

## Profiles of the 2001 Winners of the WLAM Foundation Outstanding Woman Law Student Award

### **Natalie Alane, Thomas M. Cooley Law School**



Ms. Alane will graduate with her JD degree from Cooley in May, 2002, and has already received several academic honors and a place on the Dean's List. Her achievements follow a distinguished undergraduate career, including leadership positions in student government groups and a master of arts in rural sociology from the University of Kentucky. While in Lexington, she volunteered in the Lexington Spouse Abuse Center, providing educational and social programs for children, as well as at Lexington Planned Parenthood, where she trained as a patient counselor. Her volunteerism is both international and long-standing. With experience in the Kentucky programs and a Florida adult literacy program between 1989 and 1994, Ms. Alane then served over two years in the Peace Corps. She lived in Zambia, Africa, working on health programs and helping women to form a Women's Club which taught its members small business expertise and financial independence. The Women's Club became a model emulated by women in other villages. Ms. Alane belongs to Cooley's Women's Law Alliance, and is most proud of her "experience of an expansive array of human diversity."

### **Sheila C. Cummings, Wayne State University Law School**



Ms. Cummings is an Assistant Editor of Wayne's Journal of Law in Society, and expects her Juris Doctor degree in May, 2002. A graduate of Albion College, where she majored in English and Women's Studies, she studied in Greece in 1993. After her graduation in 1995, she served as a patient advocate and public relations director at Northland Family Planning, and a supervisor at Choice Medical Group in California. After starting law school, she worked as a summer intern for The Center for Reproductive Law & Policy in Washington, DC, where she analyzed the constitutionality of pending abortion legislation, at both federal and state levels. She presently interns in the Wayne County Prosecutor Office's Child and Family Abuse Bureau, where she assists trial prosecutors and performs legal research and writing. Ms. Cummings says of her work there that "confronting and breaking the silence of family violence is [an] issue that is central to the advancement of women in our society."

### **Joy E. Hayes, Wayne State University Law School**



Ms. Hayes graduated summa cum laude with a major in Biological Sciences from Wayne State University before



continuing her education at Wayne's Law School. Her experiences before law school include work as a research assistant in molecular biology, food inspector for the Michigan Department of Agriculture, and environmental engineering technician. She also worked as a teacher at the Detroit Academy of Arts and Sciences. Expecting her law degree in May of 2002, Ms. Hayes has received the Wade McCree scholarship, won the State Bar of Michigan Negligence Council's Essay Contest, and clerked for the law firm of Clark Hill last summer. She serves on the Executive Board of the WSU Black Law Students Association, and mentors two women first-year law students. As a single parent of a fourth-grade honor student, she has served on school committees. With plans to have her own business, Ms. Hayes expresses gratitude for having "so many female trailblazers who reassure me that all is possible," and hopes that she too "will become an example and inspiration for another."

### **Cynthia L. Jaeger, Michigan State University Detroit College of Law**



Ms. Jaeger has an extensive background in child advocacy and hopes to continue her work in the area following her graduation from law school in 2003. As she obtained her bachelor's degree from MSU in psychology and criminal justice, Ms. Jaeger volunteered as an American Red Cross caseworker, girls softball coach, and classroom aide at Maxey Boys Training School. She worked as a child care worker at St. Vincent's Home for Children and most recently, as a Foster Care Worker for Child & Family Services. In both positions, she learned to advocate for children, monitoring placements, and providing structure and support. While working at Child & Family Services, she was elected a union representative and steward. As a first-year law student, Ms. Jaeger is a member of the Women's Law Caucus. She hopes to be able to continue "advocating for the children that do not always have a voice in the system."

### **Elizabeth Kluck, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law**



Ms. Kluck obtained her bachelor's degree in criminal justice, cum laude, from the University of Detroit Mercy, in 1997. She will graduate from UDM School of Law in May of 2001, after attending the school's London Law Programme and receiving several awards as a student. She has been employed as a law clerk for Prechter Holdings, Inc., and has served as a summer intern at the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. Ms. Kluck is Present of the law school's Domestic Violence Society, and volunteers at the Sts. Peter and Paul Warming Center next door. She has coached volleyball, basketball and summer league baseball at Our Lady of Grace School, and volunteered at Wayne County Neighborhood Legal Services'

Children's Law Center. In that position, she researched and prepared briefs, performed intake, and served as a children's advocate. Ms. Kluck hopes to work as a prosecutor upon her graduation.

### **Neha Lall, University of Michigan Law School**

Neha Lall will obtain her degree from the University of Michigan Law School in December, 2002, having received her BA from U of M in 1999, in history and political science, with highest honors in history. She received numerous academic honors, including the Branstrom Freshman Prize, Sophomore Honors Award, and the James A. Knight Scholarship in History. The thesis which led to the Knight Scholarship was a study of women and violence during the 1947 partition of India. Ms. Lall has discovered striking similarities in the treatment of women then and now, as she worked as a legal advocate for Ann Arbor's Domestic Violence Project/ SAFE House. She provided support, counseling, information and advocacy to victims of domestic violence, and has trained staff and new volunteers there. Ms. Lall also volunteers as a student attorney with the Family Law Project, helping domestic violence survivors obtain and enforce personal protection orders. As a law student, she is a member of the Women's Law Students Association, the Asian Pacific American Law Students Association, the Criminal Law Society, Public Interest Group and the Asylum and Refugee Law Project. From her experience working with domestic violence survivors, and studying the treatment of women in India, Ms. Lall has learned that "society cannot hide from the sides of reality that [it does] not want to confront."



### **Tara K. McGrath, University of Michigan Law School**

Ms. McGrath is a third-year student who will graduate this May, having served in several leadership positions during her educational career. While in law school, she worked as an Instructor for the undergraduate Women and the Law course at U of M, teaching undergraduates on a wide variety of women's issues. She has also served as Treasurer of the Law School Student Senate and an officer in the Women Law Students Association, which she most recently served as Fundraising Director. Ms. McGrath will practice law as a Judge Advocate General after graduation, one of approximately 500 active duty women Marine Officers, recently accepting a commission as Second Lieutenant. She obtained her bachelor's degree, cum laude in political science, from Boston College, where she helped to form a Sexual Assault Network which remains active. Between college and law school, Ms. McGrath worked as a Victim Witness Advocate in Massachusetts, assisting victims of violent crimes, and working



at a policy level with police, prosecutors and legislators. Of her decision to become a Marine officer, she has observed that it provides an opportunity to “break the mold” as a woman.

### **Margaret A. Olesnavage, Thomas M. Cooley Law School**



Ms. Olesnavage will receive her JD degree in May, 2001 from Cooley, where she has maintained a place on the Dean’s List, and has a Bachelor in Philosophy from Wayne State University and a Masters in Social Work from Michigan State University. She commuted 200 miles to Cooley Law School from her home in Ogemaw County, where she was employed full time as a Juvenile Officer in the Family Division of the Ogemaw County Circuit Court. In that position she administered youth programs, made program recommendations for individual adjudicated youths, and obtained over \$750,000 in grant money for families and youths. The Ogemaw County Board of Commissioners issued a Resolution last September, honoring Ms. Olesnavage’s fourteen years of service. She currently serves as a consultant for the Bureau of Juvenile Justice in Northern Michigan, regarding programs for neglected, abused and delinquent youths. Ms. Olesnavage and her husband, John, adopted and raised five children who were removed from neglected and abused homes, and were considered “hard to place.” She describes her parenting experience, as well as her work and educational background, as motivations for her desire to “make a difference for families in Michigan.”

### **Rebecca Kelley Oster, Howard & Howard Awardee at the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law**



Ms. Oster will graduate from UDM in May of 2001, having pursued her degree while employed as a Victim’s Rights Advocate at the Macomb County Prosecutor’s Office. Her commitment to advocacy on women’s issues, primarily domestic violence and sexual assault, is long-standing. While attending Michigan State University, she helped to organize “Take Back the Night” marches and worked with abused and neglected children at the Macomb County Youth Home. Post-graduation, Ms. Oster volunteered for Turning Point, a domestic violence shelter, and worked on other “Take Back the Night” marches and rallies. She continues her volunteer activity with Turning Point as a crisis intervention counselor, and first response volunteer, responding directly to the needs of sexual assault and domestic violence victims. Her employment further demonstrates her commitment, as she not only provides support services to victims, but also has organized and trained others in the field. Ms. Oster has helped to create a multi-county forum for others employed in women’s services, helped to create an art forum for victims, and proposed statutory changes to the state’s criminal sexual conduct statute. Ms. Oster hopes to prosecute sexual assault

and domestic violence cases following her graduation.

**Tricia A. Ronat, Michigan State University Detroit College of Law**



Ms. Ronat is in her second year of pursuing a dual degree, attending both MSU/DCL and the Eli Broad Graduate School of Management at Michigan State University. As a graduate assistant in the Eli Broad School, she has been named the best teaching assistant of the year. She brings to her educational activities a wide range of experience in the United States Air Force, in which she served from 1993 to 1997, following her graduation from Purdue University. Ms. Ronat led several software projects for the USAF, and was later employed by General Motors and GMAC. She is active in the Junior League of Lansing, where she recently helped to coordinate a fundraiser for Ballentine Stepping Stones. She also serves on the grant development board for Gilda's Club of Greater Lansing, a non-profit organization devoted to providing support to cancer patients and their families.