Aggie Law's Immigrant Rights Clinic, and a fierce human rights advocate, Professor Fatma Marouf.*

litigation challenging the “travel ban” (the executive order restricting entry from six countries and limiting refugee admissions). Marouf authored amicus briefs on the statutory issues in the case for the Ninth Circuit and the Fourth Circuit. She also submitted an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court.

“Our main argument is that the Immigration and Nationality Act as a whole constrains the president’s power,” Marouf said. “Congress has already identified the classes of people who may and may not be admitted to the United States. The president should not interfere with that scheme; his power to restrict entry should really be reserved for diplomatic and military affairs.”

Marouf has also stepped in to help members of the A&M community. She secured the release of an undergraduate who was detained at an immigration checkpoint and nearly deported. “It was a very traumatic experience for her,” Marouf said. “She’s lived in this country since she was a child, and suddenly she’s placed in a freezing cell,

yelled at, and transported to detention centers in the middle of the night. All she wants to do is graduate, apply her knowledge, and give back to the community.”

When visiting scholar Henry Rousso was detained at Houston airport and threatened with deportation, Marouf and immigration attorney Jason Mills also intervened, securing his release. “We’re seeing people being interrogated and detained for no reason or the wrong reason,” Marouf said. “Immigration officers feel very empowered right now, and they don’t always know the law.”

One of the most recent changes in immigration law is the rescission of DACA, the program that allows individuals who came to the U.S. as children, attended school, and don’t have a criminal record to work lawfully without fear of deportation. Marouf, together with other faculty and students, helped educate the community about the changes, including the renewal process for those who qualify. Marouf affirmed, “Aggies stick together.”



## Veterans Project - James' Story

James, a Vietnam War veteran, showed up to a legal workshop hosted by Tarrant County's Texas Lawyers for Texas Veterans, the Veterans Project's collaborating partner, in February 2016. He needed help with a foreclosure issue so the Veterans Project of the **Family Law and Benefits Clinic** took on his case.

The initial meeting proved to be a crash course in establishing client rapport. Despite the client's high level of duress, clinic student Philip W. Garner ably stepped in with the help of Veterans' Project Attorney Lynn Rodriguez (TWU '04)

Facing terminal illness and imminent foreclosure, James lived on \$900 per month from social security.

Despite the dire circumstances, Rodriguez and Garner worked tirelessly

on behalf of their client, postponing foreclosure and securing VA benefits for James.

"James' income went from \$900 to \$1,600 per month," Rodriguez said. "And as overjoyed as he was, it was secondary to the decision letter our client received."

"All this time he thought he'd been dishonorably discharged, and expressed shame that he'd embarrassed his father for this," Rodriguez said. "But in a beautifully written decision letter, James learned that his separation from the Navy was due to the issue he suffered in their service, and that it was not of his own making. He was so relieved he cried."

Ultimately, the Veterans Project provided James the legal assistance he needed to prepare for his death. James laid on his couch while Garner explained the medical and durable power of attorneys, along with other legal documents needed to facilitate James' last wishes. When Garner and Rodriguez left, James seemed happy and satisfied that he had found resolution for his case and continued to own his home.

James died on August 11, 2017. Garner stated, "Working with him helped me remember the real importance of our profession. In this situation, Power of Attorney documents put the client's mind to ease, and gave him closure in his last moments."

*“Working with him helped me remember the real importance of our profession. In this situation, Power of Attorney documents put the client's mind at ease, and gave him closure in his last moments.”*

-Phillip W. Garner ('18)

### *(Continued from page 2)*

arise after the return is filed. Our clinic handles those post-filing problems but doesn't prepare tax returns. Both organizations will have clients who need the other's services."

The **Low Income Tax Clinic** partnership is just the latest example of Texas A&M Law's work with United Way of Tarrant County. "We've had a relationship with Texas A&M since I took this position in 2014," Clayton said, highlighting both former and current students who have volunteered with VITA to provide free income tax return assistance. "They do it for the good of the community, and it makes me so proud to see the level of commitment. When you walk into a training class and 35 students are there because they want to be, you know good things are going to happen."

Way was a great start, but we can do even more to expand the scope of our services," Probasco said. The clinic has begun helping taxpayers in underserved areas in Texas, such as Laredo and El Paso. That expansion speaks to the reason Low Income Tax Clinics were first created, and also dovetails with the land grant mission of Texas A&M University. To facilitate serving clients remotely, the clinic will collaborate with community organizations.

With its 254-county footprint, Texas A&M's Agri-Life Extension Service is already on board, to publicize the clinic's services and provide facilities for educational events and in-person meetings with clinic clients. The clinic's tax expertise can support Agri-Life's community initiatives such as financial literacy. Legal organizations and individual attorneys in Laredo and El Paso are also potential partners. The clinic can provide the local attorneys with training and advice, and they can then help taxpayers in those areas when demand exceeds the clinic's capacity.

"United Way, Agri-Life, and these other organizations have the same basic mission as ours – to help Texans solve their problems," Probasco said. "When we work together, we can help more people collectively than we would individually."



VITA volunteer helping a client navigate tax law with a smile. Photo courtesy Pennie Clayton, United Way.

"Our partnership with United

# New Community Development Clinic in Spring 2018!

Associate Dean for Experiential Education, Luz Herrera, is bringing her community lawyering and advocacy experience to the new **Community Development Clinic**. The **Community Development Clinic** will continue some of the work begun by the **Community Legal Access Clinic** this fall semester.

The **Community Legal Access Clinic** (CLAC) was established to address the interest of evening students in having a clinical experience. The clinic meets on select Saturdays and works with courts, community organizations, nonprofit organizations, and underserved populations to help make law more accessible. It does so by participating in community presentations and developing materials to increase the public's understanding of laws that

impact their daily living.

Clarissa Dauphin ('18) stated, "I was excited to enroll in the clinic because of the range of legal areas covered. One day you may be visiting a local elementary school and the next day you may be meeting with judges. There are a number of needs in the community that this clinic allows you to address." The **Community Legal Access Clinic** will again be offered in the fall of 2018 and will be open to all students.



*Clinic student Clarissa Dauphin addresses the audience.*

justice issues. Skills that students will learn include interviewing, counseling, contract drafting, public speaking, strategic planning, community legal education, and asset mapping,



*Students from Aggie Law's Community Legal Access Clinic at Carol Peak Elementary.*

The **Community Development Clinic** is the second clinic developed by Dean Herrera this academic year. The **Community Development Clinic** will launch in the spring of 2018 and will continue to engage deeper into legal issues impacting the local community. The clinic will explore a number of critical laws and policies related to affordable housing, small business development, nonprofit development, and environmental

The clinic is designed for students to work with and advise local nonprofit organizations, community leaders, and social entrepreneurs on issues that impact their viability and engagement in the local community. This course will be of particular interest to students who want to use their law degree to impact economic and social justice in underserved communities. To learn more about this clinic, please contact Dean Herrera at [herrera@law.tamu.edu](mailto:herrera@law.tamu.edu).



**Luz Herrera**  
*Professor of Law and Associate  
Dean for Experiential Education*  
[herrera@law.tamu.edu](mailto:herrera@law.tamu.edu)

## TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF LAW

1515 Commerce St.  
Fort Worth, TX 76102

[experiential@law.tamu.edu](mailto:experiential@law.tamu.edu)  
[law.tamu.edu/experiential](http://law.tamu.edu/experiential)



**Lori Rogde**  
*Associate Director, Experiential  
Education and Special Projects*  
[lrogde@law.tamu.edu](mailto:lrogde@law.tamu.edu)