



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

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PRESS RELEASE

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Law students recognized for public interest services

April 26, 2011 – The State Bar of Wisconsin will recognize the exceptional contributions two law school students have made to serving the legal needs of the state’s immigrant communities. Kate Frigo, who is attending University of Wisconsin Law School and Ashley Roth, a student at the Marquette University Law School, will receive 2011 Outstanding Public Interest Law Student Awards presented by the State Bar’s Public Interest Law Section in June.

“One of the State Bar’s central goals is to encourage attorneys across the state to provide public interest services to individuals and groups,” explains Attorney Beth Richlen, chair of the Public Interest Law Section Board. “Therefore, it’s very encouraging and rewarding for me and my peers to celebrate the dedicated work of future State Bar members who find the time in their busy lives to serve the public while still pursuing their studies.”

Kate Frigo, U.W. Law School: Prior to Law School, Kate worked in Los Angeles as a Jesuit volunteer for poverty wages, filing immigration petitions for the Central American Resource Center. Since coming to law school, she has kept that same dedication to helping immigrants. She helped write chartering materials for the Community Legal Immigration Center in Madison and served as the center’s student volunteer coordinator. She provided assistance to a pro bono immigration case in which she pursued asylum and cancellation of removal for a client. As part of her participation in the law school’s Legal Assistance to Institutionalized Persons program, she handled several cases with Spanish-speaking clients, including one in which she uncovered an important gap in the Department of Corrections’ (DOC) approach to immigrants’ prison wages. This gap caused problems for inmates who worked and earned money but could not save it because they could not open a bank account under the DOC’s policies, so they were unable to send the money to their families. Kate developed a solution to the problem by negotiating and coordinating with several parties, including banks, the DOC and the Mexican Consulate.

Ashley Roth, Marquette University Law School: Ashley is a third-year law student who has been an advocate for public interest issues at Marquette. Among many other worthy pursuits, she is MU’s student coordinator for National Immigration Justice Center’s “Know Your Rights” detention outreach program, which sends law students to the Kenosha detention facility and conducts information sessions and individual intakes. Ashley is also an active student coordinator of the Marquette Volunteer Legal Clinic. She was a fieldwork intern at Catholic Charities Legal Services for Immigrants in Chicago. She co-founded and served as president of a Student Organization “Hablando del Derecho,” which connects students with pro bono opportunities in which they can use their Spanish language skills.

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Richlen stressed that the insights and experience the two students are gaining will be put to good use in a variety of future legal settings. "Public interest attorneys work in diverse environments, including private practice, government agencies and nonprofit legal service advocacy organizations. Their fields of practice are even more diverse, including elder law, consumer law, family law, environmental law, Indian law, public defender work, and more," she explains. "What unites us is our determination to improve the lives of our neighbors by providing essential legal services to unrepresented and underrepresented groups and individuals. These two students certainly embody those aspirations and we are very pleased that we can recognize their service."

The awards will be presented at the Member Recognition and Networking Celebration, which will be held during the 2011 State Bar Annual Meeting at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday, June 9 at the Kalahari Resort in Wisconsin Dells.

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the mandatory professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a Wisconsin law license. With more than 23,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members to help them maintain their expertise, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out community service initiatives to educate the public about the legal system and the value of lawyers. For more information, visit www.wisbar.org.

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