

## Profiles of the 2002 Winners of the WLAM Foundation Outstanding Woman Law Student Award

### Joanne M. Bridgford, Michigan State University Detroit College of Law



Ms. Bridgford will graduate in December, 2002, after attending law school as an evening student and working full-time as the Disability Management Coordinator for the Michigan Department of Corrections. A fifteen-year employee of the MDOC, she has also worked as an assistant equal employment opportunity officer, and currently serves as a diversity facilitator. As a law student, she participated in the Chance at Childhood Program and completed an externship in the Office of Children's Ombusman, investigating complaints regarding children involved in Michigan's foster care system. A wife and mother of three girls, Ms. Bridgford is active in her church, volunteers at the Sparrow Hospital Children's Critical Care Unit, and hopes to serve as a role model for her children.

### Abby Huntington Cooper, Wayne State University Law School



Ms. Cooper will graduate in May, 2003 and is a Dean's Scholar at Wayne. While she has interned with the Michigan Supreme Court and clerked with the City of Detroit Law Department, her leadership on women's issue was demonstrated by one year of service as an AmeriCorps VISTA volunteer placed at a legal service agency in Chicago. As paralegal for their Children's SSI Pro Bono Project, Ms. Cooper developed appeals of disability benefit cessation on behalf of low-income children. She wrote mentoring articles for new volunteers, and helped to train them. With the benefit of her law degree, Ms. Cooper hopes to work with low-income residents of Detroit on economic empowerment projects, including revitalization of currently dilapidated or unused properties.

### Shanta Driver, Wayne State University Law School



Ms. Driver will receive her JD in May, 2002, and has received many scholarships and awards while at Wayne. She has worked as a health unit coordinator and shop steward at Harper Hospital for twenty-three years, assisting many co-workers (mainly women) with realizing their workplace rights. In fall of 1997, she initiated a student intervention into the University of Michigan law school affirmative action case, founding the group, United for Equality and Affirmative Action, which she now serves as National Director. In that position she has planned legal strategies, prepared witnesses, written pleadings, done fundraising, written educational materials, and given lectures nationwide about the case to student rallies, academic symposia and civil rights forums. Ms. Driver will join the firm of Scheff and

Washington, a Detroit labor and civil rights firm, upon graduation.

### **Viola King, Thomas M. Cooley Law School**



Ms. King came to Cooley Law School, which she will graduate from in 2002, after working as a therapist and juvenile probation officer for Wayne Circuit Court. She devoted herself in those roles to helping at-risk young people, training them on conflict resolution, crisis intervention, and treatment options. She completed her Masters degree at Wayne while interning for 300 hours at My Sisters Place, a domestic violence shelter, and 300 hours at Henry Ford Extended Day Program, an educational program for at-risk youth. She has been a mentor in Detroit's Big Sister/Big Brother Program, and is active in the Order of the Eastern Star. Ms. King plans to use her law degree to help women and children on issues of domestic violence and child abuse, favoring a holistic person-centered approach.

### **Batol Makki, Howard & Howard Awardee at the Univ. of Detroit Mercy Law School**



Ms. Makki will graduate in May of 2002, and plans to pursue a career specializing in family and immigration law. Her dedication to women's issues is clear from her law student involvement in UDM's Immigration Law Clinic. In the clinic, she has helped women to gain permanent resident status pursuant to the Violence Against Women Act, where they were married to and abused by their US citizen spouses. She wrote an essay on the subject which became part of the Archdiocese of Detroit's Violence Against Women Act handbook. Ms. Makki has worked as a law clerk for more than a year, helping battered and abused immigrant women to apply for political asylum in the United States, and helping them to avoid separation from their children. She is also an active member of UDM's Women's Law Caucus.

### **Sarah B. Mason, Thomas M. Cooley Law School**



Ms. Mason is a member of Cooley's Women's Law Alliance who will graduate in May of 2003 with a concentration in litigation. She currently serves as law clerk for Oakland Circuit Judge James M. Alexander, a Family Court Judge. In that position she interviews petitioners for personal protection orders, performs research, and prepares recommendations for the judge. Ms. Mason volunteers at the Women's Justice Center in Detroit, and as assisted ACLU attorneys with a class action lawsuit against a county jail system for its abuse against women. She is working with other Cooley students to organize a panel presentation on domestic violence, and plans

to publish a paper on the subject soon.

### **Markeisha J. Miner, University of Michigan Law School**



Ms. Miner will graduate this May, and is a member of Michigan's Black Law Student Alliance and Executive Editor of the Michigan Journal of Race and the Law. A student who describes the difficulty of finding her "voice" as a black woman in law school, Ms. Miner has both found it now and devoted herself to helping others to do the same. She mentors both first year women law students and middle school girls in Ann Arbor, encouraging them to express their ideas in the classroom. As an intern at the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, she has helped police to understand the dynamics of abuse and difficulties of expression experienced by some victims of domestic violence. In fall of 2001, Ms. Miner worked in Durban, South Africa, at the Commission on Gender Equality, assisting women of all races and economic classes who have decided to speak out against gender discrimination. She currently is applying for a Skadden Fellowship to provide legal assistance to working poor mothers who have children in Head Start.

### **Archana Pyati, University of Michigan Law School**



Ms. Pyati will graduate in May, 2002, and plans to pursue a career in human rights, an area in which she has already distinguished herself. Fluent in English, French, Kannada and Hindi, she has served as a fellow at the UM Law School's Center for Refugee and Asylum Studies in Lusaka, Zambia, where she collected refugee testimonies and researched international law. Another UM fellowship took her to Cambodia, where she worked on land ownership rights of indigenous people and investigated human rights abuse cases in outlying provinces. More recently, she served as an intern at the ACLU, working on issues of free speech, police misconduct, privacy during pregnancy, and an intern at the National Lawyers Guild's Sugar Law Center for Economic and Social Justice, working on civil rights cases. She is seeking a Human Rights Watch Fellowship at this time.

### **Kimberly Smith, University of Detroit Mercy Law School**

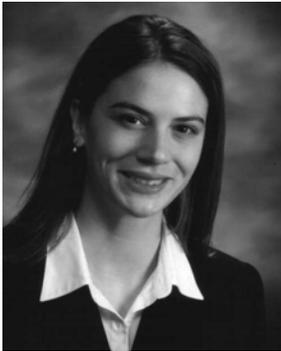


Ms. Smith will graduate in December of 2002, and serves at UDM as Associate Editor of Law Review and Vice-President of the Black Law Student Association. As a volunteer counselor at a Detroit public elementary school, Ms. Smith became increasingly concerned about over-emphasis of the needs of boys, while young girls were preoccupied with attracting male



attention. She worked with her church's youth group and then discovered Girls, Inc. while on a trip to Texas. She is working with community leaders to launch the organization in Detroit, in order to serve the needs of girls. Her goal is to "plant seeds of hope and pride in these young girls, in an effort to help them become strong and successful women." Ms. Smith also volunteers at a shelter, where she provides both a positive role model and tries to instill high self-esteem in the women she encounters.

### **Jami Witbeck, Michigan State University Detroit College of Law**



Ms. Witbeck is a social worker who will obtain her law degree in May, 2002, and the recipient of numerous awards while at MSU/DCL. Working throughout law school at the Ingham County Health Department, she administers the Adolescent Health Education Program, providing prevention education to thousands of at-risk teenagers in the greater Lansing area. The program promotes education goal-setting, self-esteem, pregnancy prevention, and conflict resolution, working with twenty-five educators to reach over 10,000 students annually. As the Managing Editor of Events for the Journal of International Law at MSU/DCL, she organized a February, 2002, symposium on human rights which address the treatment of laborers in developing countries. She plans to continue her work on initiatives that advance the rights of women and disadvantaged groups during her law career.