A new social justice center at Loyola University Chicago School of Law will expand the resources and services provided by some of the school’s pro bono legal programs.

Curt N. Rodin, a retired Chicago lawyer and Loyola alumnus, and his wife Linda are funding the new center.

The Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice is expected to officially open in the spring on the law school’s 11th floor.

The center will focus on addressing client needs in the areas of health care, education and criminal justice, said Loyola’s law school Dean Michael J. Kaufman. He said the new center will bring together three existing clinical programs at the law school: the Legislation and Policy Clinic, the Education Law and Policy Institute and the Health Justice Project.

“Curt Rodin and his wife Linda have been aware of our services in the clinics for many years, and saw this as an opportunity to bring together those clinical programs in one cohesive mission, which is to make sure the most vulnerable members of society have their basic human needs met through legal services that they couldn’t otherwise afford, and those include education, health and criminal justice,” Kaufman said.

Rodin, a 1975 graduate of the law school, said the purpose of the center is to level the playing field for low-income and disadvantaged people.

“It’s the people that are poor and underprivileged and can’t afford to hire their own lawyer, those are the people that need the lawyers and the students that are going to be participating in this [center] at Loyola. That’s why my wife and I were very anxious to get involved in this because I have always felt that one area that lawyers should do more is helping poor and underprivileged people,” he said.

Rodin is a former managing partner of Anesi, Ozmon, Rodin, Novak & Kohen Ltd., where he spent his entire career as a personal-injury lawyer. Though he is retired from the firm, Rodin said he continues to maintain a limited practice.
Kaufman said the Rodins’ donation will be used to hire an executive director to run the center as well as fund student scholarships for those interested in pursuing social justice related legal work and post-graduate fellowships for faculty who can staff the clinic.

Anita Weinberg, a clinical law professor at Loyola and director of the ChildLaw Policy Institute, has been chosen to lead the new center, he said. Weinberg will continue to serve as director of the ChildLaw Policy Institute.

Kaufman said the Curt and Linda Rodin Center for Social Justice will also provide more clinical opportunities to Loyola’s law students.

“Right now, there are students clamoring to be part of these clinics, and this will allow us to have more capacity and serve more clients as a result,” Kaufman said.

Rodin said the center has a dual purpose of benefiting both clients and law students.

“[The clients] get the legal representation, and the law students benefit because they get the experience and training to help people in these areas of law,” Rodin said.

Hopefully, experience at the new center will encourage law students to pursue public interest law after graduation, Rodin said, “because they have seen all the wonderful things that can be accomplished, and they can do more to help poor people when they are lawyers.”

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Rodin has served as president of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association and the Society of Trial Lawyers and chair of the Committee on Civil Jury Instructions of the Illinois Supreme Court.

This is not the first major donation that Rodin, an adjunct teacher at Loyola’s law school, and his wife have made to his alma mater.

In 2001, the Rodins created the Rodin Fellowship to support two student fellows in moot court.

They also formed the Harold and Shirley Rodin Scholarship and the Curt N. and Linda Rodin Scholarship as well as the Curt and Linda Rodin Visiting Clinical Professorship to support a clinical faculty position in Loyola’s Health Justice Project.

“If you’ve been fortunate enough in your career, you should give back,” he said.

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