

Cause and Effect

A Donor and His Scholarship Recipient Reflect on Their Connection to Michigan Law

George Vincent, '82, is a corporate attorney at Dinsmore & Shohl LLP in Cincinnati. Of his 35 years at the firm, Vincent has spent 11 as its managing partner and chairman. In 2012, Vincent and his father, Dwight Vincent, '57, created the Dwight H. and George H. Vincent Family Scholarship Fund.

Colleen Smythe is a 2L from Toledo, Ohio, where she served as a paraprofessional for Toledo Public Schools. She earned her bachelor's degree in sociology with highest honors from the University of Michigan. Smythe wants to pursue a career in public interest, focusing on special education law. As a 1L, she became involved in the Student Rights Project and Outlaws. She spent her summer working as a law clerk for Mental Health Advocacy Services in Los Angeles, and is associate editor of the *Michigan Journal of Gender and Law*.

GEORGE



COLLEEN



Why did you want to go to law school, and why did you choose Michigan?

GEORGE

My dad loved being a lawyer, and I looked to him as an example of what I wanted to be and what I wanted to do. He went to Michigan for undergrad and law school, so the decision was an easy one for me.

COLLEEN

I have a younger sister with Down syndrome. She graduated from high school in the spring. Her experience in special education was mixed, and it made me very interested in helping other children who face the same problems she did. My year as a substitute paraprofessional for Toledo Public Schools opened my eyes even more to the issues in the education system. I decided that the way I wanted to affect that field was through law. It seemed the best way to amplify the voice of a community that doesn't usually get a lot of attention, and to have better leverage to change the system. I chose Michigan because I really believed in its dedication to public interest and because I love Ann Arbor. I had already come here for college and was excited to return for law school.

What was your favorite class?

GEORGE

My favorite class was Restitution, which was taught by Professor George Palmer. He was an old-school professor. The cases he examined were nontraditional and thought-provoking; it was easily the most interesting class I took. That said, I enjoyed just about every class, with the possible exception of Criminal Law I.

COLLEEN

My favorite class, so far, has been Constitutional Law with Professor Richard Primus. He has a notoriously intense lecturing style that demands equally intense preparation. I never would have engaged with the material as deeply if I hadn't been at least a little terrified of his cold calls. On top of that, it is an interesting time (politically and socially) to be learning about the Constitution. It was exciting to become a more informed participant in the national conversation.

How has your Michigan Law education opened doors for you?

GEORGE

Just saying you went to Michigan Law opens doors because people immediately assume you are capable. It's a powerful degree, with an equally powerful alumni group. My primary mentor at Dinsmore was a Michigan Law graduate: Nolan Carson, '51. It gave us a special bond.

COLLEEN

This summer I worked at a nonprofit called Mental Health Advocacy Services. I felt very well prepared to jump right into legal research and writing. I also was fortunate to receive a Student Funded Fellowship grant, which made it possible for me to take the job without worrying too much about meeting my living expenses in Los Angeles. The fact that Michigan had that money available made a huge difference for me.

What about your practice inspires you?

GEORGE

My dad was in private practice, and that was the example I followed. I was somewhat torn between going into business and being a lawyer, but being a corporate lawyer has given me the best of both worlds. I liked it from the moment I started.

COLLEEN

I want to make a positive difference for people who don't get a fair shot at the legal system. Education is a good focal point to affect change in the way people perceive those with disabilities. It is rewarding when it pans out. When it doesn't, it only makes me want to fight harder to make sure these kids get the education they deserve and are integrated the way they are supposed to be.

What is your favorite Ann Arbor memory?

GEORGE

I'm hard-pressed to think of any bad memories. Ann Arbor is a wonderful place, and I love going back. In the seven years I was a student at Michigan, I only missed one home football game. Now, I have eight season tickets, and my family and I come back for at least half the games.

COLLEEN

I had the opportunity to see Ruth Bader Ginsburg speak at Hill Auditorium. She is one of my biggest role models, and I felt very lucky to be at a place where people like her would come to visit.

What does the Dwight H. and George H. Vincent Family Scholarship mean to you?

GEORGE

It is meaningful to me that it was something my dad and I were able to do together while he was still alive. It had great meaning to both of us because it meant that our names would forever be linked at the Law School, providing scholarship support for students. My dad loved Michigan. I love Michigan. It is the best way to tie those things together. Our scholarship is an opportunity to give back and to have our names attached to something we love—it's hard to explain how great that is.

COLLEEN

It means being able to pursue a public interest career and attend a top-tier university with less-intense anxiety over whether I will be able to afford my loans, or how the landscape of loan repayment assistance may evolve. I was considering a few other schools, but the Dwight and George Vincent Scholarship really helped tip the scale in Michigan Law's favor. Because of it, I am able to relax, focus on my studies, and do what I love.

George Vincent, '82, and his father, Dwight Vincent, '57, on the day George graduated from Michigan Law.

