

Peter Staffelbach

My summer internship at the St. Joseph County Prosecutor's office was one of the greatest learning experiences I have ever had. Though going into this internship I was nervous because I knew there was a wide variety of tasks in each of the different branches of the office, and I did not know exactly what to expect. But despite my initial fears, I was placed in one of the most interesting and fast paced divisions of the office: Traffic and Misdemeanor.

The Traffic and Misdemeanor division receives hundreds of cases a year, significantly more than any other branch. The very first day I came into the office they showed me my desk, phone, and first case for preparation. Within 20 minutes, I was calling police officers and witnesses for a DUI case. The pace was as intense for the first three weeks. I learned new skills and met new people every day. Remembering the names of my co-workers turned out to be one of my biggest challenges!

The duties I performed were actually critical to the success of the weekly cases. I was the first one to 'prep' the case before it reached the deputy who was prosecuting the case.

Besides preparing cases, I was asked to sit in on several trials, including felony trials. This afforded me the opportunity to experience actual flesh and blood litigation. There were also three research projects that I was able to be part of: the first research project had to do with the case law pertaining to trespassing on private school property; the second had allowed me to use case law pertaining to the double jeopardy law in Indiana; thirdly, I had to contact state attorneys in Indianapolis, Indiana in order to write a report on the license review process. Overall, I was able to do so much more hands on work than I had expected and I loved it. I was also offered a paid position next summer, if county funding is available.