

I remember that when I first mentioned to my fellow law students what I was doing for my first year summer job some of them reacted with disdain to what they thought was a marginal use of a law student's time. The others seemed to think I was being noble and self-sacrificing. The truth is I think that it is important to think of a summer job with Farmworker Legal Services the same way one might think of any summer legal job. We were trying to serve clients and to develop legal skills. We spent our summer relating to farmworkers as clients. Trying to reach out to them and get them to call us when they had a legal problem. Then trying to do the best we could to address the problems that they did bring into our office. I was humbled and challenged by the work. At the beginning of the summer I was clumsy and uncertain about how to drive up to a labor camp and do outreach. I was also very new at doing real world legal research and case work. As the summer progressed I think I got better through practice and through the guidance of the great, supportive, vibrant attorneys who were overseeing my work. I am convinced that I got as much out of this summer legal experience as any law student working in any other context. I got that something extra too of knowing that my work contributed in some small way to social justice.

The best thing about this job has been the variety of projects assigned and the collegiality in the office. I have gotten to work on lots of small problem-solving cases that come into the office on a daily basis, a few larger ongoing cases, as well as some non-case related research projects. I felt respected and nurtured by the attorneys. My class of interns often collaborated on research projects. Some of the best days involved a group of us joining together to tackle a new issue and helping each other with our research memos. After the first year of law school, it was a joy to be away from a culture of competition and turf-battles. I had more meaningful and intellectual conversations about the law here than I did throughout the whole of my first year with classmates.

The other great thing about this job is doing outreach. The memories that will probably endure longest will be those of driving around the Michigan countryside with a county map and trying to spot the camps on our list. Then venturing into a camp and trying to get a sense of what was going on there and whether anyone was going to take the opportunity to tell us about a problem. We didn't usually come back with a huge case but I can't remember ever thinking that we hadn't provided some kind of service, even if it was just getting a free phone number in someone's hands that might someday need it.