



From Home Court...to a Place Called Home 30 years of justice for DC's homeless residents

***A simple idea becomes a long-standing
Georgetown University Law Center tradition***

In 1987, Jeff Schwaber, a third-year Georgetown University law student (now a successful attorney and long-time board member of the Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless) had an idea. Jeff recalls:

As a law student, I lived on Capitol Hill and would walk by the Community for Creative Non-Violence (CCNV) shelter every day on the way to class. I saw the painful juxtaposition of this haven for over 1000 homeless men and women, against Georgetown University Law Center (GULC), just a block away. A particular interaction I had with a homeless man one day snapped me into a different level of consciousness about the issue of homelessness and triggered the idea of tapping Georgetown resources and connections to have a fundraiser – Members of Congress and Georgetown law professors squaring off in a charity basketball game. Initially, I thought we could generate \$10,000 to purchase a refrigerator for CCNV.

I talked about the game idea to one of my professors, Florence Roisman, who had helped stir my consciousness on issues of housing and homelessness. She said it was great idea, but "if you want to focus on the juxtaposition, talk to my colleague Patty Mullahy Fugere, who is part of a group starting an ad hoc project of the DC Bar to provide legal services to homeless people. They are just

getting off the ground.” I reached out to Patty, and we clicked right away. She became part of our planning group for the event – which we named Home Court – to help strategize about how best to meet our \$10,000 goal and how best to use the funds raised. Patty suggested that as law students, we might consider raising funds for legal services to support the newly created Washington Legal Clinic for the Homeless. We far surpassed our initial goal of raising \$10,000, and we ultimately followed Patty’s advice by donating \$40,000 to the Legal Clinic to hire its first staff attorney.

Patty Mullahy Fugere, a founding member of the Legal Clinic’s board and its executive director since 1991, reflects on those early days:

Jeff and his classmates were awesome! They pulled off an event that included the Marine Corps Color Guard for the National Anthem and featured two former NBA players (Senator Bill Bradley and Congressman Tom McMillen) on the “Hill’s Angels.” It was an electric evening! After his graduation, we invited Jeff to join the Legal Clinic’s board. His continued involvement was positive on so many levels. He was a mentor to the students who had agreed to organize a second Home Court game (and then a third, and a fourth, and...), and he helped our board strategize about how best to use the event to raise even more funds from DC’s legal community to support the Legal Clinic’s important work. We are truly overwhelmed – and immensely grateful – that

Georgetown’s administration and students, as well as the Members of Congress, are so willing to support the Legal Clinic year after year after year.



GULC students present funds raised through Home Court in 2016 to the Legal Clinic.



The Hill's Angels - Home Court 1 (1988)

The inaugural team included then-Senator Bill Bradley and then-Congressmen Tom Downey, Lane Evans, Sander Levin, Tom McMillen, Mike Oxley, Chuck Schumer, and others, along with then-Chairman of the DC Council David A. Clark.

A Bi-Partisan, Bi-Cameral Alliance to support a worthy cause

Home Court is a series of activities over the course of the school year, organized and run by Georgetown law students. The centerpiece is the Home Court basketball game, which typically takes place each March. In 2017, the Hill's Angels (US Senators and Representatives) and the Hoya Lawyas (Georgetown Law deans, administrators and faculty) will take to the court for the 30th straight year in what has become a fierce competition for bragging rights. Gonzaga College High School, proximate to both Georgetown Law and Capitol Hill, typically hosts the game.

Amidst great fanfare – often including cheerleaders, a band, enthusiastic fans, a silent auction, and mid-game entertainment – the two teams come together to play a game that is the focal point of the Legal Clinic’s most important annual fundraising effort. In 2016, Home Court raised more than half of the Legal Clinic’s budget for the year, bringing in just over \$730,000 from law firms, individual donors and a series of student activities. Since its inception, Home Court has raised more than \$7 million to support the Legal Clinic’s work.

Over the years, the game has become increasingly competitive. The Hill’s Angels have won nine of the past thirteen games, one in triple overtime. Michael Frisch, GULC’s ethics counsel and Hoya Lawyas team coach, with a wry sense of humor, reflects on the games:

As the years go by the faculty that make up our team get older and grayer while the Hill team gets younger and younger. A number of the players from the Hill have been athletes, even basketball stars, before they were elected....

David Koplow, professor of public international law and national security law and a long time Hoya Lawya, adds:

Our faculty has many, many strengths, but basketball is not among them. We have consistently failed in our hiring to take into consideration height, athleticism and a deft touch. We are good scholars and teachers.



Hill’s Angels’ Senator Tim Scott (R-SC) tips off against Hoya Lawyas’ Professor Chris Brummer in 2016 game.

Laura Donohue, Director of Georgetown’s Center on National Security and the Law and Director the Center on Privacy and Technology, a college athlete, and a more recent addition to the Law Center’s

faculty, recalls a Home Court game in which she participated:

Home Court is an exercise in humility. One of the Senators I played against made three-pointers every time. The first time I was guarding him, and he made the shot, he smiled at me and added, 'AND, I've had triple bypass surgery!'

Ultimately, Home Court is about coming together for a good cause. As the Hoya Lawya's Frisch notes: "The joy of the game is to see Democrats and Republicans playing together, watching them working as a team. I heard a congressman saying 'we need more of this, Congress needs more of this.'"



Hoya Lawyas Professor Donohue blocks out as Professor Williams drives for the layup

The Lane Evans Home Court Fellows Program

In 2006, at the suggestion of Home Court student chair Lindsay Amstutz, the Legal Clinic established what has become a successful annual fellowship program to give GULC students an opportunity to participate in some of the Legal Clinic's substantive activities. Named to honor the memory of Congressman Lane Evans, a long-time captain and coach of the Hill's Angels, the Lane Evans Home Court Fellows Program exposes students to the important work that Home Court supports. Sean Doran, who went on to co-chair Home Court in 2008 and serve as executive chair in 2009, was one of the first GULC students to participate in this program.

I worked with one of the staff attorneys at the Legal Clinic to help train local youth to testify before the DC City Council in order to advocate for increased funding for homeless programs. It was a phenomenal experience working with the youth and watching their powerful testimony (more powerful than most adults who testified) at the Council hearing. For me, the fellowship and Home Court are closely linked. I don't think I would have been as passionate about running Home Court if I hadn't seen the work the Legal Clinic does first hand.

GULC Students - Powering Home Court for Thirty Years

Home Court is a GULC tradition, an opportunity for law students to volunteer their time to support a worthy cause. Each year for the past three decades, a core student leadership committee has spent countless hours throughout the school year bringing Home Court to life. Many more students volunteer on game day to make the event a huge success.

Typically, Home Court student leaders first participate in their first year. They move on to take on committee leadership, and some become part of Home Court's executive board. One or two third year students serve as Home Court Chair or Co-chairs, with ultimate oversight responsibility for activities through the year and for the basketball game itself.

The tasks before them might seem daunting, given that the students are carrying a full course load and, in some instances, part-time work. Yet they remain undaunted, coming back year after year, committing their time and talent to breaking down the barriers to access to justice for DC residents who are homeless. Since Home Court's inception, more than 650 students have participated in the event.

A Powerful Impact

For some law students who participate in Home Court, the experience leaves a lasting mark on their lives. This was true for Sterling Morriss, a Georgetown Law graduate who Co-Chaired Home Court in 2011. Sterling is now Senior Manager for Equal Justice Works, helping law students secure post-graduation public interest law fellowships, as well as a Legal Clinic board member.

Home Court is actually the reason I am doing what I do today. The day I had an epiphany was the day I skipped class to solicit a silent auction item for Home Court. I remember stopping and thinking, why am I doing this? I'm paying a lot of money to go to school here only to skip class. And it made me realize that the work I was doing empowering others, in this case, at the Legal Clinic, was the work I wanted to do full-time in my career. I realized there is a place for me where I can use my knowledge base to empower others to provide front line legal services.

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WHAT IT TAKES TO ORGANIZE AND MAKE HOME COURT A REALITY

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- Staffing up committees: Business and Silent Auction; Congressional and Georgetown Community Relations; Venue and Game Day; Special Events, Social Media and Communications#
 - Raising awareness on campus about homelessness#
- Selecting a game date that works for Congress and GULC#
- Arranging a venue that is convenient to Capitol Hill#
- Recruiting Hill's Angels and Hoya Lawya team members#
 - Securing concessions for game night #
 - Soliciting donations for the Silent Auction#
- Generating publicity, enthusiasm and attendance for the event#

Eager to Volunteer

Stephanie Ritter, a Georgetown 3L and one of the co-chairs for Home Court 2017, reflects on why she decided to get involved in Home Court as a first year law student:

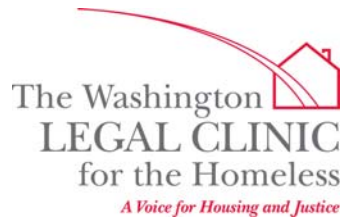
My first year, I just happened to see the Home Court booth at the student organization fair which takes place at the beginning of the year. I talked to people at the table about it. They billed it as this game between GULC professors and Members of Congress. Not only was it the entertainment, it went to raise money for a great cause. ... This seemed like it had a larger purpose. I really wanted to get involved in some public service.

Women and Men for Others

Genevieve Fugere Hulick, Stephanie Ritter's co-chair and also a 3L, reflects on the significance of the GULC annual event:

Home Court is a way for lawyers to fulfill our moral duty to provide representation to people who can't afford it. As law students at a Catholic university based in the Jesuit tradition, we have an added responsibility to be women and men for others. Home Court allows us to do that.

***About Home Court Beneficiary
Washington Legal Clinic
for the Homeless***



The Legal Clinic, formally established the same year that Home Court planning began, was at first an ad hoc initiative of the DC Bar, at a time when the number of people experiencing homelessness in the nation's capital was on the rise. The Legal Clinic envisions *"a just and inclusive community for all residents of the District of Columbia, where housing is a human right and where every individual and family has equal access to the resources they need to thrive."* The Legal Clinic's mission is *"to use the law to make justice a reality for our neighbors who struggle with homelessness and poverty."*

Combining individual representation, systemic reform efforts, policy advocacy, community education and client engagement, the Legal Clinic has not only helped individual clients achieve greater stability, but it has had a major positive impact on the social services and affordable housing programs on which low-income and homeless DC residents rely.

Since its founding in 1987, the Legal Clinic has provided legal advice and representation to more than 30,000 clients. Thousands of volunteer attorneys – lawyers from firms, federal and local government agencies, associations, congregations and elsewhere – have contributed tens of millions of dollars worth of donated legal services to assist individual clients, litigate class action lawsuits on public benefits, shelter and subsidized housing programs, develop and advance policy initiatives and otherwise work to achieve justice for the Legal Clinic's clients. The Legal Clinic, as a founding member and leader in the Fair Budget Coalition and other collaborative efforts, has successfully advocated for the establishment of - and adequate funding for - vital programs such as the Local Rent Supplement Program. Its efforts compelled DC's shelter system to come into compliance with disability rights laws, and it has helped low-income tenants faced with displacement to retain their housing and keep it affordable. The Legal Clinic has trained countless community members experiencing homelessness about their rights under federal and local laws, as well as how to be an advocate, and for more than fifteen years has trained all police recruits on the rights of people who are homeless and the resources available to assist them.

For more information about the Legal Clinic, see www.legalclinic.org.