

1 Thomas Hall  
21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court  
1 September 2013

This summer I had the absolute pleasure of interning for Marianne Schroer with the 21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court in Franklin, TN. The 21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court's mission is to provide the 21st Judicial District of Tennessee a cost-effective treatment alternative to traditional sentencing for non-violent offenders whose crimes result from drug or alcohol addiction. They work with representatives of law enforcement and the courts as participants engage in a highly supervised two-year program. The programs of the 21st Drug Court educate participants about their addictions, while training them in basic life skills as well as in the tools necessary for a sober and healthy lifestyle.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court touches nearly every facet of the judicial system, and this turned out to be incredible for me as I got to experience them all. It all began at the beginning of the summer when Mrs. Schroer asked me what my plans were after Sewanee. I told her I am planning on law school but really have no idea what type of law I would like to practice. I did have some interest in the juvenile court system but to be honest I did not know much about it. She smiled, told me that was an easy fix, and then began to plan my days outside of the office. I quickly learned that Mrs. Schroer was one of the most well connected people I have ever met. After a few phone calls she had created a summer for me of which even current law students dream of. Over the next eight weeks I spent time working with and learning from some amazing people.

The first week I shadowed The Honorable Sharon Guffee at the Williamson County Juvenile Court. Here I observed everything from runaway children charged with being unruly to a bench trial that resulted in the permanent termination of parental rights. I also found a possible

2 Thomas Hall

21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court

1 September 2013

career path while observing the noble work of the Guardian ad litem. Guardian ad litem are attorneys whom represent and defend the best interests of children. They are truly special people.

Over the next couple of weeks I spent time in the Williamson County Court House shadowing three of the four circuit court judges for the 21<sup>st</sup> district: Judge Beal, Judge Martin, and Judge Easter. Judge Beal had the domestic dockets so I sat in on “divorce court” and one absolutely bizarre division of assets trial. Judge Martin had the criminal dockets, which had three or four fascinating trials, and I then followed Judge Easter as he literally rode the circuit and presided over criminal dockets in Hickman County. These few weeks were my favorite of the summer. All three judges were super kind, each inviting me back to their chambers to discuss what had happened and why. I enjoyed these weeks so much that I continued to come back to the courthouse for the rest of the summer at least twice a week.

My next stop was the Williamson County Jail with Captain Mike Dobbins. Here I was able to observe a variety of jobs within the jail. I thought that I would hate working in the jail, and I definitely didn't like it, but I have to say I was impressed because it ran like clockwork. I had absolutely no idea how much goes into running a jail, most people do not often think of jails as businesses, but they really are.

After the jail I returned to the courthouse for my last few weeks of the summer. This time I was shadowing the District Attorney Kim Helper, and Jimmy Elkins from the public defender's office. Being able to see the judicial process start to finish from both of their perspectives was incredible. I was able to study case files, consult with clients, observe negotiations, sit in on pre-trial hearings, and observe two trials. I was blessed with the opportunity to see the whole nine yards.

3 Thomas Hall

21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court

1 September 2013

While outside of the office my experiences were nothing short of incredible, I had a great experience working in the office as well. Part of every week I was in the 21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court's office working on various tasks such as drafting the code of ethics, revising the participant handbook, and transporting inmates in the inpatient phase to and from the Williamson County Jail. When I was in the office I worked most closely with Drug Court Coordinator: Marianne Schroer, who has the overall responsibility to manage and coordinate all facets of the drug court operations, Treatment Coordinators: Tony Owens and Lynn Caudill who are responsible for developing, coordinating, and implementing all aspects of treatment for the Drug Court, as well as Administrative Assistant/Case Manager: Xandy Bradshaw who is responsible for assisting the coordinator in administrative duties and case management.

After this summer I now know that I almost certainly wish to practice criminal law. I know with a hundred percent certainty that I want to be a litigator and who knows maybe even one day a judge! To be honest, when I started I thought of the 21<sup>st</sup> Drug Court as just a "hug a thug" program, but after this incredible summer I now realize that could not be farther from the truth. I observed for three months as these inspiring people changed lives. Marianne, Tony, Lynn, and Xandy are absolutely outstanding individuals who work extremely hard for a wonderful cause. They work with the judicial system to "arrest addiction one life at a time". They welcomed me with open arms and created the best work environment of which I have ever been a part. I could not have asked for a better internship! Oh and to top it all off on my last day they gave me a car! I am dead serious; I am now the proud owner of a 1995 Honda Odyssey, LIFE IS GOOD.