

Profiles of 1998 Winners of the WLAM Foundation Outstanding Woman Law Student Award

Stacy Combs

Detroit College of Law at MSU

Ms. Combs's interest in women's issues began during her undergraduate years at Michigan State University, where she participated in the Community Advocacy Project, helping victims of domestic violence to use community resources to receive food, clothes, furniture counseling and employment. Once in law school, she served as an intern at the Bay County Prosecutor's Office, and recently completed an externship for the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office in the Child and Family Abuse Division. Working with victims of domestic violence and stalking, she prosecutes personal protection order violation. Ms. Combs also is the law clerk for the State Bar of Michigan's Domestic Violence Committee. She recently started work in the Attorney General's Office, assisting attorneys who handle appeals from child abuse and termination of parental rights. She hopes to specialize in women and children's issues during a career in prosecution following her May, 1998, graduation.

Sue Ellen Fabian

Wayne State University Law School

Ms. Fabian's interests and accomplishments focus primarily on elder law, drawing on her master's degree in guidance and counseling, and self-employment as a geriatric care manager. She assists families in crisis to develop care plans for suddenly infirm elders, educates the public on the geriatric care management profession, and plans rehabilitative care while also serving as the sole caregiver for her mother, a stroke patient. She developed a survey and coordinated volunteers in a federally-funded research project studying elderly malnutrition in Wayne County; the research resulted in the nation's first supplemental food program for the elderly poor. She has comprehensive patient advocacy skills and knowledge of community assistance programs. Ms. Fabian is currently clerking for an attorney handling discrimination and personal injury cases, and expects to graduate in May of 1999.

Allison Folmar

Cooley Law School

Ms. Folmar is attending law school while working as a probation agent in the Michigan Department of Corrections, where she started as a corrections officer in 1988. As a corrections officer, she was selected to train other officers in sexual harrasment, communications with prisoners, and hostage negotiations; her success in that role led the Department to use it as a training model. While a probation officer, she was selected by co-workers to lead a Diversity Team charged with addressing employee conflict resolution, planning for cultural and gender-based diversity in hiring practices for the Department. As a law student, Ms. Folmar has shared her work experience with incoming women law students and state employees, encouraging all to achieve their highest potential. Her community service includes serving as a mentor to teenaged girls in a foster care program, an instructor of young girls on self-esteem and etiquette, and instructor of domestic violence victims on the personal protection order process.

Michelle D. Johnson

University of Detroit Mercy Law School

Ms. Johnson's commitment to community service is longstanding, demonstrated during undergraduate years when she counseled elementary school children who were the product of abusive or otherwise dysfunctional homes, and sponsored a workshop series for women's groups on abstinence and prevention of the spread of venereal diseases, in response to the growing numbers of women infected by the HIV virus. She developed a "walk-a-thon" sponsored by her sorority which raised money for the Rwandan fund for women and children. As a law student, her interest in working for women and minorities continued as she served as President of the Black Law Students Association. While serving in that capacity, Ms. Johnson has made a special effort to ensure that presentations feature women, where they previously had been men. She explains that her sense of commitment "stems from a recognition of a responsibility to help the daughters and grand-daughters of those who have helped me to develop both socially and intellectually."

Katherine R. Weatherly

University of Michigan Law School

Ms. Weatherly is a second-year student at the law school who was awarded a graduate student instructor position to teach an undergraduate class on Women and the law. With two other graduate students, she lectures on women and work, child custody and abortion rights to a class of one hundred students. As a woman of Native American descent, Ms. Weatherly co-founded the law school's Native American Law Students Association, providing a forum for Native issues and concerns, and serving as a recruitment incentive for prospective Native American students. She received a Kellogg Foundation Child Welfare law Fellowship last summer which allowed her to work on the Yakama Indian reservation in Washington state, representing children in the tribal court system and making recommendations to the court based on her assessment of each child's best interest. This challenging work with children, some of whom suffered from fetal alcohol syndrome or extreme poverty, was both difficult and rewarding, according to Ms. Weatherly.