

# Sooner Lawyer Archive

---

Volume 2011 | Issue 2  
*Fall 2011/Winter 2012*

---

2011

## OU Legal Clinic: Celebrating 40 Years of Service

Jonella Frank

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/soonerlawyer>



Part of the [Legal Education Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Frank, Jonella (2011) "OU Legal Clinic: Celebrating 40 Years of Service," *Sooner Lawyer Archive*: Vol. 2011: Iss. 2, Article 5.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.law.ou.edu/soonerlawyer/vol2011/iss2/5>

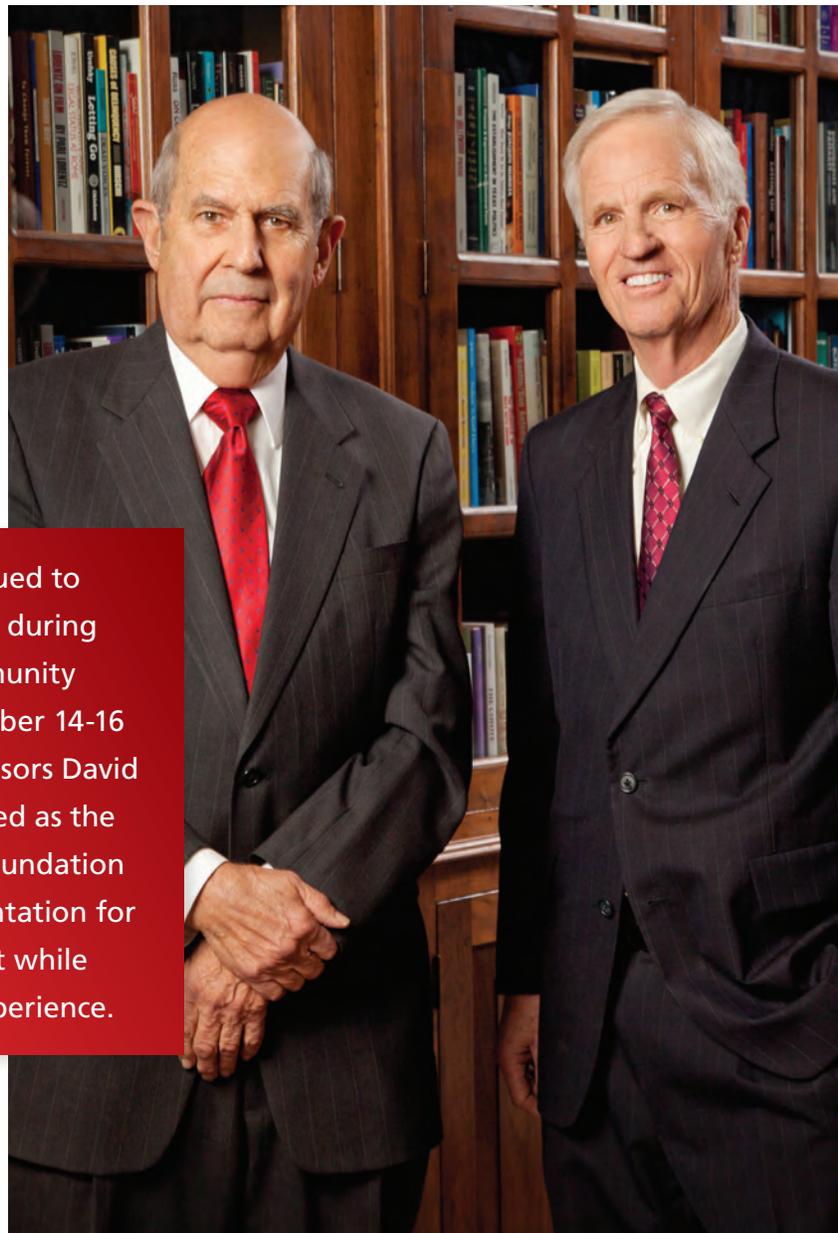
This Article is brought to you for free and open access by University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Sooner Lawyer Archive by an authorized editor of University of Oklahoma College of Law Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu](mailto:Law-LibraryDigitalCommons@ou.edu).

OU Legal Clinic:

# Celebrating 40 Years of Service

BY JONELLA FRANK

Founded in 1971, the OU Legal Clinic has continued to develop and evolve, touching thousands of lives during its four decades of existence. The OU Law community celebrated the program's 40th anniversary October 14-16 and honored two College of Law alumni, professors David Swank ('59) and Ted Roberts ('64). The two served as the first leaders of the OU Legal Clinic, laying the foundation of the program that has provided legal representation for clients who would have otherwise gone without while allowing students to gain hands-on, real-life experience.



**CELEBRATING THE PAST** With encouragement from the American Bar Association, an increasing number of law schools added clinical education to their curriculums during the 1970s. Of the programs already in place at other law schools across the nation in 1971, few included live client representation. That was the year Dean Robert Wright tapped Swank and Roberts to develop a live client legal clinic for OU.

Swank served as director and Roberts served as assistant director. They worked with members of the Cleveland County Bar Association and developed client income guidelines patterned after those used by Legal Aid Services of Oklahoma Inc., which did not, at that time, have an office in Cleveland County.

With limited space available in Monnet Hall, Swank's faculty office served as the program's first office until fellow faculty members, concerned about the noise and congestion created by clinic traffic, encouraged a move to another building on campus. Space was located in the Physical Sciences Building (aka the Waring blender building), where the office was located until 1976 when the College of Law moved to its present location.

**“We are grateful for the foundation laid by David and Ted. As we celebrate the past, let's also recognize the present.”**

**– Cheryl Wattlely,  
OU Legal Clinic director**

the supervision of a licensed attorney while attending classes on Friday and Saturday. Within the next five years, the clinic added the El Reno Federal Prison Project, the McAlester State Prison Project and the judicial clinic.

Throughout the years, the clinical program has changed as different needs were identified and new opportunities developed. Today, the OU Legal Clinic maintains three live client clinics, two advocacy clinics and the legal externship program.



Former directors of the clinic pose with the current director. Pictured are Rod Uphoff, Keith Bystrom, Cheryl Wattlely, Ted Roberts, David Swank and Don Bogan.

In the early days of the OU Legal Clinic, the staff consisted of Swank and Roberts, who supervised a secretary and anywhere from eight to 20 legal interns each semester. Initially, there were three types of clinical legal experiences offered. Students could work in the law school clinic representing income-qualified clients or work in a law office under the supervision of a licensed attorney. In addition, for students in their final law school semester, there was a third option that allowed students to work Monday through Thursday under



Students register a participant for Race Judicata, the final event of the OU Legal Clinic anniversary weekend.

**HONORING THE VISION** The 40th anniversary observation celebrated the history and growth of the program. The weekend of events began on Friday with a reception and tour of Monnet Hall, followed by a performance of "I'll Do It!" written by Cheryl Wattley, clinic director and professor. The play, which commemorates the historic struggle of Ada Lois Sipuel Fisher to attend law school at the University of Oklahoma, was performed by the OU Black Law Students Association at Sooner Theatre in downtown Norman.

On Saturday, a reception in the OU College of Law Sneed Lounge preceded dinner in the Kerr Student Lounge. The theme of the anniversary dinner was "Honoring the Vision: A Tribute to David Swank and Ted Roberts." In addition to clinic alumni, current students, faculty and staff, all of the former clinic directors attended.

"Thank you for having the vision," Wattley said to Swank and Roberts. With "We Are the Champions" as background music, a video provided a history of the legal clinic through photos and video clips of clinic alumni and former directors sharing memories.

At the conclusion of the presentation, Wattley said, "We are grateful for the foundation laid by David and Ted. As we celebrate the past, let's also recognize the present." She introduced the current attorneys and staff members of the OU Legal Clinic and highlighted some recent clinic achievements.

Wattley again expressed appreciation for the contributions of Swank and Roberts and asked for their comments. "We had a lot of fun with it," stated Swank. Roberts agreed, "We worked as a team and had the same vision. We wanted to give students the experience of dealing with real people in the real world."

Wattley closed the evening by thanking everyone for attending. "We are so grateful for the presence of our alumni," she said. "It's like a family reunion."

The final event of the weekend was the Race Judicata at 4 p.m. Sunday, October 16. The annual 5K race and fun run, sponsored by the Student Bar Association, benefitted the Cindy M. Foley Memorial Indigent Defense Fellowship Fund. More than 200 people attended the 2011 event, with 150 running in the race, resulting in \$5,000 being donated to the fund. The Student Bar Association also donated \$1,000 to the Coats Fellowship for Summer Public Service.

**RECOGNIZING THE PRESENT** At the 40th anniversary dinner, Wattley noted that the live client clinics remain as the core of the clinical education program. Students continue to provide quality representation in Cleveland and McClain counties in both civil and criminal cases.

She also described some new programs that have been implemented in the recent past. More than 60 students have participated in the mediation externship and have received mediation certification from the Oklahoma Supreme Court.



Clinic alumnus Gary Dart ('73) and his wife, Beverly, enjoy the reception prior to the anniversary dinner.

Wattley also commented on the positive feedback she received on the performance of two students in the Section 1983 Clinic who had the rare opportunity to participate in a three-day jury trial in federal court in March 2011. In addition, another student was preparing to travel to Denver to appear in front of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit.

In speaking of the International Human Rights Clinic, Wattley

described how students prepare and submit reports to the U.N. Human Rights Council on human rights issues affecting indigenous populations. Several reports submitted by clinic students have been cited and quoted multiple times in the summary reports of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Participating on the project with this result was "an incredible opportunity," she said. "We have been fortunate and blessed to travel to many of these countries. The difference it makes for our students is remarkable."

Looking back on the weekend, Wattley reflected that "it gave our clinic students an invaluable opportunity to meet alumni and make connections. But more importantly, as one student said, it 'lets you know you are a part of something bigger than yourself.'" | **SL** |



Charlotte Hughart ('77), clinic alumna and former associate director, chats at the Monnet Hall reception with Amy Pepper, clinic attorney and assistant professor of law.

## Current clinic staff members help students learn through experience



**Cheryl Wattley**  
director and associate professor of law



**Amy Pepper**  
assistant professor of law



**Brenda Barnes**  
visiting assistant professor of law



**Robert Mitchell**  
visiting assistant professor of law



**Lori Ketner**  
clinical education assistant



**Bobbie Foster**  
staff assistant