



Volume 3 | Issue 2 | March 2009

### **SMRLS/U of M Equal Education CLE Kicks off SMRLS' Centennial Celebration**

Nearly 150 legal aid, private and corporate bar and government lawyers and community representatives attended SMRLS' first of four Centennial Events with local law schools, starting with the University of Minnesota on February 6th at Mondale Hall on the U of M campus.

"Unequal Educational Outcomes: Is Achievement Tracking a Source or Perpetuator of Racial Discrimination Within Schools" was the topic of the day-long CLE, held as part of the U of M's 24th Annual William McGee National Civil Rights Moot Court Competition. Ten outstanding national and local speakers participated in the event which was organized by Professor Carl Warren of the U of M Law School and SMRLS Senior Counsel, Bruce Beneke. The CLE addressed the difficult and vexing issues regarding the use of ability grouping or tracking in schools and explored the instance of persistent segregation and lack of educational opportunity in Minnesota and strategies to equalize opportunity.

SMRLS has received many positive comments on the outstanding presentations, discussions and materials at this CLE. Many thanks to the CLE speakers who did such an excellent job in preparing and presenting on this critical SMRLS mission and community issue on a pro bono basis. See speaker photos below.



Paul Dieseth, Senior Attorney, Dorsey & Whitney



Melissa Krull, Ph.D., Superintendent, Eden Prairie Schools



Amanda Lewis, Ph.D., Associate Professor of Sociology, Emory University



Judge Natalie Hudson, Minnesota Court of Appeals



Myron Orfield, Executive Director, Institute of Race and Poverty, University of Minnesota Law School



Atlee Reilly, Equal Justice Attorney Fellow, Education Law Advocacy Project, SMRLS



Carl Warren, Professor of Clinical Instruction, University of Minnesota Law School



Bruce Beneke, SMRLS Senior Counsel

## **“Barriers to Justice” Centennial Educational Events Draw Nearly 270 persons**

To call attention to the emerging critical legal needs of low-income persons and to generate new ideas and resources to address these needs, SMRLS and Hamline University School of Law jointly sponsored a symposium and a CLE on “Justice and the Administrative Process” at the beautiful Klas Center at Hamline University on March 12 and 13, 2009. The CLE featured three administrative law judges and attorneys from SMRLS and other practice settings who discussed “best practices” for administrative tribunal representation. The “Barriers to Justice” symposium featured outstanding national and local speakers, including SMRLS attorneys. Those presenting included Professor Lucy Williams of Northeastern School of Law; Dr. Augustine Romero, Director of Student Equity at Tuscon University School of Law; former SMRLS Board member, the Honorable Tanya Bransford, District Court Judge and Loretta Frederick, a leading international speaker on domestic violence issues (and former SMRLS attorney).

Nearly 270 persons participated in the two events. The conferences highlighted the important ways that staff and pro bono attorneys can help low-income persons receive the emergency assistance they need to survive the threatened loss of a job or home during the recession, or to remove welfare to work or other barriers to achieving economic self-sufficiency. The symposium explored new “justice system” ideas to prevent domestic violence and preserve family safety, as well as laws and new programs designed to assure educational equity for low-income children. SMRLS thanks Hamline Law School and all of the symposium and CLE speakers and planners for their outstanding work in raising community awareness of the unique future challenges faced by low-income persons.



SMRLS CEO Jessie Nicholson; SMRLS Campaign for Legal Aid Chair Steve Kirsch, Esq. and Hamline University School of Law Dean Don Lewis



Front row: Laura Melnick, SMRLS Senior Attorney; Leah Montgomery, SMRLS Staff Attorney; Back row: Ken Gilchrist, SMRLS Senior Attorney; Martha Eaves, SMRLS Supervising Attorney; Lindsay Davis, SMRLS Staff Attorney; Chuck Thomas, SMRLS Litigation Support Counsel (Mankato) and Bruce Beneke, SMRLS Senior Counsel



Hon. Bruce Johnson, Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings



Hon. Patrick Kontz, Minnesota Department of Human Services

## Appealing the Denial of SSDI Benefits Panel Discussion



Hon. Diane Townsend-Anderson,  
ODAR Chief Judge



Jonathan Khan, Professor, Hamline  
University School of Law



Martha Eaves, SMRLS Supervising  
Attorney

## Appealing the Revocation of a Day Care License Panel Discussion



Hon. Bruce Johnson, Minnesota Office of Administrative Hearings; Lindsay Davis,  
SMRLS Staff Attorney, Jon Geffen, Arneson & Geffen and Cara Hawkinson, Minnesota  
Attorney General's Office

## Health Care Worker Disqualification Panel Discussion



Leah Montgomery, SMRLS Staff Attorney, Hon. Patrick Kontz, DHS; Chuck Thomas,  
SMRLS Litigation Support Counsel (Mankato) and Cara Hawkinson, Minnesota  
Attorney General's Office

## **Justice Barriers to Economic Self-Sufficiency, Job Opportunities and the Impact of Welfare Reform Panel Discussion**



Lindsay Davis, SMRLS Staff Attorney; Joan Truhler, Counselor, Workforce Solutions; Lucy Williams, Professor, Northeastern University School of Law; Martha Eaves, SMRLS Supervising Attorney; Mary Nelson, Ramsey County Welfare Administrator/Leader; Jon Geffen, Arnesen & Geffen

## **Future Domestic Violence Issues: Justice Barriers to Securing Physical and Emotional Safety and Family Stability Panel Discussion**



Loretta Frederick, Battered Women's Justice Project; Nancy Ver Steegh, Professor, William Mitchell College of Law; Dave Ellis, Greater Twin Cities United Way; James Street, SMRLS Supervising Attorney; Angela McCaffrey, Professor, Hamline University School of Law and Hon. Tanya Bransford, 4th Judicial District

## **Innovative Practices and Opportunities: Justice Barriers to Equal Education Opportunity**



Front row: Tom Romero, Professor, Hamline University School of Law; Blong Xiong, Associate Professor, University of Minnesota; Lilian Ejebe, SMRLS Education Law Advocacy Project Supervising Attorney; Kevin Brown, Professor, Indiana University School of Law  
Back row: Augustine Romero, Ph.D., Director of Student Equity, Tuscon Unified School District; Bruce Beneke, SMRLS Senior Counsel; Carlos Mariani, Minnesota State Legislator



Ami Janda and Elizabeth Leahy, both of Hamline *Journal of Public Law and Policy*



Amy Schwartz and Amber Mulder both of Hamline *Journal of Public Law and Policy*



Don Lewis, Dean, Hamline University School of Law and Kevin Brown, Professor, Indiana University School of Law



Steve Kirsch Esq., SMRLS Campaign for Legal Aid Chair and Susan Stephan, Alumni Relations - Law, Hamline University



Ana Maria Gomez Gomez, SMRLS Staff Attorney and Degalynn Wade-Sanders, former SMRLS Staff Attorney