

# Chicago Daily Law Bulletin®

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## Fellowship takes clinic director to Southeast Asia

State Department had head of John Marshall veterans legal center strengthen ties to area

BY SARAH MANSUR  
Law Bulletin staff writer

Months after Brian E. Clauss welcomed a young Malaysian lawyer to The John Marshall Law School, he had the opportunity to visit Malaysia himself.

Clauss, director of Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic at the law school, traveled with his guest lawyer, Mohammad Muzammil Bin Muhammad Hairiri, to six cities in three countries — Malaysia, Indonesia and Singapore — over nine days in October.

"It was a tremendous experience," Clauss said of his first trip to Southeast Asia.

Clauss was chosen as a fellow by the Young Southeast Asian Leaders Grant, a U.S. State Department program aimed at strengthening ties between the U.S. and Southeast Asia.

"It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to go there and not only learn about the culture but also be a representative of my country and my culture," Clauss said.

Hairiri described his nine-day trip with Clauss across Southeast Asia as "life-changing."

"What really inspired me from the trip was the fact that most of the students, who I was informed come from low-income and underprivileged families, were really determined to break the chain of poverty in their life but at the same time, excited to learn more about pro bono and how they can

contribute back to their society upon graduation and becoming full-fledged lawyers," Hairiri wrote in an e-mail.

The organization in the U.S. that sponsored Clauss' visit is the American Council of Young Political Leaders' Professional Fellows Program.

During the trip, Clauss and Hairiri spoke to law school students at the MARA University of Technology outside the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur, and the Asian Pro Bono Conference at the University of Malaya in the nation's capital.

They also spoke at Sumpah Pemuda School of Law in Indonesia in South Sumatra.

Trauma informed design, where past events have left a telling mark on an individual, is one of the topics Clauss discussed with law students in Southeast Asia.

*"It was a once in a lifetime opportunity to go there and not only learn about the culture but also be a representative of my country ..."*

Clauss said he and his staff at the Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic consider things like perimeter, sight lines and balancing security against privacy.

Clauss has car stickers on his laptop as a way of starting a conversation and making his clients feel comfortable.



**Brian Clauss, director of the Veterans Legal Support Center and Clinic at The John Marshall Law School, accepts a memento from (from left) Dr. H. Firman Freaddy Busron, Dr. Rianda Rivingishita, Dr. Hj Jauhariah at the Sumpah Pemuda School of Law in Indonesia last month. Mohammad Muzammil Mohammad Hairiri**

"That always starts a conversation when you ask someone, 'What was your first car?'" he said. "Then they talk about that and reminisce. It gives them good feelings and is one of the first steps of building trust."

He asked the law students at MARA University of Technology: "What would you put on your laptop?"

While overseas, Clauss said, he explained that trauma informed design is not just for clients.

"It could be students, staff, faculty — anybody can have something happen to them which has affected them," he said. "It doesn't cost any more to be sensitive."

The Young Southeast Asian Leaders Grant and the American Council of Young Political Leaders were also responsible for Hairiri's visit to Chicago this past summer.

clinic aimed at helping women in family law matters, and he plans to use what he learned at John Marshall to pursue that goal.

He said, in the e-mail, that he enjoyed working with John Marshall faculty, including Clauss; Erik Fagrelis, John Marshall's director of corporate and foundation relations; Kelly Lindstrom, the staff attorney at the Pro Bono Legal Clinic; and Debra Pogrud Stark, the director of the Family Law and Domestic Violence Clinic.

"I was able to glean some insights and advice from all of them regarding the business proposal and the feasibility of the project," Hairiri wrote.

But, he said he faces challenges that have kept him from opening his pro bono clinic in his community where pro bono culture is still in its infancy.

"There are a lot of challenges in getting the legal clinic accepted in the legal community with small pro bono presence. To date, there is no public funding or grants available for us to apply for, to support our cause of addressing the issue of lack of access to justice, to the best of my knowledge," Hairiri wrote.

"In the meantime, we are still continuing to set up help desks on the weekends to offer free legal advice to the public and hopefully improve the accessibility to legal service, albeit on a small scale."

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