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Cardozo News

4-13-2022

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Recommended Citation

Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, "Scholars in Service Event Celebrates Supporters of Cardozo Summer Public Interest" (2022). *Cardozo News 2022*. 29.

<https://larc.cardozo.yu.edu/cardozo-news-2022/29>

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Scholars in Service Event Celebrates Supporters of Cardozo Summer Public Interest



Guest speaker Menashe Shapiro '00

“There’s not a day that goes by where I don’t call on lessons learned in law school,” said Menashe Shapiro '00, Deputy Chief of Staff for the Mayor of New York City. Shapiro was the guest speaker at an April 6 luncheon to thank sponsors

of Cardozo's Summer Public Interest Stipend Program. He said the stipend supported his opportunity to work in Washington, D.C. at the Department of Labor saying, "It gave me in-depth expertise in a new subject area that I was later able to draw on when I interviewed for jobs at firms."

Dean Melanie Leslie '91 hosted the event to thank the sponsors of the Summer Public Interest Stipend Program, including the David Berg Foundation, David Samson '93, David Katz '84, Benjamin Reynolds '04, Scott Silver '97 and the Gem Star Foundation.

"Most everyone attending today has supported and or benefitted from this visionary program and I thank you as well for your commitment to the success of the law school," Dean Leslie opened as she introduced the first student speakers and David Berg Fellows, 3Ls Isaac Altman and Kelsey Keane. Altman interned at the non-profit Sanctuary for Families and the New York City Commission on Human Rights, and Keane at The Legal Aid Society. Both students spoke about how their public service internships solidified their interest in the field.

The Dean encouraged students to learn from Menashe's experience, "and understand that your legal career can take many turns, and there are different ways you can be of service to the public, both from within government and outside."

In addition to working at a high level in the New York City government, Shapiro began his career as an attorney practicing securities litigation and representing clients who had been defrauded in the stock market. He was most recently a strategic communications consultant and rapid-response adviser to Eric Adams' campaign for Mayor. Previously, he was part of the research and communications team for Michael Bloomberg's presidential campaign and served as the Deputy Research Director for Bloomberg's 2009 reelection campaign.

Alissa Bernstein, Director of Cardozo's Center for Public Service Law, introduced David Samson '93, who created the Samson Fellowship Program for Cardozo students interning at the Miami-Dade Public Defender's Office. Many Fellows have gone on to work full-time at the Office after graduation. Samson was a member of the Cardozo Board of Overseers from 2010 to 2018 and Chairman for the last four years of his service.

"During my time at Cardozo, I realized I had the privilege to decide what I wanted to do during law school while others made decisions based on financial ability," Samson said. "I wanted to make it my life's work to find a way to help Cardozo alumni practicing in their desired field of law."

Rachel McNassor, Associate Dean of Advancement, closed the ceremony and once again thanked the donors present who support the Summer Public Interest Stipend Program.

Through the Cardozo Summer Public Interest Stipend Program, Cardozo students receive funding so that they may participate in otherwise unpaid internships in public service over the summer months after their 1L and 2L year. Through community effort, Cardozo has been able to provide funding for every student who has applied for a stipend over the past several years. Summer placements have included U.S. Department of Defense, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, the Legal Aid Society and more.