



**RAPPAPORT CENTER**  
FOR LAW AND PUBLIC POLICY

**BOSTON COLLEGE | LAW**

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or stay. I decided to stay."*

– Julia Sauve

## Julia Sauve: Close to The Injustice

To the future young people of Boston: There's a well-traveled, tough, empathetic and fearless advocate coming your way.

"I definitely have a heart for children who've had a lot of struggles and a lot of hardships," said Julia Sauve, a 28-year-old second-year student at Boston College Law. "Ultimately, I just want to be as useful to children in Boston as I can be."

When she speaks of struggles and hardships, and doing something about it, she's not bluffing. She worked briefly in a Costa Rican orphanage while in high school, spent two months commuting by chicken bus to help with kindergarteners and fourth-graders in Tanzania, and spent another two months in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam — doing everything from changing diapers to teaching math and English nine hours a day — inside a few tiny, windowless rooms.

And that was just a warmup.

Julia was only 23 when, armed with a Boston College degree in economics and her various multicultural experiences, she left Boston and her job at a family law firm to return to her mission with children. "I wanted to help more, and I knew I felt very alive when my feet were on the ground."

She also knew there was a significant need just across the Mexican border, where the largely lawless conditions tended to keep American volunteers away. She found an orphanage in Tijuana, flew in to see it, "and that's where I knew I wanted to be."

It didn't take long to discover that the conditions in this orphanage were more than could be fixed quickly. "It was either go home and call it a day, or stay," she said. "I decided to stay."

Julia stayed for two and a half years, in fact, during which time she came to realize that the troubles were even darker than she had originally thought, in the form of exploitation and sexual abuse. With little help from the police and resistance from the orphanage director, she enlisted the local newspaper and, ultimately, federal authorities, and after a year the orphanage was shut down.

In its place, Julia opened "not an orphanage," she said, "but a home," and founded Agape Kids, Inc. in support of that mission. What was missing from the Tijuana experience, she said, was a legal background to help navigate. So she returned to the northeast and worked at a personal injury firm while applying to law school.

The Rappaport Fellowship led her to the Youth Advocacy Division of the Committee for Public Counsel Services, where she got a real sense of how easy it is for young people with still-developing brains and tough backgrounds to make life-altering decisions. She listened to their conversations with lawyers and thought: "They're just children, and now they're looking at this tough road ahead."

The Rappaport Center's resources and networking "have propelled me year ahead of where I would have been without as far as insight and reflection," she said. "From every angle, they continue to overwhelm us with opportunities."

She expects her eventual career to take aim at that dynamic, whether in person or through policy work, always with an eye on the kids she's helping. "Someone once told me to stay close to the injustice," she said. "Don't get too far from it, or it's easy to lose vision."



– Dave Cummings  
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