



Ann Flynn

“Why give?”

Soon after I joined the UW Foundation, an alumnus said to me, “I’ve never given to the Law School — I don’t make enough money.”

Well, there are a lot of reasons why people give (or don’t give) to a particular organization. And lack of resources might certainly be one reason not to give. But consider this: If every alum gave just \$100 per year to the Children’s Justice Project (see story below) or to any other worthy project within the Law School, that would add up to over \$1 million.

Here at the Foundation, we could start an endowment with that amount that would provide nineteen more student fellowships. Wouldn’t that be great?

I’d enjoy hearing from you.

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Alumni Generosity Supports Fellowship

As a child struggling to hold her family together, Jennifer Grissom saw how family law worked or, in some cases, didn’t.

So she was glad to spend her summer as an intern with the Dane County Corporation Counsel’s office dealing with child welfare and family issues.

Grissom drafted petitions to terminate parents’ rights in cases showing abuse and neglect. She also researched areas of family law that are unclear and drafted memos on defining them.

She was able to take the summer post as one of two 2004 Children’s Justice Project Fellows, a new program made possible through an award from the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and generous contributions from UW Law School alumni. The other 2004 Fellow was Joel Plant, who worked with People Against Domestic Abuse in Jefferson, Wisconsin.

Grissom’s desire to help grew



Jennifer Grissom spent her summer as an intern working with child welfare and family issues.

out of her own childhood. “My family was not functional, to put it nicely,” she says. Her mother, older sister, and younger brother all suffered from mental illness. “My mother didn’t want any help or services, so a lot of the burden fell on me to try to make things OK,” says Grissom, who engaged the system on her own.

Her sister spent a lot of time in foster care. “I saw how the system worked in some ways and how it was also hard on my sister,” Grissom says.

Getting in the thick of things appealed to Grissom, but she acknowledges that keeping feelings

at bay is one of the hardest parts of working in child-welfare law. “A lot of people think, ‘Wow, that’s a worthy cause, but I don’t want to do it, because it’s too hard emotionally,’” she says.

“I think a lot of the law relating to children is emotionally driven, and a lot of times there isn’t clear precedent,” she says. “So we wanted to create policies that outline precedent to give social workers and others making decisions clearer guidelines.”

Grissom, who is entering her third-year Law School studies, says a summer in the trenches has encouraged her to practice child and family law. “It would be rewarding to be able to see how going to work every day could have a positive impact on a child’s life,” she says.

And she’s grateful for the fellowship. “The Corporation Counsel has no funding for internships, and I couldn’t work for free,” she says. “It was great to have this opportunity, and it helped the Law School assist an area of the law that’s often overlooked.”