

Putting a Good SPIN on Public Interest Law



Anna Holdren L'19 of SPIN and professors Kevin Maillard and Cora True-Frost L'01 run the live portion of the SPIN Auction.

The Syracuse Public Interest Network (SPIN) kicked off the traditional SPIN Auction in Dineen Hall, beginning with the live portion with Professors **Kevin Maillard** and **Cora True-Frost L'01** as auctioneers. Held on Valentine's Day, appropriately enough, supporters showed love for students interested in pursuing public interest law a career.

The items auctioned included center court tickets for an Orange basketball game, bar preparation courses, and dinner with a professor. The silent portion of the auction began immediately after the Valentine's Day live event and wrapped up at the March 23 Barrister's Ball.

Since 1989, proceeds from the auction and other funds raised from alumni donors have funded summer fellowships so that students can gain practical experience working in district attorney and public defender offices, as well as legal aid and other public interest organizations. In addition to the auction, the SPIN program benefits greatly from the generosity of alumni donors who wish to build and support the field of College of Law public interest lawyers.

The College has a long history and deep commitment to the field, with a vast network of alumni globally who have dedicated themselves to public service, social justice, and the representation of communities in need.

2019 SPIN Fellowship Recipients & Placements

Rising Third-Year Law Students

- > **Philip Alvaro**
Ontario County (NY) Public Defender's Office
- > **Chanan Brown**
Maryland Office of the Public Defender, Appellate Division
- > **Brian Gunderson**
Clark County (NV) Public Defender's Office
- > **Sara Pielsticker**
Advocates for Children of New York
- > **Alicia Slate:**
Yates County (NY) District Attorney's Office

Rising Second-Year Law Students

- > **Mariah Almonte**
New York State Mental Hygiene Legal Services (Bronx, NY)
- > **Robert Baurley**
Montgomery County (PA) Public Defender
- > **Evan Pfeifer**
Federal Public Defender for the Northern District of New York

To support SPIN, contact **Sophie Dagenais**, Assistant Dean for Advancement and External Affairs, at **315.443.1964**

"GO" Big or Go Home!

David Goldstein L'91 Reminisces About the Origins of SPIN

The original iteration of the Syracuse Public Interest Network (SPIN) had a rather unusual nickname. How did the acronym GOP come about?

Originally the program was called the Grant Opportunity Program, which we shortened to the GO Program because we wanted a catchy name. That seemed to do the trick. The program was nicknamed the "GOP," which was a bit of a play on words.

Why did you and your classmates decide to create a public interest law grant program for students?

When I entered the College of Law in 1988, I was hoping for a curriculum that focused on public interest law and working with public interest groups, but there was nothing at the time like that. The problem students interested in public interest law have is that jobs pay very little, so there's a real lack of enticement for students to do it. So we thought, what about creating a grant program to support summer public interest opportunities, a stipend to enable students to work in a district attorney's office or a legal aid office, for example?

The SPIN Auction is now a College of Law tradition. How did that method of raising money come about?

We approached the College with the grant program idea, but in the end thought it best to raise our own money. Based on my undergraduate experience working on charitable events, I knew that an auction was an effective way to raise money. To build excitement, we solicited local companies for items to auction. The professors loved the idea, and they donated items and personal effects, such as a favorite tie! Defining public interest law quite broadly to attract more people, we generated real buzz. The first auction was held in the White/MacNaughton common area. We ran the auction ourselves and generated around \$2,000, with faculty also donating funds.

That success must have taken you aback. What did the Go Program do next?

We had money! So we created a simple application process for public interest students who needed a stipend, and then we held a raffle of submitted names. I believe two or three students were funded in the first year, and the next year we were even more successful. It's great to hear that the program is still going, albeit under a different name.

David A. Goldstein L'91 is a founding partner at Goldstein Hall PLLC, a full service real estate law firm with offices in New York and Washington, DC. He concentrates his practice on affordable housing development, real estate and community development, nonprofit formation and governance, and corporate formation and governance.



Did you in fact decide to pursue public interest law as a professional attorney?

After graduating, I began representing tenants through Southern Tier Legal Services (Bath, NY). After that I worked for the Queens Legal Services office in New York City. Eventually, I created my own practice—Goldstein Hall—to continue my public service advocacy. Today my firm specializes in affordable housing, community development, and the formation and governance of non-profits. My mission was always to make a living, but also to give back. That was very important to me. I was lucky enough to go to law school, and I feel something should be returned to those who need it.

What pitch would you make for the study and practice of public interest law today?

Being a lawyer is a profession that is in the service of others. Therefore, we have an obligation to serve the public good and to ensure that the ideals in the Constitution are upheld. ■