



**FALL 2024**

# CLINIC NEWS

The newsletter of the Texas Tech University School of Law  
Clinical Programs

## STUDENTS BEGIN FALL SEMESTER WITH CLINICAL PROGRAMS ORIENTATION

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The Clinical Programs welcomed all students during orientation week! Clinic students were required to attend orientation during the week prior to the first day of Fall classes. The Advanced ADR (Advanced Alternative Dispute Resolution) Clinic began with forty (40) hours of basic mediation training starting on Monday, August 12th with Professor Larry Spain and Adjunct Professor and Director of the Office of Dispute Resolution of Lubbock County, Gene Valentini to seventeen students.



The Tax Clinic and the Criminal Clinics consisting of the Criminal Defense Clinic, the Caprock Regional Public Defender Clinic, and the Innocence Clinic held their orientation on August 15th and 16th. Students were treated to lunch at Cancun's Restaurant on the 16th. During orientation, the Criminal Defense Clinic students were also able to visit some of their clients in jail thus beginning their representation.



Melissa Vasquez, Terri Morgeson, and Donnie Yandell, conducted the afternoon orientation with both Family Law and Civil Practice Clinic



students. Students were provided with information on Clinical Programs Policies and Procedures, as well as software programs to be used during the academic year for

document assembly, data base entries, and timekeeping. The information provided to all clinic students gives them a jump start with providing representation to their clients beginning with



the first day of classes. All students (with the exception of the Tax Clinic and the Advanced ADR Clinic students) are provided their third year trial card by the State Bar of Texas and makes it official for them to represent their clients under the supervision of their professors and instructors. On the other hand, a Special Appearance Authorization letter from the Internal Revenue Service authorizes Tax Clinic students to practice before the IRS during the semester.

As reported in articles provided in this edition of *Clinic News* by each clinic director, students have done an outstanding job during the Fall semester and we look forward to another successful Spring Semester!

We look forward to seeing many students at the Clinical Programs Mandatory Information Session scheduled for Tuesday, January 28th, as we begin our selection process for 2025-2026 academic year. See page 12 for more information!



## FROM THE DESK OF LARRY SPAIN

DIRECTOR OF CLINICAL PROGRAMS AND CIVIL PRACTICE CLINIC

During the fall semester, eight students were enrolled in the Civil Practice Clinic: **Matthew Amunrud, Chase Chamberlain, Samuel Dick, Sydney Dumas, Abby Dye, Megan Goracke, Katie Master, and Meagan Vlasak .**

Over the course of the semester, a total of 32 new client cases were undertaken, 18 cases were completed and closed, and 20 cases remain open and will be carried over to the spring semester along with additional cases to be taken over the break. In addition to assuming responsibility for assigned cases, each of the students participated in evening Pro Bono Clinics sponsored by Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas where they conducted intake for individuals seeking legal representation. This allowed the students

to be exposed to a wider variety of legal matters experienced by individuals who cannot afford access to legal counsel. Each of the students were kept busy carrying an individual caseload of 3-4 clients at most times throughout the semester and assumed primary responsibility for the representation of clients in matters involving family law, social security claims, wills and other advance planning, and other civil matters. Several of the students were able to complete divorces for clients from start to finish over the course of the semester while others will be ready for a final hearing immediately after the semester break.



Professor Larry Spain teaches Civil Practice Clinic, Family Law, Professional Responsibility, and Advanced ADR Clinic.

Before joining the faculty at Texas Tech, Professor Spain was the Director of Clinical Programs at the University of North Dakota School of Law for eighteen years, where he established several new clinical programs and expanded the range of clinical opportunities available to students. Prior to entering legal education, he worked for several legal services programs in Nebraska.

In addition to law teaching and legal practice, he has also been active in the field of alternative dispute resolution, serving as Chair of the Governing Board of a university-affiliated community dispute resolution center as well as being a frequent trainer and practitioner in mediation skills. He currently serves on the Advisory Board for the Office of Dispute Resolution for Lubbock County.

"Clinic has been so fulfilling this year! Taking on cases where clients genuinely need assistance and getting to learn through those experiences has been a priceless experience so far. We love our clinic team and the support we get from all of the faculty and staff.

*Katie Master*



Pictured L to R:

Chase Chamberlain, Matthew Amunrud, Sam Dick, and Professor Larry Spain, Front Row: Sydney Dumas, Megan Goracke, Katie Master, Meagan Vlasak, and Abby Dye

## FROM THE DESK OF LARRY SPAIN AND GENE VALENTINI

### ADVANCED ADR CLINIC

Seventeen students were enrolled in the Advanced ADR Clinic during the Fall Semester: **Ashley Boyce, Taylor Brumbaugh, Abby Cheek, Cody Clayton, Gunnar Duke, Nura Elhently, Gregory Ferrer, Caroline Ford, Nusaybah Khan, Joshua Legg, Jorey Maples, Hunter Robinson, Lauren Somerlot, Lauren Tedder Caunitz, Claire Walker, Destiny Weeks, and Edmund Zafrani.**

Each of the students completed 40 hours of basic mediation training prior to the start of fall classes qualifying them for appointment as an impartial third party under Chapter 154 of the Texas Civil Practice and Remedies Code. As a result, when classes began, students were initially able to observe experienced mediators conducting mediations before serving as either a co-mediator or solo mediator in a variety of disputes through the Office of Dispute Resolution for Lubbock County.

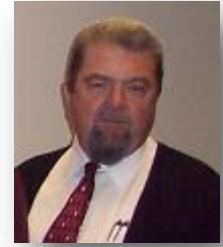
Most of the mediations were court ordered from the various District, County Court at Law, and Justice Courts of Lubbock County and Lubbock's

Municipal Court. Referrals from law enforcement, Lubbock City Prosecutor, and Lubbock County Criminal District Attorney were also often mediated by students.

Nearly 400 hours of mediation services were provided by the students over the course of the semester. The following is a breakdown of the types of cases mediated by students during the semester:

Debt Cases	49
Family	30
Diversion	45
Breach of Contract	2
Civil Suits	3
Criminal	6
Landlord/Tenant	6
Divorce	1
Small Claims	6
Tax Appraisal	1
Veteran Diversion	3
Self-referral disputes	6
Contracts	2
Property Damage	1

(Continued on page 9)



D. Gene Valentini is the Director of the Office of Dispute Resolution of Lubbock County, an administrative entity that manages an innovative ADR System, which began in 1985. He is also responsible for the statewide USDA mediation program. A mediator since 1981 and an active trainer for the past twenty plus years, Gene is the Master of Dispute Resolution for the courts of Lubbock County, Dean of Texas' ADR System directors and also co-teaches the Fall ADR course.

### WORDS FROM OUR STUDENTS:

"My time in the Tax Clinic has been invaluable. The hands-on experience advocating for clients has made me a more competent and confident representative. Overall, it's been a fantastic opportunity to apply my education in a real-world setting. And I've loved every minute."

-Meagan Watson  
Tax Clinic



#### Pictured L to R:

Left to Right Professor Larry Spain, Gregory Ferrer, Claire Walker, Hunter Robinson, Taylor Brumbaugh, Nura Elhently, Abby Cheek, Destiny Weeks, Joshua Legg, Cody Clayton, Edmund Zafrani, and Jorey Maples.  
Front Row: Lauren Somerlot, Caroline Ford, Ashley Boyce, Lauren Tedder Caunitz, Nusaybah Khan, and Adjunct Professor Gene Valentini

## FROM THE DESK OF TERRI MORGESON

### DIRECTOR, FAMILY LAW CLINIC

It's Christmas break for the Family Law Clinic, and I am excited to share an update on my students' activities for the Fall 2024-2025 semester, much like a proud parent sharing a family Christmas card. This semester's students participating in the clinic are Samantha Beirne, Harlan Burke, Harlan Gardiner, Carlie McCleary, Vanessa Jones, Breuklyn Nivens, Izabelle Mendoza, Fernanda Roman and Ashley Trujillo.

This semester has focused on contested hearings. A group of students were scheduled to appear for hearings, and several cases reached successful settlements. Hagan, Izabelle, Breuklyn, Ash and Harlan negotiated agreements with pro se parties or other attorneys to

resolve these cases. Carlie had a successful hearing for a contested protective order.



The experience these students gained from preparing for these hearings and negotiating settlements is invaluable and cannot be replicated in any classroom setting. Izabelle receives the award for the most contested matters. It seems all her cases were scheduled for a hearing. She also deserves recognition for her excellent issue spotting, as she identified the potential for asserting an informal

marriage.

Overall, all the students have done an outstanding job with their cases.

"So far, I have had the opportunity to learn how to better conduct myself with my clients. It's been a pleasure to help those who don't have the resources to go and pay for an attorney. My clients have all been so thankful and kind. Each client has expressed how big of an impact us taking their case has had on their lives and have been so respectful and appreciative. I feel that I have gained more practical knowledge on what the actual steps of 'lawyering' are, and I look forward to continuing to learn next semester."

Hagen Gardiner  
Family Law Clinic



Terri Morgeson began her work with the Clinical Programs in the fall of 2007 as a full-time Clinical Fellow for the Civil Clinic, Family Law Clinic and Criminal Defense Clinics. She continued in this position while occasionally teaching a couple of upper level skills classes, negotiations and interviewing and counseling courses.

Terri graduated from Lubbock Christian University in 1994 and received her J.D. from Texas Tech in 2003. Before becoming an instructor at Texas Tech, Terri had a private practice here in Lubbock. She is currently a committee member for State Bar of Texas, Legal Services to the Poor in Civil Matters.

Additionally, Terri was a founding member of the Lubbock Private Defender's Office.

Terri Morgeson served as Director of the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic in addition to continuing as Clinical Fellow for the Civil Practice Clinic from May 2014 until July 2023. Although the learning curve had been steep, she enjoyed the challenge and continued the tireless work of her predecessors. However, when Professor Wendy Ross departed TTU School of Law, Terri Morgeson assumed the role of Director of Family Law Clinic. Family law has always been her passion!



#### Pictured L to R:

Back Row: Breuklyn Nivens, Ashley Trujillo, Fernanda Roman, Vanessa Jones, Izabelle Mendoza  
Front Row: Carlie Jones, Samantha Beirne, Director Terri Morgeson, Harlan Burk, and Hagen Gardiner.

## FROM THE DESK OF PATRICK S. METZE

### DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

Just a short note to let everyone know the students in the Criminal Defense Clinic are, as always, busy representing real people in real cases in real time. This semester the students have handled or are handling 77 cases for 56 different clients. Students handle all phases of representation from initial interview through appearance in Court. The responsibility of representation falls entirely on the clinic students' shoulders under the ever-watchful eyes of the Clinic Director, Professor Metze, and our Senior Lecturer, Dwight McDonald. This semester, of those 77 cases, 29 have been completed with 13 pleas of guilty and 16 dismissals for a 55% dismissal rate. These 77 cases represent 71 misdemeanors and 6 felony charges—a very ambitious docket. Representing clients in the Magistrate Court, two Lubbock County Courts at Law, and in all three criminal District Courts of Lubbock County are: **Sydney Allison, Aiya Almzayen, Mitchell Barry, Kalee Gore, and Katherine Jost.**

Please congratulate them all for their hard work. Space does not allow an individual account of all they have accomplished in 4 months. Suffice it to say, these students are practicing law at the highest level for the benefit of their clients every day. They are learning the real-life lessons of the practice of law and putting their education to great use. All students are members of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association (TCDLA) and the Lubbock Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. Networking with criminal defense lawyers is just one advantage of membership in these organizations. In October, all criminal clinic students attended a two-day seminar in San Antonio on forensic science at the invitation of TCDLA and a grant provided by the Court of Criminal Appeals.

The students are also set to attend the 44th Annual Prairie Dog Lawyer Advanced

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Patrick Metze became a full-time faculty member teaching and directing the Criminal Defense Clinic in 2008. Pat is an experienced criminal defense practitioner in Lubbock who is a Past President and Director of the Lubbock Criminal Defense Lawyers Association and former Board member of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. He is enthusiastic about continuing the development of our Criminal Defense Clinic and providing a quality experiential program for our students. He received a Bachelor of Arts from Texas Tech University and his Doctor of Jurisprudence from The University of Houston. He was admitted to practice in the State of Texas on April 29, 1974, celebrating this year 50 years in the practice of law. Prior to joining the faculty, he was one of only 14 attorneys qualified for appointment as first chair in Capital Murder cases in the 45 counties of the 9<sup>th</sup> Administrative Judicial Region and the only attorney in Lubbock who was qualified and solicited appointments to indigent clients for misdemeanors, juveniles, felonies, death penalty cases, and appeals in all courts.



#### Pictured L to R:

**Standing:** Mitchell Barry, Sydney Allison, Katherine Jost, Aiya Almzayen, Kalee Gore.

**Sitting:** Professor Patrick Metze and Professor Dwight McDonald

## FROM THE DESK OF JOE STEPHENS

### CAPROCK REGIONAL PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE

Jose Covarrubias, Ethan Jimenez, and Victor Lopez – the student attorneys in this year’s Caprock Regional Public Defender Clinic – have been nothing short of brilliant. It is my first semester leading this clinic, and it has been a pleasure to see each of them – in their own way and style – developing (and putting into real-life practice) a set of skills that only come from fearlessly diving into the rugged world of rural criminal defense.

Throughout the semester, each of them has maintained an active caseload of about 20, and the results – across a dozen counties – have been spectacular. We have, as a team, secured the release of 31 different clients from jail and have had 24 cases – misdemeanors and felonies – dismissed or rejected. The statistics are impressive, but it is the caliber of attorney they are becoming that I most want to highlight.

Jose Covarrubias and I went to Muleshoe, TX, one afternoon to represent a juvenile

– 12-years-old – charged with a felony. His older brother had just pled guilty and Jose’s client, though offered the same deal, held firm to his innocence (a tough thing for *any* accused to do). Jose set the case for trial, worked and negotiated the case brilliantly, held firm, and ultimately the felony charge was outright dismissed.

Ethan Jimenez has secured multiple dismissals this semester as well, but one – on a drug case in Brownfield, TX – was handled swiftly (and through the meticulous gathering of mitigation) that allowed his young client to get – and keep – his job. The paths to dismissals are varied, but Ethan’s excellence here lay in his ability to truly *tell* his client’s story, and the result was the right one.

Victor Lopez has brought an incredible sense of detail, preparation, and thoroughness to his work this semester that has led not only to dismissals, but also to the release of a number of people

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After working in public defender offices in rural South Texas and the Hill Country, Joe was hired as Chief Public Defender to create the Concho Valley Public Defender Office. By the time he left, it was the largest rural office in Texas.

Joe has also served on the Board of Directors of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers’ Association. He was also appointed to serve as a Member of the State Bar of Texas Legal Services to the Poor in Criminal Matters Committee, is a mentor in the Future Indigent Defense Leaders of Texas program, and sits on the Oversight Board of two different regional public defender offices across Texas. He is a frequent speaker around Texas on an array of criminal defense matters.

Joe was born in Australia and grew up in the Washington, D.C. area. He was an Ingram Scholar at Vanderbilt University where he was President of the Vanderbilt Prison Project. In 2010, he graduated from the University of Texas School of Law with honors. Joe has also worked for two chairmen across three legislative sessions in Austin, and spent time in private practice in Baltimore, where he worked on appellate and post-conviction matters.



Pictured Top: Jose Covarrubias, Professor Patrick Metze, Professor Dwight McDonald, Professor Joe Stephens, Victor Lopez, and Ethan Jimenez.

## FROM THE DESK OF ALLISON CLAYTON

### DIRECTOR, INNOCENCE CLINIC

The Fall semester at the Innocence Clinic has been nothing short of exhilarating, filled with big wins, tough battles, and a whole lot of heart. As the semester wraps up, I'm thrilled to share what we've been up to, and let me tell you, it's been a season of victories worth celebrating.

First and foremost, over the summer we had a monumental exoneration in a triple capital case. Our client had spent over 25 years wrongfully imprisoned after his wife and their babies tragically died in a house fire while he was at work. Using groundbreaking advances in arson science, we unraveled the faulty evidence that had been used to convict him and proved what we'd known all along—he was innocent. This semester, we put the finishing touches on this victory by getting his records officially expunged. It's hard to put into words what it feels like to watch someone walk free after years of injustice, but let's just say, it's the kind of moment that reminds us all why we chose this path.

Of course, not every battle involves the courtroom. This semester, we faced off with state agencies in a quest for

thousands of pages of records, and let's just say, it was not a swift or painless process. After countless calls, emails, and what I like to call "respectfully persistent nagging," we finally got our hands on the documents. Then came the Herculean task of organizing and reviewing every single page—a painstaking effort that was as tedious as it was rewarding. If nothing else, it's proof that justice isn't just about bold arguments and dramatic courtroom scenes; sometimes, it's about staying the course, one paper cut at a time.

Speaking of getting our hands dirty, our clinic trip this semester was a true throwback to old-fashioned investigative work. Imagine a group of dedicated students trudging through unfamiliar terrain, knocking on doors, and piecing together fragments of long-forgotten stories. It was messy, exhausting, and completely unforgettable. We uncovered new leads, deepened our understanding of the cases we're working on, and came back inspired—albeit with a few muddy shoes.

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Allison Clayton is the adjunct professor of the Innocence Clinic and also runs a local law practice. She is Deputy Director of the Innocence Project of Texas, Director of the Lubbock Criminal Defense Lawyers Association, and an active member of the Amicus Committee of the Texas Criminal Defense Lawyers Association. Allison graduated from TTU magna cum laude with honors in 2004 and TTU School of Law summa cum laude in 2007. Upon graduation from law school, she served as a clerk on the Second Court of Appeals for one year before becoming a staff attorney for the Federal District Court for the Northern District of Texas. Allison left the federal court in 2013 and started her own law practice focusing on appellate and post-conviction criminal defense litigation, which is ironic considering the fact she started law school fully intending to never practice a day of criminal defense in her life.

Dealing primarily with felony convictions, Allison has represented clients in appellate and post-conviction matters around the state and nation. She currently has cases pending in the United States Supreme Court, Fifth Circuit, Federal District Court for the Northern District of Texas, Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, and multiple Texas courts of appeals.



Pictured L to R:

Left to Right  
Professor Patrick Metzger,  
Patrick Seger, Eva Lynch, and  
Professor Allison Clayton.

Sitting Left to Right:  
Alexandra Blair, Robin  
Heinz, and Aimee Vasquez.

## FROM THE DESK OF MIRANDA M. RHYNE

### DIRECTOR, LOW-INCOME TAXPAYER CLINIC

The Tax Clinic is proud to announce the conclusion of a successful Fall 2024 semester. We had ten student attorneys qualified to practice before the IRS: Jacie Birkenfeld, Jacob Durland, James Holdridge, Kasha Ross, Kolton Looka, Meagan Watson, Morgan Hammel, Priyanka Pudasaini, Ryleigh Waldo, and Savannah Monterrey. Though often overlooked, tax representation has a profound impact on the lives of individuals and families in our community. Our clinic helps clients resolve tax disputes by reducing debt and securing refunds, in both administrative and judicial forums. This semester alone, we secured over \$61,000 in refunds for our clients and eliminated over \$41,000 in tax debt!

Participation in the Tax Clinic offers students interested in transactional and administrative law a unique opportunity to develop essential skills transferrable to any practice area. Students learned that effective representation often requires a holistic approach, necessitating solutions that extend beyond traditional legal remedies that are tailored to each client's

unique needs. Throughout the semester, they gained practical experience in legal research and writing, along with client interviewing, counseling, and communication, honing their problem-solving, advocacy, and negotiation skills.

Our student attorneys learned to navigate the complex and unpredictable nature of tax practice. They managed demanding caseloads, each representing 8-10 clients at any given time, often juggling competing deadlines and complex legal issues—including dependent-related or self-employment audits, offers in compromise, identity theft, and innocent spouse relief. Students also dealt with slow responses, tight deadlines, and the unique challenges of working with government agencies, developing their resilience, patience, and adaptability.

The Tax Clinic is excited to continue its important work in Spring 2025. We remain committed to providing high-quality legal representation to those who need it most, while offering our student attorneys a rewarding educational experience.



Miranda M. Rhyne is a Clinical Instructor and the Director of the Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic. She is a member of the State Bar of Texas and is also admitted to practice in United States Tax Court. Miranda graduated from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. After earning her J.D. from the University of Miami School of Law, she made her way to Texas and obtained an L.L.M. in Taxation from SMU Dedman School of Law.

As a law student, Miranda served on the International and Comparative Law Review as both an Articles and Comments Editor and Executive Editor. Prior to entering legal education, she worked as a tax attorney for a non-profit organization representing taxpayers before the IRS in controversy resolution. In doing so, she saved clients hundreds of thousands of dollars through debt reduction or elimination and assisted in securing delayed or denied refunds. During her time in the public sector, Miranda discovered her passion for advocacy and has dedicated her career to helping others. She has found community engagement and education to be one of the most rewarding aspects of her practice. Miranda has presented on various tax topics to a wide variety of audiences and has a knack for engaging non-tax legal professionals and the lay person alike.



#### Pictured L to R:

Meagan Watson, Savannah Monterrey, Jacie Henefey, James Holdridge, Jake Durland, Morgan Hammel.

#### Front Row L to R:

Kaylee Jackson, Priyanka Pudasaini, Professor Miranda Rhyne, Kolton Looka, Ryleigh Waldo, and Kasha Ross.

## FROM THE DESK OF LARRY SPAIN AND GENE VALENTINI

### ADVANCED ADR CLINIC

(Continued from page 3)

59% of the disputes resulted in an agreement, 29% resulted in an impasse, and 12% were continued for an additional mediation session. Mediations were conducted with parties participating either in-person, by telephone, or via Zoom.

In addition to the mediation of actual disputes, every student videotaped an

introductory statement for a simulated mediation for individual critique and prepared reflection papers on mediations that they participated in. We enjoyed working with this group of enthusiastic students in developing their mediation skills which will prepare them well for their future professional role either serving as mediator or as an attorney representing clients in mediation.

## FROM THE DESK OF PATRICK METZE

### DIRECTOR, CRIMINAL DEFENSE CLINIC

(Continued from page 5)

Criminal Law Seminar next semester at the Law School, all free of charge. During the course of each semester, each student will spend a minimum of 200 hours representing their clients in addition to a two-hour seminar support course held once a week. This equates to a total time investment during each semester of a minimum of 1600 hours of pro

bono representation for the clinic clients. The Criminal Defense Clinic is proud to represent the indigent citizens of the South Plains by court appointment only and plays its part in the Law School's commitment to providing quality, ethical representation for the poor while educating each student of the importance of such work.

## FROM THE DESK OF ALLISON CLAYTON

### DIRECTOR, INNOCENCE CLINIC

(Continued from page 7)

DNA also played a starring role in our work this semester. In one case, we coordinated with a Conviction Integrity Unit and a state-of-the-art DNA lab for extensive testing that could make or break the case. In another, we launched litigation for post-conviction DNA testing—and won. These scientific breakthroughs are changing the game, and it's thrilling to see the impact they have, not just on individual cases, but on the broader fight for justice.

Meanwhile, we've also been working closely with recanting witnesses in another case, helping people come forward to correct the record and set the truth free. It's not easy for someone to admit they got it wrong, but when they do, it's a powerful moment—and one

we're proud to facilitate.

This semester has been a masterclass in perseverance, teamwork, and the relentless pursuit of justice. It's been messy, thrilling, and sometimes downright exhausting, but through it all, we've been reminded why this work matters. Every exoneration, every hard-won record, every step closer to the truth—it all adds up to lives changed and futures rebuilt.

To our students, alumni, and supporters: Thank you for being part of this journey. Your belief in what we do fuels everything we accomplish. Here's to a semester of victories, lessons, and maybe just a little less mud next time.

## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

**Sarah Kannel** (May '24 – Caprock Clinic) - is an Associate with Hurley, Guinn, Singh, and VonGonten in Lubbock Texas.

**Joseph Patrick Gonzales** (May '24– Innocence Clinic) is an Associate Attorney at Husch Blackwell LLP, in Houston, Texas. He was hired into their mass torts and products liability practice group. He works mostly on products liability and commercial litigation cases and is loving it!

**Curtis Phelps** (May'23– Family Law & Housing Clinic) - currently working as a Staff Attorney at Legal Aid Society of Lubbock.

**Shelbi Stogdill** (May'24 – Clinic) – is working in Dallas for the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office.

**Anne Scott Greenberg** (May'24 –Caprock Clinic) – is an Associate with Hurley, Guinn, Singh & VonGonten, specializing in criminal defense.

**Victoria Gallegos** (May '24 – Criminal Defense Clinic) - is working as a Defense Attorney in the Lubbock Federal Public Defender's Office.

**Abby Keese** (May '24– Advanced ADR Clinic, and Capital Punishment Clinic) - is an associate with Dunham Law Firm in Ft. Worth, TX . She is loving her position working in criminal defense. Her office covers Tarrant, Parker, Johnson, Hood, and Palo Pinto counties.

## FROM THE DESK OF JOE STEPHENS CAPROCK REGIONAL PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICE

(continued from page 6)

from custody (including one charged with a high-level felony). In more than one instance, he has spotted flaws in charging instruments, found statutory defenses, and leveraged his researching skill to convince a prosecutor to let a case go.

Rural indigent criminal defense is exceptionally

challenging work. The hours are long, the driving miles are many, and the small-town courtroom becomes the most treasured classroom. But it is in these spaces – quiet and anonymous – where Jose, Ethan, and Victor are taking what they know and putting it into practice, and that's a delight to see.

## CCAV SEEKS VOLUNTEERS FOR UPCOMING TAX SEASON

The *Coalition of Community Assistance Volunteers* continues to seek volunteers to assist with the tax season around the corner. An information session was held on November 11th and Elma Moreno supplied us with information on the how to become a volunteer for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program.

**It's not too late to sign up to volunteer!** The *Coalition of Community Assistance Volunteers* asks that you consider volunteering your time and talents to prepare and e-file income tax returns FREE for low income taxpayers in our community. Tech Law students have played an important role in the community by serving as volunteers for the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance program for over 30 years. During the 2024 filing season, volunteers prepared a total of 2100 tax returns. The average gross income of the taxpayers was \$1911/month or \$22,934.17 annually. It is estimated that CCAV saved income-eligible taxpayers from paying \$150/each in unnecessary tax preparation



and e-filing fees. This resulted in refunds totaling more than \$3.5 million in refunds into the local economy. Volunteers prepare basic individual income tax returns on an easy-to-use computer software program and enjoy protections under state and federal Volunteer Protection Acts. Hours also qualify for law-related pro bono hours to meet the graduation public service requirement.

CCAV asks that law students **train and test at the Advanced Level**. Training and testing must be done on-line.

We hope you'll choose to participate with us during the upcoming tax season which runs from January 29th thru April 15th by volunteering 2-4 hours of your time per week. Not too late to volunteer if you are interested, please feel free to contact me at [melissa.vasquez@ttu.edu](mailto:melissa.vasquez@ttu.edu) if you have any questions or if you would like to pick up a packet. You can find more information at <https://freetaxlubbock.org>

## THANKS TO CLINICAL PROGRAM FACULTY AND STUDENTS SUPPORTING PRO BONO

The Law School faculty traditionally co-sponsors Pro Bono Clinics held during the months of September and February in association with Legal Aid of NorthWest Texas. Thanks to the following faculty who

participated in these clinics during the month of September: **Jessica Aycock; Gerry Beyer; Dwight McDonald; Terri Morgeson; Larry Spain, Joe Stephens; and Ken Williams.**

## WORDS FROM OUR STUDENTS



"My experience thusfar as a member of the family law clinic has been extremely beneficial to my growth as an advocate. As a future family law attorney, it is crucial that I gain experience running my own cases during my final year of law school. Learning the intricacies of family law under the tutelage of Terri Morgeson has undoubtedly prepared me for my upcoming career. Handing cases

from start to finish with an appropriate amount of oversight has enabled me to think and act like an attorney and gain real-world experience. The hours I have worked as a member of the clinic will have me ready to hit the ground running post-bar. While law students don't always make the best decisions with their time, deciding to apply to the family law clinic was the best decision I've made at TTU Law. "

-Harlan Burk  
Family Law Clinic

"The clinic experience has given me a better perspective on what people in my community are experiencing, and how my small participation in pro-bono clinics can make a difference in their lives. There are so many people in Lubbock or surrounding areas who are one bad break from upending their lives, so paying for legal representation is basically out of the question. My experience has taught me to give more grace and patience to people in general, because we are not all starting from the same place. Some of our clients are barely keeping the lights on or kids fed, so helping take care of a legal matter can really help their stress levels and help them move forward with what is most important. I'm thankful we can provide a service to people who would likely not receive help otherwise. Clinic has been one of the most valuable experiences during law school and I'm always encouraging 1L and 2L students to start thinking about applying to clinic. "

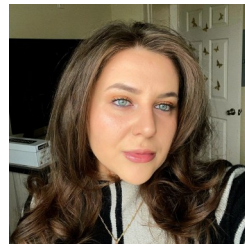
-Abby Dye  
Civil Practice Clinic

"Working in the criminal defense clinic has been one of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my law school journey. Visiting clients weekly has allowed me to build relationships with the clients and become deeply familiar with their cases. Advocating for the best possible outcomes has not only been fulfilling but has also boosted my confidence as a

future attorney. This semester, I've gained valuable experience by negotiating with prosecutors, filing motions, appearing in court, and conducting client interviews, among many other tasks."

-Mitchell Barry  
Criminal Defense Clinic

"The Criminal Defense Clinic has provided an invaluable opportunity to immerse myself in the practice of law while still in law school. Through hands-on experience, I've gained



critical insights and developed skills that will serve me throughout my legal career. The clinic has not only allowed me to learn from my mistakes, but it has also taught me how to navigate challenging interactions with colleagues and clients. These experiences have been instrumental in preparing me for the complexities of real-world legal practice."

-Aiya Almzayen  
Criminal Defense Clinic

My experience with the civil clinic has been phenomenal. I've been able to gain real life experience by helping real people solve their legal problems. While regular law school classes do a great job teaching the principles and theories of the law, I'm so grateful to be in the clinic where I can learn the practical step-by-step practice of law as well.

-Chase Chamberlain  
Civil Clinic

My experience with the Family Law clinic thus far has been very fulfilling. It has been very rewarding to know that I am helping people as a qualified representative. Additionally, I've been able to learn a lot of things that you do not get to learn through case law and course work, which has diminished the stress I had of going into the real world. I still have a lot of things to learn, and I look forward to continuing to learn next semester. "

-Fernanda Roman  
Family Law Clinic



CLINICAL PROGRAMS MANDATORY INFORMATION SESSION  
FOR 2025-2026 STUDENT SELECTION PROCESS SCHEDULED



TEXAS TECH UNIVERSITY  
School of Law  
Clinical Programs

ATTENTION  
2L AND 1L  
STUDENTS!

COME LISTEN TO  
CLINIC DIRECTORS  
DISCUSS THE CLINICAL  
COURSE OFFERINGS &  
HOW YOU CAN START  
WORKING WITH  
CLIENTS & ACTUAL  
LEGAL CASES IN YOUR  
3L YEAR.

*Clinical Programs Mandatory*

# INFORMATION SESSION



FOR 2025-2026 STUDENT SELECTION  
TUESDAY JANUARY 28TH - NOON  
LANIER AUDITORIUM- LUNCH PROVIDED

CLICK FOR CLINIC  
INFORMATION

*More information will be provided during the information session by all clinic directors.  
If you are currently a 2L student you will be able to apply to participate to any of the clinics. If you are  
currently a 1L student, you will only be able to apply to the Advanced ADR Clinic.*

*Selection process for Students Interested in Participating in the Clinical Programs during the 2025-2026 academic year  
will begin in late January! Mandatory Information Session is scheduled for January 28th 2025 in Lanier Auditorium.*

*Watch for announcements coming in January and visit the clinic website at  
<http://www.law.ttu.edu/acp/programs/clinical/> for more information!*

## SNAPSHOT CORNER



## CLINIC DIRECTORS:

**Larry R. Spain**

Director of Clinical Programs  
Civil Practice Clinic  
Advanced ADR Clinic

**Terri Morgeson**

Family Law Clinic

**Miranda Rhyne**

Low-Income Taxpayer Clinic

**Patrick S. Metze**

Criminal Defense Clinic  
Capital Punishment Clinic  
Caprock Regional Public  
Defender Clinic  
Innocence Clinic

## INSTRUCTORS:

**Allison Clayton**

Innocence Clinic

**Dwight McDonald**

Criminal Defense Clinics

**Gene Valentini**

Adjunct Professor  
Advanced ADR Clinic

**Joe Stephens**

Chief Public Defender  
Caprock Regional Public  
Defender Office

ADMINISTRATIVE  
STAFF:**Melissa Vasquez**

Unit Manager for Clinical  
Programs

**Nancy Mojica**

Senior Business Assistant

**Sally Moreno**

Senior Business Assistant for  
CRPDO



FROM THE  
*CLINICAL PROGRAMS*  
*FACULTY AND STAFF*



CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL WHO PASSED THE BAR EXAM!  
WE ARE TECHLAW PROUD!  
CONGRATULATIONS DECEMBER GRADUATES!!



SEARCH TTU SCHOOL OF  
LAW CLINICAL PROGRAMS

**CLINIC NEWS**

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