



Westchester County Bar Foundation Fellowship Improving the Lives of Westchester Residents

Excerpted from a speech by WCBF Fellowship Recipient Darren Guild, Esq., at the 3rd Annual WCBF Benefit on November 14, 2013

During law school at Pace University, I heard many of my classmates state that they went to law school because they wanted to make a difference. This is also why I went. Not everyone had a chance to achieve this goal.

For past fellows Karen Maxim, Virginia Foulkrod and I, the WCBA Fellowship has given us the opportunity to fulfill the dreams we had on our first day of law school.

More important, however, is the tangible difference the Fellowship has on Westchester residents who cannot afford—but are most in need of—legal representation. For them, the Fellowship changes lives.

For example, Randy—one of my clients—was a 15 year old boy who came to my office after being suspended from school. His disciplinary record was as thick as a book. His report cards were filled with failing grades and comments from teachers that

Randy needed to listen more and show more respect. School was not a successful place for Randy.

After meeting and talking with Randy, I could not believe that the intelligent, thoughtful young man in front of me was the same one described in his school records. His cognitive testing showed him scoring well above average yet he was failing every class.

One thing stood out—Randy's reading scores were extremely low. Randy—a ninth grader—was reading on a first or second grade level. It was apparent that many of his behaviors were defense mechanisms to divert attention away from the fact that he could not read and protect himself from embarrassment. With my help, Randy was able to obtain the proper remedial reading services.

I called Randy's mother a few months ago. I told her I hadn't heard from her in a while and asked how things were going.

After telling me that Randy was doing well, she began to cry. She said that Randy had recently read to her for the first time and that she was so proud of him. I believe that the Fellowship changed Randy's life.

I have hundreds more stories like this one, and I am sure Karen and Virginia do as well. Having seen the impact first hand, I am convinced that the Fellowship changes lives.

Thank you again for being here tonight and showing your support for this very important Fellowship.

DARREN GUILD, ESQ. was the 2011-2013 Westchester County Bar Foundation Public Interest Fellow. He graduated from Pace University School of Law in 2011 and joined Student Advocacy, a nonprofit organization dedicated to protecting public school students' educational rights. He continues to advocate for students' rights.