
ANSWERING THE CALL TO HELP DURING COVID-19

“A law license is a gift to do good, to help people, and to change our communities for the better.” Kimball Anderson





On March 31, 2020, Immediate Past President **Doug Young** challenged all Fellows: “Unfortunately, the poorest of the poor among us are usually those most adversely affected by a crisis such as this, whether it be in regard to their health, their economic situation, or their access to justice needs. The pandemic offers a particular opportunity, and responsibility, for each of us to do what we can to help those most in need of our care, support, and assistance.” Although many Fellows generously have and continue to do just that, Access to Justice Distinguished Pro Bono Fellow **Kimball Anderson** answered Doug’s call to action in a very significant way when he and his wife, Karen Gatsis Anderson, funded a first of its kind COVID-19 focused public interest internship program in collaboration with the University of Illinois College of Law, Kimball and Karen’s alma mater (both of them Order of the Coif).

The Anderson Internship Program was a win not just for the fifteen participating law school students, but also for the ten public interest organizations hosting the students and for the countless individuals and families whose lives had been turned upside down because of the various pandemic-generated legal problems they faced. Each of the law students received a \$6,000 stipend for the summer and, most importantly, a very rewarding opportunity to make a difference.

Anderson speaks to the origin for this innovative internship program: “Although access to justice historically has been a problem in Illinois, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated that problem many times over. To meet this emergency need, Karen and I repurposed our University of Illinois

College of Law internship program so that 15 students could work on COVID-19 related matters at legal clinics throughout Illinois.”

University of Illinois College of Law Executive Assistant Dean for Career Planning and Professional Development Greg Miarecki welcomed the students to the internship: “This summer, each of you will be working with various legal aid agencies around the state of Illinois, providing valuable services to your fellow residents. And you will be doing so at a critical time, when the state is dealing with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need for pro bono legal services is increasing markedly.... Kimball and Karen, on behalf of the College of Law, THANK YOU for your support of our students. Your support will enable our





students to make a real difference in the lives of fellow Illinoisans at this critical time.”

Illinois Legal Aid Online intern Paige Rhodes describes her summer experience: “COVID-19 impacted so many different areas of the law. People are struggling. It feels really good to make a difference through this internship.”

Megan Osadzinski, an intern at the Legal Council for Health Justice, through a separate internship Anderson created many years ago, says: “As a first-generation Polish-American and first-generation law student at DePaul, the opportunity to work in the public interest field during my first summer of law school was truly transformative. This internship opportunity strengthened my desire to pursue a lifelong career as a public interest attorney and use the law to advocate

on behalf of very deserving communities.”

Tom Yates, the Executive Director of the Legal Council for Health Justice which Kimball co-founded more than 30 years ago, expressed his appreciation for the excellent work done by another one of the Anderson interns: “Nigia Cusic provided invaluable support to the Legal Council’s work during a uniquely challenging summer. Nigia assisted our staff in laying the groundwork for a new initiative to expand legal assistance to low-income individuals on Chicago’s south side and south suburbs, bolstered our ongoing special education advocacy on behalf of students with medical needs whose needs have been ignored during the pandemic, and furthered our impact advocacy for older adults who rely on Medicaid and Medicare for health care during the pandemic. Nigia provided valuable insights,

undertook her projects with diligence, and produced excellent work product.”

The other organizations benefitting from the Andersons’ internships were Prairie State, John Howard Association, Land of Lincoln, National Immigrant Justice Center, Equip for Equality, Chicago Legal Clinic, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, and the Chicago Bar Foundation. The breadth and scope of the Andersons’ generosity extended far and wide as it significantly impacted many organizations with differing clientele experiencing a variety of COVID-19 related problems such as employment and health care.

Kimball Anderson is a nationally recognized access to justice pioneer and role model. From 2003 to the present, through various fellowship and internship programs, Kimball and Karen have awarded grants and stipends to numer-



ous practicing public interest lawyers and law students: “The problem of crushing school debt plagues many public interest lawyers. We are still trying to chip away at the problem seventeen years later. Our effort has been extremely rewarding to us because we have watched almost all of our Anderson Fellows become outstanding leaders of their public interest agencies. We created an internship program several years ago with the hope and intent of cultivating a life-long commitment to public interest law. We thought that exposing second-year law students to the public interest community through summer internships at legal aid agencies would spark a commitment to and interest in public interest work which would stay with the students well into their legal careers.”

One Anderson Fellow who clearly fulfilled Kimball’s vision now serves as the Executive Director of Illinois Legal Aid On-

line. Teri Ross recounts: “I was selected as the 2009 Anderson Fellow. This Fellowship changed the trajectory of my professional career. I no longer had to worry about making a hefty repayment on my education loan each month on my modest legal aid salary, which enabled me to focus on being the best advocate I could be to people in need. I can’t say if I would have stayed in legal aid otherwise. I have now been with Illinois Legal Aid Online for over 12 years. Largely thanks to the Anderson Fellowship, I was able to pay off the entirety of my school loans in 2014. Karen and Kimball are such amazing advocates for justice, and they lead with heart. They have inspired so many law students and new lawyers.”

In speaking about Kimball, Doug Young simply exclaims: “How could one person have accomplished so much, and for so

many?” By placing the spotlight on Kimball Anderson’s COVID-19 initiatives, the College can hope that other Fellows will be inspired by what Kimball has done to consider programs in their own communities, whether the focus is on COVID-19, social injustice or any of the myriad other problems facing so many in need during these difficult times. Kimball sees these programs as serving “the dual purpose of increasing access to justice and instilling in young lawyers a life-long commitment to the public interest. Equally important, these programs are gratifying to Karen and me because we see the success of the fellows and interns. They stay in touch with us and make us proud and grateful that we had the opportunity to help them.”

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