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Spotlight on Public Interest Attorneys

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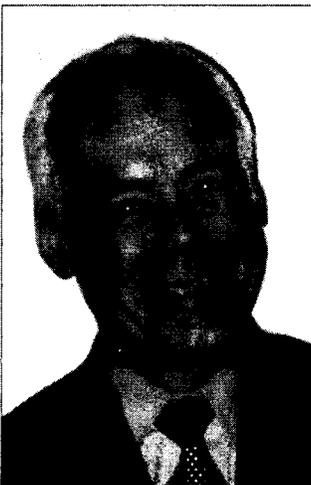


Spotlight on Public Interest Attorneys

by JANELLE SKALOUD

RICHARD HUTT

*ATTORNEY SUPERVISOR, COOK COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER—JUVENILE
JUSTICE DIVISION*



Rick Hutt moved to the Cook County Public Defender's Office from a private criminal defense firm 17 years ago, and he hasn't regretted it for a minute.

"I enjoy my job thoroughly," says Hutt. "I can't say enough about the people here—I'm amazed by them every day."

Hutt fulfills the mission of the Public Defender's Office to protect each client's "rights, liberties, and dignity" in the Juvenile Justice Division. He, along with two other supervisors and a division chief, oversees a staff of 45 attorneys who defend children 17 and younger against criminal charges, although Hutt says they mostly see 14-17 year olds.

The children face charges ranging from theft to battery to murder. The goal of the juvenile justice system, Hutt says, is to hold children accountable, but also to truly rehabilitate them so they do not re-offend as adults. In almost all cases, the Public Defender seeks probation for a juvenile, especially first-time offenders.

Hutt views his role in the Office as being a "consultant/teacher" to the attorneys in his division. He divides his time between conducting daily courtroom checks to evaluate the attorneys, keeping tabs on what the judges and opposing counsel are doing, and, most importantly, providing his attorneys with whatever support they may require.

The best part about the job, Hutt says, is that "you can really change somebody here." Sometimes, Hutt says, a child's Public Defender may be the first authority figure to really listen to him.

"We don't treat kids as hopeless cases," Hutt says. "We try to recognize where kids are coming from, and what they're dealing with." This might include identifying a child's mental health issues or developmental problems, and making sure the judge is aware of those issues.

"A lot of kids we see are 'on the fence,'" says Hutt, "and how we treat them now determines which way they'll go in the future."

Law students interested in an internship in the Juvenile Justice Division may call Dorene Kuffer at 1-312-433-7046. Hutt says law students with a 711 license should definitely get matched up with a trial.

ANDY DOUGHERTY

STAFF ATTORNEY—HOUSING LAW, CABRINI GREEN LEGAL AID CLINIC



Andy Dougherty knew what he wanted to do when he graduated from law school.

“I had that realization that a lot of people who do public interest law have,” he says. “I wanted to actively work to serve the greater good.”

Upon graduating from Loyola University Chicago School of Law in 2005, Dougherty became the Housing Attorney for the Cabrini Green Legal Aid Clinic (CGLA), after having interned there the previous summer. The CGLA is a privately-funded, non-profit organization that represents Chicago residents living in poverty in the legal areas deemed most critical: housing law, family law and criminal law. In the Housing Law Program, Dougherty represents clients in eviction cases, grievance cases and back-rent disputes.

Dougherty says that evictions are a pressing concern for his clients, most of whom reside in public housing.

“If evicted,” he says, “public housing residents must wait three years before re-applying to get back in, and the chances of them obtaining another subsidized residence are minimal.”

Many of the evictions Dougherty defends against are a result of the “One Strike Law,” which provides that an entire family can be evicted from a public

housing unit if one family member or guest engages in drug-related activity or a criminal act.

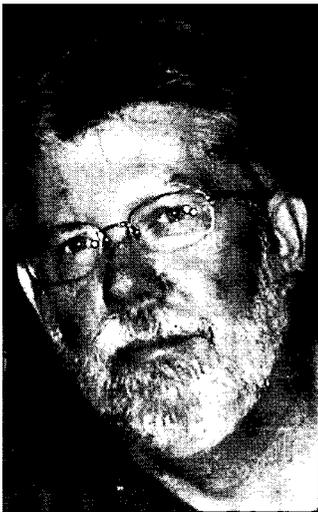
Dougherty says he tries to balance providing quality legal representation with taking as many clients with defensible cases as possible. He usually handles an average of 50 cases at a time, all in various stages of litigation. He divides his time between going to court, meeting with clients, negotiating with opposing counsel, researching and writing, and attending staff meetings. Part of his job also includes community outreach.

“For many of my clients, their backs are against the wall,” Dougherty says. Helping them get out of that situation and into a more stable environment, he says, is the most rewarding aspect of his job.

Law students interested in volunteer/internship opportunities with the Housing Law Program of the Cabrini Green Legal Aid Clinic may email Andy Dougherty at andydougherty@cglanet.net.

ROBERT ROY

OFFICE DIRECTOR, EVANSTON COMMUNITY DEFENDER OFFICE



Bob Roy has dedicated 30 years to the Evanston Community Defender Office, first as a staff attorney and now as Office Director. Roy believes in advocacy that “meets the client’s total needs, which may go well beyond the problem they came to us with.”

The Evanston Community Defender Office is a non-profit organization that believes a holistic approach to representing clients is the best way to address clients' immediate needs as well as prevent future recurrences of the problems that cased them to seek legal assistance in the first place. Since the 1990s, the organization has focused on indigent youth, mainly representing low-income Evanston residents ages 21 and younger in both criminal and civil matters.

Currently, Roy says, criminal justice programs like Public Defender offices and Civil Legal Aid offices exist to provide representation to those who cannot afford an attorney. These offices, however, are limited in the types of services they can provide.

"We are able to meet the client's total legal needs," says Roy. "A client may come to us on a criminal matter, but in talking with him and his family we will discover that they are also dealing with, say, a housing problem, or a disciplinary matter at school, and we will represent them on that as well."

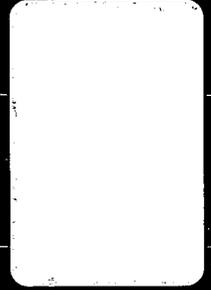
Because the clients' needs so often go beyond their legal situation, the office also provides social work and counseling services to help clients and their families address the underlying causes of the situations they are facing.

Roy's duties as Office Manager involve "wearing three or four different hats." He provides direct services to clients but is also responsible for fundraising and administrative tasks around the office. A typical week for him might involve representing his clients in Juvenile Court, advocating for a client's special education needs with the school, meeting with the Board of Directors and writing grants to raise funds for the Office.

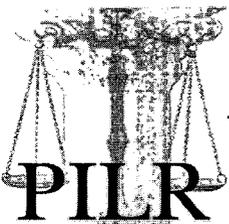
The rewards of his job, Roy says, come when he is able to fulfill the Office's mission of "improving the lives of kids in the home, school, and community."

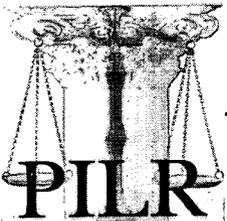
The Evanston Community Defender Office welcomes law clerks and volunteers. Please contact Bob Roy at ecdo828@earthlink.com for information.

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PUBLIC INTEREST LAW REPORTER





The Loyola Public Interest Law Reporter is an innovative legal publication in news magazine format, directed to students, educators, and practitioners. The magazine is edited and produced by Loyola students and is housed within the Center for Public Service Law. Founded in 1995, PILR offers feature articles and news of legal developments in the areas of human rights, economic justice, criminal justice, the environment, and governance. In addition to an editorial staff selected through a write-on process, student volunteers help with research, writing, graphics, production, and business management.

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