young son, Al-Mulhim likes to try new recreational activities. He’s visited a shooting range, experimented with archery and skydiving, ridden in a helicopter, and canoed at Lake Calhoun.

Up next? Says Al-Mulhim, “I want to ride a horse in the suburbs.”

BRIAN BELL
CLASS of 2013

Like all new law students, Brian Bell faced a mountain of homework during his first weeks of classes. “Uh oh,” he remembers wondering. “Was this the right decision? Will I be able to handle it?”

He needn’t have worried. Bell hunkered down, labored long, and earned a GPA in the top quartile of his class. In addition, the Minneapolis native argued well at the National Moot Court regional tournament last fall and co-wrote the petitioner brief that won best-in-region honors.

Once Bell settled into Law School, he found that a lot of the reading related to history and political science, subjects he’s been passionate about for years. In high school, his advanced placement classes focused on U.S. and European history. As an undergraduate, he earned a political science degree from the University.

“I just love politics,” he says. “That’s my sport.” Bell enjoys reading political blogs and following electoral politics in non-presidential years, something most Americans don’t bother to do. He has volunteered on one campaign and says he’d consider running for office himself someday. “Potentially I have something to contribute,” he says.

Some impressive future employers believe Bell has plenty to contribute. Beginning this summer, he will be clerking at the Minnesota Supreme Court for Justices Alan Page (’78), Christopher Dietzen, and Wilhelmmina Wright. He’ll research cases, write bench memos, and draft opinions.

In mid-2014, Bell joins Dorsey & Whitney, one of the city’s most prestigious firms, as an associate, working in the areas of environmental, energy regulation, and regulatory affairs law. After clerking at the firm last summer, he came away impressed. “I was surrounded by intelligent, hard-working people,” he says. “I liked being part of the private sector.”

Bell has also found those traits among the Law School faculty. He points to Professor Ruth Okediji, who teaches contracts, international intellectual property law, and other courses, as a case in point. “She genuinely cares about students,” he says, and in the classroom, “She’s not afraid to let students confront one another and confront her.”

In the end, Bell says the Law School raised his game. “The University has brought my knowledge and critical thinking skills to a new level.”

LAURA MATSON
CLASS of 2014

When Laura Matson started Law School, she didn’t expect property law to be a favorite course. “It was very surprising to me,” she says.

The Minnesota native, who earned a master’s degree at the School of Oriental and African Studies at London University and studied Swahili in Kenya while an undergraduate at Sarah Lawrence College, figured to focus on international human rights issues. And while she has done that too, Matson has become fascinated by who owns what and why.

The 1823 U.S. Supreme Court decision that sparked her imagination, Johnson v. M’Intosh, prohibited Piankeshaw Indians from selling their land to private individuals. According to the court, only the federal government had that right. That landmark ruling limited the economic freedom of American Indians and reverberated through U.S. history.

Professor Hari Osofsky, who taught the property law course and is working on a doctorate in geography, didn’t just discuss the legal implications of the case, she delved into its social implications. That approach appealed to Matson. So she’s doubling up in grad school by taking courses in law and geography simultaneously, toward an eventual Ph.D.

“I always wanted to be a professor,” Matson says. “Ultimately, I’m interested in theoretical questions.”

But that doesn’t mean she’s ignoring the real world. In Kenya, besides learning Swahili she spent time with the Giriama people and later wrote an undergraduate thesis about the experience. “I wanted to get out of my comfort zone and be surrounded by people who were different than me,” she says.

More recently, she testified before the U.N. Human Rights Committee in Geneva on the impact of weapons violations on human rights. As summer student director of the Human Rights Litigation and International Legal Advocacy Clinic, Matson co-wrote an amicus brief in the case of Kiobel v. Royal Dutch Petroleum. And she’s also served as lead outside articles editor for Law & Inequality: A Journal of Theory and Practice.

Luckily, Matson has a hobby that brings her pleasure and eases the intensity. The 28-year-old is a gifted soprano who starred in the latest Theatre of the Relatively Talented (TORT) parody, “Back to the Future Interest.” She played the role popular-
GEORGE BYRON GRIFFITHS
CLASS of 2015

Before George Byron (“Geordie”) Griffiths began studying law, he worked as a Minneapolis photographer. During his career, he rarely pointed his camera at lakes or sunsets. For him, people were the most compelling subjects.

“I was never really interested in nature or products,” he says. “For me, it’s all about people and story.”

That’s evident in his projects, including “Children Born to Challenge,” a series of black-and-white portraits focusing on the struggles and triumphs of three mentally disabled children, and “Minnesota 2000,” a photographic documentation of state citizens at the turn of the century.

For more than a decade, Griffiths managed a thriving commercial photography business with big-name clients such as Children’s Hospitals & Clinics and the Guthrie Theater.

Then the recession of 2008 hit like an economic tsunami. Companies cut budgets overnight and freelancers flooded the marketplace. “I saw the writing on the wall,” he says. “I knew it wouldn’t be sustainable.”

So Griffiths signed up for the LSAT, scored high, won admission to the Law School, and began classes in September 2011. But when his mother contracted cancer, he worked closely with the Law School to obtain a deferment and get connected with available University resources to assist him through a challenging time. “It confirmed for me that this isn’t just a really great school,” he says, “but it’s a really great school that cares about who I am.”

As he nears the end of his 1L year, Griffiths is pondering his future legal career. He majored in psychology as an undergraduate at St. John’s University but didn’t pursue a specialty in clinical and counseling psychology, despite being attracted to the topic. Now he’s considering trusts and estate law—to incorporate that interest into a future legal practice.

When his great-uncle and grandmother died several years ago, one without a will and one with a trust, he witnessed firsthand how the law worked in both situations. In law as in photography, it’s all about people for Griffiths, and he wants to help others.

“I want to provide that counselor role to potential clients as they navigate the choices they have for how and to whom to leave gifts when they die.”

By Todd Melby, a freelance writer and radio producer based in Minneapolis

FEDERALIST SOCIETY
HAS STRONG YEAR OF OPEN DEBATE

THE LAW SCHOOL’S FEDERALIST SOCIETY student chapter has a simple goal: supporting debate. Founded on the principles of limited government, minimal judicial activism, and the separation of powers, the Federalist Society believes in the power of persuasion through competing arguments rather than indoctrination through one-sided speech. Thus, the group hosts debates on relevant law and public policy issues, which, based on student reactions, are meeting its goals.

“[I]m consistently impressed by and appreciate the Society’s commitment to hosting debates in which the speakers shed light on both sides of the issue in question,” says Carla Virlee (’15). “Topics are always current, interesting, meaningful, and sometimes provocative.”

The fall 2012 semester’s events ranged from a presentation on state court resistance to Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission by Seventh Circuit Judge Diane Sykes to a debate on the current state of privacy and surveillance in America after United States v. Jones.

An especially popular debate was titled “ACA Decision: Correctly Decided?” More than 100 students packed the lecture hall to hear Law School Professor Fred Morrison and George Mason Law Professor Ilya Somin explore the Supreme Court’s NFIB v. Sebelius decision.

Somin argued that Chief Justice Roberts’ opinion correctly stated that the Act could not be upheld under the Commerce Clause, but was incorrect in upholding the Act under the taxing power. Conversely, Morrison argued that the decision was correctly decided in terms of the taxing power, but also should have been upheld under the Commerce Clause. Both speakers made compelling textual and policy arguments, citing precedent ranging from Marbury v. Madison to the more recent United States v. Lopez and Gonzales v. Raich.

By Rebecca Furdek (’15) and James Dickson (’13)