

Profiles of the 2005 Winners of the WLAM Foundation Outstanding Woman Law Student Award

Patricia Barnes, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, Michigan State University College of Law.



Ms. Barnes's love for the law began to flourish when she realized, while volunteering at a domestic violence shelter, that legal services were not readily available to the women who used shelter services. It was at that point she realized she could best help women by becoming a lawyer. In law school she is President of the Family Law Society, an Editor for the Journal of Gender Law and a Women's Law Caucus member. Ms. Barnes has undergone extensive training in domestic violence issues and uses those skills in each of her three volunteer positions: (1) as child advocate in a neglect case, (2) working for the 30th Circuit Court in the Personal Protection Office, and (3) as a Court Watch volunteer through End Violent Encounters and Safe Place.

Alethia Battles, Howard & Howard Awardee, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.



Ms. Battles worked full-time to put herself through undergraduate and master's studies, culminating in a Masters Degree in Social Work from the University of Michigan. She continues to work as a Clinical Social Worker while attending law school and raising her two children. She has distinguished herself in law school by being a junior member of the Law Review, a quarterfinalist in the Moot Court competition, being awarded the Book Award in Applied Legal Theory and Analysis and externing for Michigan Supreme Court Justice Marilyn Kelly.

Elizabeth Grace Cote, Ford Scholarship Awardee, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.



Ms. Cote believes that every person can and should make a difference and demonstrates this commitment in her work with asylum seekers at Freedom House and as volunteer coordinator, and weekly volunteer, for a local warming shelter. Ms. Cote has sat as first chair for 11 asylum trials and her clients have been granted asylum in 8 of those cases. She is in her third year of law school and has participated in numerous activities and received various awards for her service and commitment to justice.

Mahbuba Fidda, Ford Motor Company Fund Awardee, Michigan State University College of Law.



Ms. Fidda is a LLM candidate, having earned her law degree after one year of study in her native Afghanistan and 5 years of study in the Soviet Union. Having lost her husband when the Fundamentalists captured the University where they worked, she escaped with her two children, living in Moscow and Yugoslavia before immigrating to the US. Fluent in five languages Ms. Fidda uses her considerable skills working with refugee services and serving on the Ingham County Community Health Board, among many other activities.

Jenna Goldenberg, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, University of Michigan Law School.



Ms. Goldberg demonstrates her dedication to furthering the rights of women and children through her work and volunteer efforts on and off of campus. As the Bergstrom Child Welfare Law Fellow, Ms. Goldberg spent the summer of 2004 directly representing child clients throughout their experiences within the foster care system. At the Law School, Ms. Goldberg is a Dean-appointed member of the Campbell Moot Court Executive Board, a Member of the Journal of Gender and the Law and a Chair of the Political Action Committee for the Women Law Students Association and Executive Board Member of that organization. Outside of school she volunteers for the Wolverine Street Law program and Safe House.

Robbin Pott Gonzalez, Ford Motor Company Fund Awardee, University of Michigan Law School.



Ms. Gonzalez's commitment to children and their welfare is evident in her choices of classes, clinical experiences and volunteer efforts. If pursuing a joint degree in both law and public policy is not enough of a challenge, Ms. Gonzalez is also an articles editor for the Journal of Gender and Law, the 2003 Henry Bergstrom Child Welfare Fellow and a 2004 Public Service Fellow. She is a Board Member of Growing Hope, worked at Peace Center as an intern and, two years after the internship ended, continues her efforts there on a volunteer basis.

Jennifer Goulah, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.



After a successful career in Human Resources, Ms. Goulah returned to school to pursue her law degree after the close of business where she had been Director of Employee Relations. Working during the day and attending evening classes, she is currently number one in her class. Ms. Goulah is on Law Review, was awarded the Book Award in Contracts and received two scholarships in the 2004-2005 school year. She works in a law firm that specializes in elder law.

Linda Kellum, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, Thomas M. Cooley Law School.

Ms. Kellum, a Dean's list scholar in April and August 2004, spends considerable time not only on her studies but also in the community. She volunteers with the Kalamazoo County Bar Association in a program that provides pro bono legal advice and assistance to low income individuals. She has worked in the public sector as a paralegal for Western Michigan Legal Services and Legal Services of South-Central Michigan. She also worked as a Civil Rights Investigator for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights in Kalamazoo.

Cristy N. Oakes, Ford Motor Company Fund Awardee, Thomas M. Cooley Law School.



Ms. Oakes used her interest in rodeo events, specifically team roping, a rodeo event that is predominately male, to mount a challenge to stereotypes about women and their abilities. Being a positive role model for other women is something that is particularly gratifying to her. Prior to law school she taught middle school in Ohio. In addition to attending law school, Ms. Oakes serves as associate editor of her school's Journal of Practical and Clinical law and writes articles about women's issues for the Black Law Students Association News Magazine.

Susan Phillips, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, Thomas M. Cooley Law School.



Ms. Phillips, who holds a Masters of Science Degree in Mechanical Engineering, has worked in various engineering capacities for over 19 years and is attending law school while continuing her employment at the GM Chassis Center. She and her husband George are raising eight children and devote considerable time to charitable work for organizations that advance the rights of women and children.

Megan Reynolds, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, Michigan State University College of Law.



Ms. Reynolds, who at age 19 became the youngest certified midwife in the United States, credits her work at a maternal-child health clinic as her training ground for a life long commitment to social justice work. Working at the clinic, which offered quality, affordable prenatal and birth care by midwives to poor immigrant women, her eyes were opened to the challenges faced by poor immigrant women and children. This work propelled her to research and project positions with organizations dedicated to bettering the lives of poor women and children including the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Ms. Reynolds is a member of the Law Review, maintains a merit scholarship and was a summer associate with Farmworker Legal Services of Michigan.

Marquita Sylvia, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, Wayne State University Law School.



Ms. Sylvia came to law school after successful careers in both the profit and non profit worlds, having been the manager of operations for Subway Inc, a company she helped form to purchase and promote Subway franchises, an evaluator for the United States General Accounting Office and a division manager for the Boston Globe. She has continued to excel in law school and is an elected representative of the Student Board of Governors, Vice President of the Black Law Students Association and a member of the Trial Advocacy Program.

Amanda Szukala, Ford Motor Company Fund Awardee, Wayne State University Law School.



Ms. Szukala, a second year law student and Assistant Editor for the Law Review, has contributed enormously to her law school by organizing the first annual law school gala, volunteering as an assistant in the Admissions Office and actively participating in the Women's Law Caucus. She interned in Wayne County's Child and Family Abuse Unit, finding great satisfaction in writing sentencing memos in support of severe sentences in domestic violence cases. Ms. Szukala is incoming Managing Editor for the Wayne Law Review and an intern to federal district Judge Nancy G. Edmunds.

Rebecca Torres, Women Lawyers Association of Michigan Foundation Awardee, University of Michigan Law School.



As the Director of Human Resources and Curriculum Development at a consulting firm, Ms. Torres, while enduring the hostility and discriminatory beliefs of her boss, did not let his beliefs stop her from hiring and training many qualified minority individuals whom she believed had much to offer. This fight against discrimination led her to law school, where she is an Associate Editor for the Law Review, a Senior Judge for the Legal Practice Program and Vice Chair of the Latino Law Students Association. Ms. Torres split her 2004 summer work between the Mexican American Legal Defense Fund and a large firm where she, pro bono, prepared documents for and represented a client in adoption proceedings.