

## **Experience counts in the courtroom**

### **Local lawyers mentor clerks in legal matters**

Joel Hagen, The Daily Journal of Fergus Falls, Minnesota

The Pemberton, Sorlie, Rufer & Kershner law firm in Fergus Falls is helping four young law clerks this summer earn experience in the field. Each clerk benefits with one-on-one experience with an attorney as a mentor.

Luke Robinson, of Mahtomedi, said experience is the most important thing to have when trying to find a job after school, and working as a clerk is the best way to learn.

"You learn things that could never be taught at school," said Sam Rufer, originally from Fergus Falls.

They said it was like night and day with the law firm and school.

"I've enjoyed the interaction I've had with all the attorneys," said Nick Heydt from Alexandria. "It's really different from a school setting."

Katrina Wass of Underwood agreed. "The exposure you get here is amazing." She said.

Heydt describes the experience as "sink or swim with a life jacket." He said the attorneys are always available and open to questions when he needs them.

They said there was a large difference between working in Fergus Falls compared to the cities. The consensus was that the large law firms in the cities can treat clerks with soft gloves, but at the Fergus Falls firm, they learn by working in many areas. They said most firms in Minneapolis wouldn't have given them the many opportunities to client exposure they have already had in Fergus Falls.

"They really do throw you into here in a positive way," Wass said.

Managing partner at the firm, Morrie Kershner, said they almost always have about one to four clerks for several reasons. He said the first reason is they are always looking for good people to hire as attorneys and this is the best way to judge their work. He said about 75 percent of the lawyers at the firm in the last 25 years were clerks before they started here. Kershner said the firm also believes it is an important part of any student's education as well as a help to the firm.

"We give them a much more varied experience," he said. "I think a smaller general practice firm that has some of everything as opposed to a large firm organized by department is able to provide clerks with a broader range of experience."

The four clerks started in mid-May and will continue through mid-August before heading back to their last year of school.

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