

Excellence in Diversity Award: MHSL Mobile Law Office

The RCBA Diversity Committee has selected the Mitchell Hamline School of Law Mobile Law Office as the recipient of its annual Excellence in Diversity Award.



The MHSL Mobile Law Office has bridged the gap between the often unnavigable legal system and the people of the greater Twin Cities area. It empowers law students to further their reach into their community and deliver quality information and assistance to those self-representing in the bureaucratic maze which is our legal system. By extending their knowledge and legal acumen to those most in need, the MLO protects those without a voice in the legal system, and creates a community of support and legal equity within the Twin Cities. With the recent pandemic and the killing of George Floyd, the need for such service for those often under-served by typical law and order, has become even more apparent. The role of legal professionals in relationship to their communities has always been to serve, and the unique accessibility of the MLO is a necessary manifestation of that essential role. The program has established itself as such within the community, causing the number of clients seeking assistance to steadily increase as its reputation spreads. The MLO removes the transportation barrier by meeting clients in the community and providing a valuable service and resources, and in return, a unique opportunity for students to gain hands-on, “real world” practicum experience. When the bus arrives at the libraries, they are often greeted by a line of smiling faces as its very presence and availability serves to foster and facilitate change, growth, and justice by offering services to community members where they are.

The people living in the Twin Cities come from all walks of life, and often enter the legal system at a disadvantage—not having had the resources to study law and master its intricacies. Those seeking justice or compromise from a point of marginalization are even more vulnerable to exploitation and need the assistance of those in their community fortunate enough to receive a robust legal education. MH’s students are engaged and dedicated because they believe whole-heartedly in MLO’s mission, “to provide free legal assistance to individuals who may otherwise encounter obstacles to receiving needed services.” Our legal system is wrought with disparities in overt and covert ways—whether intentional or inadvertent. The MLO plays an integral role in shining a spotlight on the interplay between racism and socioeconomic status, and how those designations are interpreted by society at large. While gaining internship and job experience, students soon realize that community outreach and engagement through advocacy are necessary ingredients for creating change and making a positive impact in our community. Additionally, students receive invaluable real-world experience by confronting the implicit and systemic biases and injustices inherent in the riddles presented to them by the community members on a first-hand basis. Like most law students, MH’s students are eager to make a difference and the MLO gives them an opportunity to be effectual and actually witness change as their dedication and hard work transform lives in real time.

The MLO would like to thank students Aretha Haynes, Tim Kelly, and Laura Sweeney for continued dedication to the program.

By: Geri Sjoquist | Supervising Attorney for the MLO

CLASSIFIED ADS

Achieve Your Goals.

Attorney coach/consultant Roy S. Ginsburg provides marketing, practice management and strategic planning services to individual lawyers and firms.

Contact: roy@royginsburg.com or 612-812-4500.

Mediation Training in St. Paul.

The transformative approach. Family, Civil and Advanced plus New 1-day Negotiation Course. Highly-rated curriculum and instructor. Register now for early-bird rates. www.transformativemediation.com

Contact: Dan@simon-mediation.com or 612-824-8988.