



September 2015

IIP AND POLICE TRAINING UNIT BEGIN CADET TRAINING INITIATIVE

The Illinois Innocence Project is honored to announce its collaboration with the University of Illinois Police Training Institute (PTI) to help educate police cadets about the causes of wrongful conviction.

UIS Professor Gwen Jordan, who provides part-time legal services to IIP, and IIP volunteers recently met with PTI Director Mike Schlosser, Ph.D., to discuss incorporating topics such as witness misidentification, improper forensics and false confessions into cadet training curriculum. Director Schlosser says IIP and police have the same goals – to find and uphold the truth.

“There is no officer out there who wants to arrest and have somebody convicted wrongfully and spend time in prison, or worse yet, be on death row,” he says.

For more information: WCIA news story, PTI website, PTI Facebook.

EXONEREE ANGEL GONZALEZ JOINS IIP FRIENDS AT FUNDRAISER

Thank you to Kent and Gwen Childs for inviting new friends into the IIP family with a gathering at their home in August. Angel Gonzalez traveled from Chicago to share his story of being imprisoned for 20 years for a crime he did not commit. Since his release in March 2015, Angel has reconnected with his large family and recently moved to his own apartment in Chicago, where he enjoyed his first summer beyond bars.

Kent and Gwen challenge other IIP supporters to host their own “living room” gatherings.

“If we all invite new friends to IIP,” Kent says, “we really can change the lives of even more innocent people like Angel.”

STANDING ROOM ONLY AT IIP OFFICE

The IIP office is overflowing with the energy and enthusiasm of 23 undergraduates – our largest class ever – who are evaluating and researching dozens of backlogged and daily incoming requests for help from Illinois inmates claiming innocence. IIP is one of only two innocence projects nationwide to be housed at an undergraduate institution, providing college students a unique opportunity for hands-on criminal justice work.

Introducing three of our newest students ...

Ray Alvarez

Ray, from Hanover Park, Ill., is a senior majoring in political science/legal studies and minoring in international studies. He is passionate about social justice and wants to help educate others about wrongful convictions during his IIP internship. Ray intends to pursue law and MBA degrees, and eventually practice business law; he also aspires to run for public office.

Andrea Davidsmeyer

Andrea, a senior from Springfield, Ill., is majoring in legal studies with the goal to become a paralegal. Attending Jennifer Thompson's and Ronald Cotton's on-campus presentation last spring cemented her decision to intern with IIP, where she is gaining experience juggling the demands of a busy legal practice. Seeing how the criminal justice system can go awry has convinced her to continue volunteering with IIP after graduation.

Kalima Swain

Kalima, from Chicago, is a senior majoring in legal studies with minors in criminal justice and philosophy. She is evaluating requests from inmates who pleaded guilty, an area of innocence work expanding now that Illinois law allows for motions to DNA-test evidence in these cases. Interning at IIP has inspired Kalima to expand her knowledge of the criminal justice system. She intends to go to law school and practice family law.