

IP/NO Clinic's Clients Range from Sexual Assault Survivors to Pet Pantry Founders

A HORRIFIC CRIME 1,700 MILES AWAY led the Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations (IP/NO) Clinic to work on a charitable project that uses music to benefit victims.

Two years ago, a man with a knife invaded a Seattle home, where he stabbed and sexually assaulted two women who had been asleep there. One survived. Her partner, Teresa Butz, a native St. Louisan from a large, musical family, did not.

After struggling with the horrendous news, two childhood friends of Butz decided to pay tribute to her by producing a compact disc and selling it to support sexual assault survivors around the country. Rachel Ebeling and Jean Fox initially consulted a St. Louis lawyer, who early last year referred them to the IP/NO Clinic. The lawyer was acquainted with Senior Lecturer in Law Peter Ruger, JD '69, who had joined the clinic as co-director several years earlier to expand its mission to work with nonprofit organizations.

From their friend's tragedy was born the Angel Band Project, which last fall released the CD to raise funds for the Voices and Faces Project, a national organization that

supports sexual assault survivors, their family members, friends, and communities.

To accomplish that goal within a year, Ruger and clinic co-director David Deal, working with law students, guided Ebeling and Fox through a number of legal matters. "This project involved both nonprofit issues in creating a not-for-profit corporation for them and some very significant intellectual property issues in getting the rights to the music," Ruger says.

"Some original pieces of music had been written for this project, and some were remakes of known songs by more popular artists," explains former clinic student Eric Finch, JD '11. "We basically had to walk them through the permission process to use the music that was written by others. The project was pretty heart-wrenching since it sprang from a tragedy, but helping them produce the CD allowed us to use our legal skills to obtain a really positive outcome."

THE CLINIC'S IP AND NONPROFIT practice areas have collaborated to assist other clients as well. One client wanted to incorporate as a nonprofit in metro St. Louis to help disabled and elderly people maintain their homes.

"When they started out, they wanted to use a name called, 'Lend a Helping Hand,'" Ruger recalls. "Under David's direction, some of the students checked and found that name was



David Deal, Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic co-director, left, and then clinic students Garrett Fischer, JD '11, and Fanyu Kong, JD '11, right, meet with client Rachel Ebeling, second from left, on legal issues related to the Angel Band Project.



As an Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic student, Taylor Stevens, IP/TL LLM '11, center, and Senior Lecturer Peter Ruger, JD '69, right, enabled a nonprofit pet food pantry to gain tax exempt status.

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being used by a charity that's based in Los Angeles and a commercial outfit in California."

The client, a successful businessman, understood the risks of violating a trademark so the name "The Brooktree Foundation" was adopted instead. The bulk of the clinic's work involves similar transactions, though Ruger says students do represent clients in some administrative or civil hearings concerning, for instance, tax exemptions for real estate. The nonprofit side also helps draft bylaws, review contracts, and dissolve entities whose funding has dried up. Among the clinic's clients have been several charter schools needing a variety of such services.

"What our students do, I think, accurately reflects what most lawyers in practice do," Ruger says. "Very few lawyers deal with criminal law issues. To be sure, there's a substantial number, but not as a percentage of lawyers practicing."

Patent Law Field Placement

Patent Law Program Provides Needed Professional Training

THE NEW Washington, D.C., area Patent Law Field Placement is helping prepare students for a career focused on the preparation, filing, and prosecution of patent applications. Students have the opportunity to extern at the law firm of Oliff & Berridge in Alexandria, Virginia, for one semester.

"Our students are expected to perform as a first-year associate," says David Deal, director of the law school's Intellectual Property & Technology Law Program and co-director of the Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic. "Students prepare responses to patent office actions, draft amended patent claims, and prepare communications with clients."

After formal training, law students also are paired with a mentor at the firm and given a slate of projects for the semester. The program is designed to immerse students in a law firm environment and facilitate the transition from law students to competent and productive practitioners.

"There is a steep learning curve involved in patent law work," Deal says. "Practical preparation and prosecution experience enhances employment opportunities for these students."

The training is already paying off for both the students and firm. Three students who participated in the first Oliff & Berridge placement in spring 2011 accepted offers of post-graduation employment. ||||

LAST FALL, then third-year law student Steve Chiang, JD '11, worked for both sides of the clinic, which he calls "an excellent starting point for law students who wish to experience the transactional side of lawyering."

In another recent project, students worked with the Bi-State Pet Food Pantry, a nonprofit organization that assists low-income families in St. Louis with free food for their pets. The pantry is the brainchild of St. Louisans Kylie Shafferkoetter and Sandy Lynn who are pet owners themselves and volunteers with Stray Rescue.

"We felt very fortunate to have Peter and the students on our side," says Shafferkoetter. "After we formed the pantry, had it incorporated, and started getting the word out, people began giving us donations. Our board had helped us with the bylaws, but we weren't sure how to proceed with getting tax exempt status. So we went online, but the IRS website was very confusing. It felt overwhelming."

"The clinic really made the process much more pleasant and easy," agrees Lynn. "They were able to help guide us through all the steps." ||||

Intellectual Property & Nonprofit Organizations Clinic students and faculty worked with the St. Louis County Police and Sperring Middle School administrators to draw up incorporation papers for an inclusive afterschool program.

