

November 2021

Law Week experience a dream come true for young aspiring lawyer

A young woman with a passion to become a lawyer since childhood has been further inspired to follow her dreams after being a guest at the 2021 Women in Law Breakfast, hosted by HRCLS in May 2021.

Friend Kighoma, a 17-year-old student from Wodonga Senior Secondary College, was eager and excited to hear from an experienced lawyer, Alexandra Wearne from Reid family Lawyers who appeared as this year's special guest speaker.

"I've been interested in law ever since I was small," she said. "When I heard the family lawyer from Sydney was going to be there, I was really excited and wanted to see her and learn things from her and the other lawyers there."

Born in the Democratic Republic of Congo before moving to Kenya, Friend migrated to Australia in 2019 with her four siblings and mother, with the assistance of the UNHCR. They landed in Sydney and soon made their way to Wodonga.

Now settled and enjoying her new home and life, Friend is preparing to tackle Year 12 next year with zeal and enthusiasm, as she plots a course towards studying law at university. Spurring her on to this goal is the personal trauma experienced in her homeland, and also the possibility of creating a better world for others through her work that beckons in the future.

"A lot of stuff happened in my family and my own life," Friend said. "When I was a kid, sometimes I used to feel that if I had the capability of being involved in the law, I could change some things. Maybe not for my family, but others who might be going through the same things me and my family went through. So I want to be able to make change to help people feel like that they have the right to live and not be denied the right to live."

The Women in Law Breakfast was introduced more than 13 years ago as the feature event in the HRCLS annual Law Week calendar to bring women together to celebrate their successes and achievements and demonstrate the difference people can make when they follow their passion and work to reach their potential.

Friend was deeply inspired by being in a roomful of women committed to the law and having a positive impact in their respective services, firms and

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organisations. The experience gave her a real strength and confidence to follow her passion and the path.

“It was a dream come true...I felt really happy and it was something that I had always wished to be involved in,” she said. “I just wanted to learn more from the people these, and came away hoping one day I will become like them.”

The main message Friend took away from the guest speaker’s talk was ensuring the community understands the need to seek legal assistance to solve their problems. “The biggest thing I learnt from Alex was you have to ask for help and never be afraid if you want it, because that’s the most important thing you can do for you and your family,” she said.

For Friend, it’s important that people can live without fear and have peace of mind as they go about their lives. Although she was a child at the time, she can recall how her mother faced constant threats of harm before migrating to Australia. “It was really hard and horrible for us. We would see it all, but we couldn’t do anything about it because there was no one to help us,” she said.

Now with the opportunity before her, the aim is to get justice for people when they need it, and she intends to take up the challenge in her new country.

“I felt like I am here in Australia for a purpose and can make change here,” she said. “Even in the two years I have been here, I have seen a lot of stuff that maybe can be changed. When I came here, I started to think maybe I can do something, because I can go to school and study hard and one day I can help people.”