



# RUTGERS JOURNAL OF LAW & RELIGION

Welcome to the RJLR Newsletter. This is the first volume, which is designed to keep alumni in touch with the current faces and events that make up the RJLR. We would like to introduce you to a few 2011-2012 leaders.



Ryan Peters is the RJLR's Editor-in-Chief for the 2011-2012 year. Ryan attended the United States Naval Academy, graduating with a BS in Political Science. After graduating in 2004, Ryan went directly to SEAL training for 18 months. As a SEAL Officer, he

*"It has been my honor to serve as Editor-in-Chief. I am fortunate to have a staff that continues to work hard to improve the Journal."*

conducted two combat deployments to Iraq and one to Afghanistan. In addition, he is a husband and father of two. In the fall, Ryan will be an associate at the law firm of Pepper Hamilton LLP in Philadelphia, PA.

As Editor-in-Chief, Ryan has made significant strides towards developing the journal. He initiated and succeeded in producing the first hard copy editions of the RJLR, which will continue to be published. This achievement of having the RJLR available in print will support the Journal's goal of securing prominent authors, and continuing to increase its international recognition.

Ryan has also worked to make the RJLR more collegial and has spearheaded many team-building initiatives, such as a mentoring program for new journal members and a

*"The alumni association is a wonderful initiative. RJLR is on its way to becoming one of the top law and religion journals in the country, but we can't do it without the support of our alumni."*

year-end banquet.

Ryan hopes to meet more alumni at the symposium on March 20<sup>th</sup>, and he looks forward to seeing all of you then.



Mark Steitz, Jr. is the RJLR's Managing Editor for the 2011-2012 year. Mark attended Fairleigh Dickinson University in Madison, NJ, where he completed a dual degree accelerated program in psychology. In 5 years, he graduated with a BA in psychology and an MA in Clinical Psychology. After graduation, he worked as a crisis intervention specialist, helping children and families throughout Camden County.

Mark has led our staff with enthusiasm that has filtered down to the staff editors, making this year a great experience for everyone. He feels he has grown as a



Danielle Gold is Associate Research and Writing Editor for the 2011-2012 year. Danielle's note, *Seeking Religious Validity for Body Piercings and Tattoos: How the Church of Body Modification Should Gain Recognition as a Religion in the Modern Era*, was selected to be published in one of the first print editions of the RJLR.

Danielle's article discusses a school's dress code prohibiting facial piercings, and argues that the prohibition violated Ariana Iacono's right to practice her religion as a member of the Church of Body Modification. The article examines the development of religious freedom within the United States, as well as constitutional issues

writer by reading, editing and spacing this year's publications, and emphasizes the importance of effectively communicating with the target audience.

Mark balances his academic commitments by spending time with his wife and their 6-month old. Mark has been accepted into the US Air Force JAG program. Upon Bar passage, he will attend Commissioned Officer Training, and then a Military Law Course.

*"We have a staff that is genuinely interested in furthering RJLR. Our enthusiasm has filtered down to the junior journal members, who will grab the reigns next year. I am confident that they will continue on our mission to attract the best authors and publish the best articles possible."*

surrounding the court's failure to define religion. Because it is unclear whether the Church of Body Modification, a religion deriving its fundamental beliefs from acts of body modification, would be legally recognized as a valid religion, the article argues that Ariana Iacono should be exempt from the school dress code because of her sincere belief in the tenets of the Church. The article also describes potential arguments in support of Ariana's religious freedom claim, and analyzes how Ariana could likely prevail if her claim implicates the hybrid-rights exception acknowledged in *Employment Division, Department of Human Resources of Oregon v. Smith*.

*"I am very honored to have been selected for publication in one of the first print editions of the RJLR."*

Please remember to RSVP for the Donald C. Clark Symposium on March 20, 2012, featuring speaker Professor Michael W. McConnell, Director of the Constitutional Law Center at Stanford University Law School.