

Alumni Update

In this Issue:

Employment Arbitration Agreements: Pitfalls to Avoid 2



Nkoye Iwerebon 3

Skadden alum takes on new role as Dean of Admissions at Columbia Law.



Mallory Curran 6

Former Skadden Fellow seeks to expand Ohio program for children's health.

Blazing Trails

Brian Pomper Takes the Road Less Traveled to Washington

When asked to explain how he achieved his current position as minority chief trade counsel for the U.S. Senate Finance Committee, Brian Pomper ('97/Wash./Lit.) says it's important to go back to the beginning. Not the beginning of his time in D.C., or even of his legal career, but all the way back to his college years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. One day in the spring of 1989, Brian happened to see a flyer that said *Go to Japan with the MIT Japan Program*; at that moment, his nascent interest in international relations and trade began shaping his life.

"All you had to do was study Japanese, and they'd send you to Japan," Brian says. "I said



Skadden Fellow Profile

Against All Odds

Mallory Curran Defies Convention to Help Sick Children

Throughout the country, children's health is constantly endangered by circumstances that could easily be changed. Anything from an inadequate diet to substandard housing conditions can create illness, and for children living in poverty, these risks are very real. Legal remedies and public assistance for those families exist — but sometimes, the people in trouble don't know where to turn for help, and those who have access to resources don't know how to reach out to those who have the greatest need.

That's where former Skadden Fellow Mallory Curran comes in.

Mallory is now director of the Family Advocacy Program in Cleveland, Ohio. The program, a collaboration between the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and the local Children's Hospital at MetroHealth Medical Center, strives to improve child health and development by reducing legal barriers that might interfere. "We created the program with the Skadden Fellowship," Mallory says, explaining that she modeled the Ohio program on one at the Boston Medical Center. "We were one of the first five such programs nationally, the first and so far only in Ohio. It's a trend in pediatrics; now there are 25 programs."

She says that most "legal barriers" to children's well-being are social determinants of health: for instance, a child's asthma will worsen if she lives in a shoddy apartment building with mold. Parents of a child with disabilities might not be receiving all the state and federal benefits that would allow them to access the best medical care and special education available. The mission of the Family Advocacy Program is to connect assistance and knowledge with the families who need them most.

"All of our clients are referred to us by pediatricians, social workers, anyone who's coming across a family who might have those problems," Mallory says.

An Ohio native, Mallory has had a longtime interest in

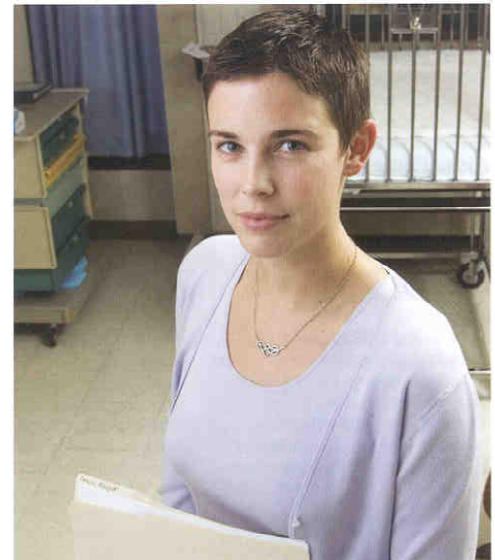
public health issues. During high school, she learned that both her uncle and his partner were HIV-positive. At the time, Mallory says, "the late '80s, early '90s — there wasn't a lot of hope." She admits, "I felt a little powerless. My response to powerlessness is to get more knowledge and share that knowledge with other people."

So she became an HIV and AIDS health educator while attending The Ohio State University, which included providing pre- and post-test counseling. Originally, Mallory had planned to get a masters in public health, but she decided on law school instead. "I was concerned that [in grad school] I would be dealing with only policy and concepts, not people. Law school would give me more flexibility in dealing with people on an individual basis." When she learned about the Boston Medical Center program, Mallory says, "It was like hearing about my dream job."

She knew that, in order to create a program like that for Ohio, she would first have to find the ideal partners. She reached out to MetroHealth, the "safety net" hospital for Cleveland and Cuyahoga County, which sees almost 50,000 pediatric outpatient visits a year, with nearly 70 percent of those patients either Medicaid-eligible or uninsured. "They were ready to go from the moment we approached them," Mallory says of her Skadden Fellowship pitch. "Their first question was, 'When can you start?'"

Now, Mallory works as the Family Advocacy Program's only staff member. "I do my own intake and screen the cases," she explains. "Where appropriate, I will refer them to other units within the Legal Aid Society, but the majority of cases I keep." She doesn't handle most housing, divorce- or income-tax related issues, but Mallory deals with virtually everything else herself.

More people would be helped with a larger staff — which is why Mallory is currently pursuing a grant with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation that would greatly expand the program. If the grant comes



Mallory Curran

Photo by Mike Stenberg/Blackstar

through, the Family Advocacy Program will be able to hire three more attorneys, a paralegal and a program coordinator. They could add someone to the staff who speaks Spanish, for better outreach to Cleveland's large Puerto Rican community, and someone who specializes in working with patients recently released from prison. Finally, the program could extend its geographical area and become known as the Community Advocacy Program.

The grant is highly competitive, but as Mallory points out, "We faced similar odds before." The last longshot was the Skadden Fellowship, and Mallory hopes she'll beat the odds again. ■