

A Time to Celebrate Our Best

State Bar of Michigan 2016 Award Winners

By Mike Eidelbes, Lynn Patrick Ingram, and Samantha Meinke

T

he State Bar of Michigan honored exemplary representatives of the legal profession during the 2016 Awards Banquet, held on September 21 at the Amway Grand Plaza Hotel in Grand Rapids in conjunction with the SBM Annual Meeting. Outgoing SBM President Lori A. Buiteweg and incoming SBM President Lawrence P. Nolan presented the following awards during the banquet.

Roberts P. Hudson Award

When **Linda Rexer** sat in the crowd at the National Legal Aid and Defender Association's annual conference waiting to receive the prestigious Charles Dorsey Award, the person introducing her described her as someone who can (and does) quote Shakespeare in any situation.

She hadn't planned to quote Shakespeare in this particular situation, so Rexer had to ad lib.

Reflecting on her lifelong study of the Bard of Avon, her career dedicated to serving the poor, and the audience full of lawyers for the poor, Rexer thought of the perfect quote. She rose from her seat, walked to the stage, and described the scene in King Lear when, after his daughters have lied to him to get his kingdom, Lear ventures out into a storm. On the blustery heath with his Fool and Poor Tom, Lear, for the first time in his 80 years, learns empathy and an appreciation of the humanity of poor people.

Finding a hovel and seeing the suffering of his companions, he tells them to go in first, a very unkingly thing to do. Then, thinking about how he should have done more for the poor as king and how all the privileged should do more, he speaks what Rexer told the crowd are the best lines on poverty in all of literature:

Poor naked wretches, whereso'er you are, that abide the pelting of this pitiless storm, how shall your houseless heads and unfed sides, your loop'd and window'd raggedness, defend you from seasons such as these? O, I have ta'en too little care of this! Take physic, pomp; expose thyself to feel what wretches feel, that thou mayst shake the superflux to them, and show the heavens more just.



Rexer marveled at Lear's epiphany. The change in him is the same sort of change she has dedicated her career to trying to instill in society as she has worked tirelessly as an attorney to increase access to justice for the poor.

For nearly 30 years, Rexer has served as executive director of the Michigan State Bar Foundation. The organization was founded in 1947, but in the first 40 years of its existence, the foundation administered almost no funding directed to the support of legal services for impoverished people.

Within four months of Rexer's becoming executive director, the foundation's articles of incorporation were amended to include the mission of "the furtherance of the delivery of legal services to the poor." As of 2016, in the 29-plus years spent under Rexer's leadership, the foundation had administered a total of more than \$190 million in grants, primarily in support of legal services to the poor.

Rexer also collaborated with legal leaders to establish Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts in Michigan, something financial institutions are not required to do. In 1990, the Michigan Supreme Court approved IOLTA and designated the Michigan State Bar Foundation to serve as its administrator. Ever since, Rexer has earnestly and persistently persuaded Michigan financial institutions to participate in IOLTA and to work together to increase IOLTA income to support legal aid grants. At the end of 2015, Michigan IOLTA funds totaled more than \$27.5 million.

In 1994, Rexer established the Michigan State Bar Foundation as administrator for the distribution of the portion of Michigan court filing fees designated for civil legal aid. By the end of 2015, the legal aid portion of these fees had totaled nearly \$136 million. In 1997, Rexer was instrumental in creating the Access to

Justice Fund, through which Michigan lawyers can make voluntary financial contributions to support civil legal aid. At the end of 2015, fund contributions had totaled more than \$14 million, of which almost \$5 million is being maintained as an endowment.

Rexer didn't accomplish all of that alone, but it would not have happened without her leadership.

"[T]hroughout her services as MSBF executive director, Ms. Rexer has worked diligently and with success to create and then maintain a culture of collaboration and respect among the MSBF, the SBM, and the various legal aid programs throughout the state," wrote former SBM President Al Butzbaugh in his nomination letter. "Nationally, Ms. Rexer is an icon."

In addition to her management of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, Rexer has assumed many voluntary leadership roles within Michigan. She was a founding member of the SBM Access to Justice Task Force in 1997 and continues to co-chair the Committee on Justice Initiatives, born as the result of that task force. In 2000, she was a founding member of the Michigan State Planning Body, an independent group focused on civil and criminal legal aid for the poor. In 2010, Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly appointed her as co-chair of the Michigan Solutions on Self-Help Task Force, which developed an innovative interactive self-help website at www.michiganlegalhelp.org, opened affiliated local self-help centers, and developed court and public library training curricula for those assisting self-represented people. Also in 2010, she served as co-chair of the Access to Justice Committee of the SBM Judicial Crossroads Task Force. In 2015, she was co-chair of the Access and Affordability Committee for the SBM 21st Century Practice Task Force.

Nationally, Rexer has also assumed many leadership roles. She has served as president of the National Association of IOLTA Programs and chaired its national Technical Assistance and Meetings committees. She is a member of the NAIP Legal Services Corporation Funding Advocacy Network, a liaison to the Legal Services Corporation, and a member of LSC's Pro Bono Task Force; a trustee of the National Conference of Bar Foundations; a member of the National Legal Aid and Defender Association Board of Directors and Program Enhancement Committee; a member of the American Bar Association Commission on IOLTA; a member the IOLTA FDIC Committee and its Blue Ribbon Tax Committee; and a member of the ABA Task Force to Revise the Standards for Civil Legal Aid.

Rexer will retire from the Michigan State Bar Foundation at the end of 2016. She has received other State Bar awards, including the Michael Franck Award for contributions to the profession. Now, the State Bar's highest award, the Hudson Award, honors a legacy overflowing with long-lasting improvements to access to justice for all in Michigan. Shakespeare himself might have written that Rexer's career has truly helped to "show the heavens more just."

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

William Forsyth is a Kent County legal institution. He's been a prosecutor for 42 years—spending all but two of them in west Michigan's largest county.

Longevity isn't Forsyth's only hallmark, however. He's also been a driving force behind innovations that have benefitted not only Kent County, but the entire state.

On numerous occasions, Forsyth has testified before the state legislature on issues affecting criminal law and public safety, and legislators routinely rely on his experience and expertise to help craft fair and ethical laws. Notably, he played a key role in drafting Michigan's truth-in-sentencing law, which eliminated disciplinary credits, good time, and corrections centers for certain offenders and requires them to serve their entire minimum sentences in prison before they can be considered for parole.

In Kent County, Forsyth set up a diversion program to keep those convicted of certain crimes out of jail by requiring them to take responsibility for their actions through paying restitution and placing them under court supervision. He also devoted an assistant prosecuting attorney to work on cold cases using the investigative subpoena process. To date, the move has helped solve more than 20 homicides.

By definition, Forsyth's job requires him to put people in jail. That said, he also considers himself a defender of the innocent. As one of his nominators wrote, "[H]e understands the balance of justice and his role in the process."

This past summer, Forsyth persuaded the court to vacate the conviction of a man jailed for a sexual assault he didn't commit. While investigating a cold case, new evidence came to light connecting another person to the crime. Forsyth immediately went to work to get the conviction removed from the man's record and, after he was released from prison, met with him to express remorse for the time he spent behind bars.

Though he's as popular as ever among voters—he received more than 194,000 votes when he last ran for election in 2012, more than anyone else running for countywide office—Forsyth announced earlier this year that he would not run for reelection.



Wayne Pratt has done more to fight healthcare fraud than almost anyone in the U.S. Department of Justice. Since becoming chief of the Health Care Fraud Unit for the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan, his efforts have saved Medicare nearly \$1 billion. His passion for prosecuting individuals who defraud our nation's healthcare system has made him a true guardian, protecting the public from dangerous criminal activity committed by doctors, pharmacists, and other healthcare providers.



During his 33 years as an assistant U.S. attorney, Pratt has prosecuted some of southeastern Michigan's most notorious narcotics traffickers and corrupt healthcare providers. Recently, he successfully prosecuted Dr. Farid Fata, who provided expensive chemotherapy and other treatments to patients he knew did not need them so he could enrich himself while his patients suffered needlessly.

Among his other accomplishments, he successfully prosecuted the Patel pharmacy case, which defrauded Medicare, Blue Cross, and other insurance companies of \$18.9 million; the Quick Response Medical Clinic case; the Selden Medical Clinic case; the Hubbell Medical Clinic case; and many more. Since Pratt became chief of the Health Care Fraud Unit in May 2010, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of Michigan and the Fraud Section of the U.S. Department of Justice have successfully prosecuted more than 50 doctors and more than 30 pharmacists for felony violations involving fraud, controlled substances, or kickbacks.

According to his colleagues, Pratt's competency is matched only by his professionalism and integrity.

U.S. Attorney Barbara L. McQuade, who nominated Pratt, said that during his long career as a federal prosecutor, he has distinguished himself as a professional of the utmost integrity, intellect, and competence.

"From the beginning, Mr. Pratt has been an exemplary practitioner of criminal law," she wrote in her nomination. "He has that rare combination of scholarship and real-world practicality."

Michigan Court of Appeals Judge Michael J. Riordan, who worked closely with Pratt during his time as an assistant U.S. attorney, called Pratt "the finest trial attorney I have ever known. He is smart, humble, and ethical. He is not only a fantastic litigator, he is also an outstanding appellate attorney."

Riordan said one of the best experiences of his career was working the "Joy Boys 'mobile' crack house case with Wayne," noting he is respected by all who have ever worked with him.

McQuade agreed.

"Wayne Pratt is among the finest attorneys whose word is accepted as truth by judges, attorneys, and all who come in contact with him," she said. "He is a true champion of justice who has vastly improved the lives of people in southeastern Michigan."

Champion of Justice Award

His name—**Ulysses Whitaker Boykin**—sounds like it belongs to a man who should be a judge.

His accomplishments during his 45-year legal career, however, are even more impressive than his commanding moniker.

Wayne County Circuit Judge Michael Hathaway, who has known Boykin since the two attended Detroit's Cass Tech High School in the early 1960s, wrote, "Ulysses has always been intensely socially aware and effectively but quietly active in our common commitment to social justice."



Boykin earned his bachelor's degree from Hampton University, which is where he developed a strong interest in constitutional law. From there, he went on to earn his law degree from Harvard and, upon graduation, became the first African-American attorney to practice at Dickinson Wright.

After a brief stint as an army officer and positions at two different law firms, Boykin was elected to the Third Circuit bench in 1999. Though he practiced primarily corporate law and civil litigation, he quickly adapted to criminal court, becoming a skilled trial judge who earned the respect of his colleagues, defense lawyers, prosecutors, and litigants, and a leader in promoting rules and procedures in an effort to create a more efficient court.

In addition to his bench duties, Boykin also served on the Michigan Crime Victims Compensation Board and the Michigan Military Appeals Tribunal and chaired the Detroit Civil Service Commission. He also is a member of the Hampton University Board of Trustees.

His accomplishments during his legal career are many, but Boykin is perhaps best known for his work as a mentor; during the past four decades, he has shared his time and knowledge with high school and college students, young attorneys, and fellow judges.

In a letter supporting his colleague's nomination, Third Circuit Court Judge Edward Ewell Jr. neatly encapsulated Boykin's stellar career: "Judge Boykin has probably ruled on thousands of cases; mentored hundreds of judges, lawyers, and students; served our country in the armed forces; and conducted himself as the epitome of a first-class judge."

Hon. Nanci Grant saw a disturbing pattern and decided to do something about it.

The chief judge of the Oakland County Circuit Court, Grant discovered an influx of combat veterans on her dockets and those of her colleagues.

"We learned that [they were] struggling with housing, necessary paperwork to access VA benefits, or they simply needed better guidance," Grant told *Wayne Law* magazine. "I knew that something must be done to help these struggling veterans...service men and women who served their country honorably and put themselves in harm's way."

Her response was to launch the county's combat veterans treatment court in 2013—the only one of its kind in the state and one of only two in the country. Its goal is keeping veterans out of jail by providing them with intense supervision, treatment for mental health and substance abuse issues, readjustment counseling, and mentoring sessions with military veterans who can relate to their combat experiences.

"The veterans in the combat veterans treatment court view Judge Grant as their commanding officer—someone who has their best interests in mind and will go to battle with and for them," wrote Marseille Allen, president of the Warriors Trust Fund and the court's former supervising probation agent. "Her efforts have saved the lives of veterans who returned from war with little or no hope."



The combat veterans treatment court isn't the first time Grant recognized a particular population needed help navigating court proceedings. As a practicing attorney, Grant noticed people—especially seniors and those who had recently lost a loved one—were unsure and fairly uneducated about the need for estate planning. In 1990, she developed a series of free programs for Oakland County residents called “Removing the Mysteries of the Probate Court” to help get their estates in order and chart a path through the probate process. More than 25 years later, the programs are still going strong and, just as important, remain free to the public.

Now in her fourth term as Oakland County Circuit Court chief judge, Grant is also serving her third term on the Michigan Judicial Tenure Commission and previously represented circuit courts on the state's Community Corrections Board.

The horrific beating death of Vincent Chin and the subsequent lack of any jail time for his killers set **Roland Hwang** on a path to right wrongs and ensure that Chin was never forgotten.

He cofounded American Citizens for Justice, an Asian-American civil rights organization. ACJ hosted rallies, raised money for attorneys, and sponsored debates about whether Asian Americans were protected under federal civil rights laws. As a result of their efforts, the FBI and Department of Justice pressed civil rights charges against the men who killed Chin.

Although neither killer ultimately served jail time for his crimes, a movement to protect the rights of Asian-American citizens had begun and Roland Hwang played a big role in it.

In his day job, Hwang became an assistant Michigan attorney general to protect victims. In his spare time, Hwang worked as a volunteer to help Asian Americans. He continues to serve as a leader for ACJ 33 years after its founding. He served as Civil Rights Work Group chair for the Michigan Governor's Advisory Council on Asian Pacific American Affairs, a commissioner on the Michigan Asian Pacific American Affairs Commission, a central regional governor for the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, and a member and president of the Michigan Asian Pacific American Bar Association. He also taught courses on Asian American History and the Law as an adjunct instructor at the University of Michigan for nearly 20 years.

Hwang has served as a member of the Michigan State Advisory Committee to U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and the Attorney General's Hate Crime Prevention Task Force, a hearing referee for the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, a board member for the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion, and a State Bar board member. As a member of the State Bar Law-Related Education and Public Outreach Committee, he led the charge to turn the Vincent Chin case into a Michigan Legal Milestone.

“Roland brought his experience with the Chin case to his work as a lawyer, a servant to the people of Michigan, in his activities to seek civil rights, not only for the Asian Pacific American community, but for all with no voice,” wrote Ann Malayang Daley,



Ellen Ha, and Hyun J. Ha in a letter supporting the nomination. “He crossed racial, community, and ethnic lines to assist others in their quest for justice—in the local community schools, for the immigrant with no knowledge of the system, or the young students just learning about the issues of discrimination and diversity in the government and justice systems... We believe Roland exemplifies what a true Champion of Justice embodies.”

There's a common thread running through **Marla Mitchell-Cichon's** legal career, one that started as a public defender in Ohio and continues to her current post as a professor at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School—helping people who, without her, would likely get lost in the machinations of the legal system.



Mitchell-Cichon landed at Cooley in 1995; she was previously director of the University of Akron Trial Litigation Clinic and the Kramer Law Clinic at Case Western Reserve University. At Cooley, she's been clinical supervisor for the school's Sixty Plus Elderlaw and Estate Planning clinics, co-director of the Access to Justice clinic, and, most recently, director of its Innocence Project, a program she has worked with since its launch in 2001.

Over the past 15 years, hundreds of law students participating in Cooley's Innocence Project under Mitchell-Cichon's supervision have screened more than 6,000 cases, 30 of which were earmarked for additional DNA testing. New evidence brought to light by the Innocence Project's work has resulted in the exoneration of three clients wrongly imprisoned for crimes they did not commit. In a fourth case, the Michigan Court of Appeals last year ordered further DNA testing in the case of a man convicted in a 1988 murder in Oakland County.

“She has designed a clinic that puts students and clients in the forefront,” WMU Cooley Clinical Coordinator William J. Fleener Jr. wrote in a letter supporting his colleague's nomination. “She has moved students into roles that the law school was originally not comfortable with, including arguing in appellate cases and visiting clients in prison.”

In addition to her work with the Innocence Project, Mitchell-Cichon played an integral role in the effort to get rid of the sunset provision on Michigan's post-conviction DNA testing law. That measure, which would have expired this year, is now permanently on the books in the state. She's now educating lawmakers on a proposed law that would result in victims of wrongful conviction getting compensation from the state for each year they spent in prison.

“Marla is the best kind of advocate, one who maintains credibility with those opposed to her legal and policy positions,” wrote Michigan Deputy Solicitor General Eric Restuccia. “In giving everyone the benefit of the doubt, she has an undeniable optimism that is irresistible.”

H. Rhett Pinsky became a lawyer because his father was a lawyer.

"I never really thought I had a choice," he said.

Pinsky left his home state of West Virginia for Princeton, where he earned a bachelor's degree before moving on to Harvard Law School. After three years in the armed forces, he looked for a place to start his legal career.

"I wanted a medium-sized city, I wanted to be far enough away from West Virginia but not too far, and I liked winter," Pinsky said.

West Virginia's loss was west Michigan's gain.

Pinsky set up shop in Grand Rapids with an eye on labor and employment law, an area to which he gravitated in part because civil rights was a hot-button issue at the time.

Pinsky's first notable case was in 1972, when he filed a federal class-action lawsuit against the Grand Rapids Fire Department on behalf of two African-American applicants who alleged the fire department's methods of recruiting, testing, and selecting candidates for job openings was racially discriminatory. Two years later, the court entered a consent decree ordering the fire department to implement an equal opportunity hiring program and develop a better entrance exam for applicants.

Nearly two decades later, Pinsky played a key role in a Grand Rapids group's successful gender-equity lawsuit against the Michigan High School Athletic Association. Although the case is most famous for leading to changes to the state's high school basketball and volleyball seasons, the ruling forced the athletic association to do a better job complying with the federal Title IX law banning sex discrimination in schools.

"It provided a big step in equality of treatment between boys and girls in high school athletics," said Pinsky, who added he wasn't overly familiar with Title IX when he joined the case after getting a call from the lead counsel.

Not all of Pinsky's memorable cases have been high profile. He recalled a case from the 1970s involving religious freedom; he and his client remained friends until the man recently died at age 99.

"It's been a real privilege to practice law for 50 years and continue to practice law," Pinsky said. "It's really different from a business. In a business, you represent yourself. A lawyer has to consider his client first. To be able to do that is a really wonderful thing."



to its mission of serving the greater Macomb community....Not only does it raise money from lawyers, the MCBF channels lawyers' volunteer time into one of Macomb County's most pressing needs—the legal literacy of its citizens."

To accomplish this goal, the Macomb County Bar Foundation hosts special events each year. In honor of Law Day, it sponsors an essay contest followed by a Law Day ceremony held in the Macomb County Board of Commissioners' auditorium in which students discuss and debate their essays, posters, and multimedia presentations. On Constitution Day, the foundation hosts events to educate students, adults, and lifelong learners about constitutional principles and interpretations of American law. And it collaborates with the Michigan Center for Civic Education to host the Macomb County regional tournament of the Michigan High School Mock Trial competition. This year, the Macomb tournament featured 14 teams of approximately 110 students from 11 high schools in the Macomb County area.

The foundation also presents ongoing educational programs. It hosts the History Book Club, which meets monthly to view a presentation on and participate in discussion about history books, and the Lawyer-Teacher Partnership, which connects attorneys with school classrooms. It also produces "Macomb County Bar Foundation Legally Speaking," an Emmy-nominated public television show about law-related topics, in collaboration with Sterling Heights Television.

The foundation created and funds a series of scholarships for second- and third-year law students enrolled in Michigan law schools. The Trustees Law School Scholarship and the Philip F. Greco Memorial Scholarship are awarded to students who demonstrate a commitment to serve the legal community, and the Kimberly M. Cahill Leadership Memorial Scholarship is awarded to a student who demonstrates outstanding leadership and inspirational qualities.

"The sheer volume of outreach programs offered by the foundation might lead one to believe that these programs are merely window dressing or programs in name only," Robert Garvey wrote in his nomination. "That is not the case with the Macomb County Bar Foundation....The leadership has been able to engage judges at all levels, lawyers in almost every aspect of the profession, and, most importantly, members of the public who will be voters and future leaders."

John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award

George T. Roumell is a living legend.

As a lawyer, arbitrator, and adjunct law professor since 1957—he is the longest-serving member of the faculty at the Michigan State University College of Law—Roumell has built a reputation that is beyond reproach.

As a lawyer, he has worked on many significant cases, including *Bradley v Milliken* (the Detroit school busing case), in which he argued before the United States Supreme Court on behalf of the Detroit Board of Education.



Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award

The **Macomb County Bar Foundation**, once led by none other than Kimberly Cahill, goes above and beyond to promote law-related education to people of all ages in its community.

"I knew Kim Cahill. And the MCBF is Kim Cahill. She nurtured this program in its infancy and led it into its adolescence," wrote Tom Rombach in a letter supporting the nomination. "Just like Kim, the MCBF has masterfully met the challenges presented by changing times, while deftly staying true



Dawn Prokopec
Foundation President

As an arbitrator, he has handled more than 6,000 cases and is so widely trusted that earlier this year, the Chicago Fraternal Order of Police sought him out to arbitrate its issue with the city of Chicago regarding the destruction of police misconduct records.

But perhaps his greatest accomplishment is the impact he has made on generations of law students.

Norman Lippitt, who nominated Roumell, said everyone who knows him holds him in the highest regard.

"I can't imagine another professor from a Michigan law school whose influence on Michigan lawyers has elevated the quality of the legal practice in the state more than Professor Roumell," Lippitt wrote.

Several of his former students echoed this sentiment in their letters of support.

Dan Downey, a Texas lawyer, state representative, and district judge who was a student of Roumell's and later worked with him as a law clerk on the Detroit school busing case, said the lessons he learned from Roumell were instrumental in his career.

"No one, except my father, has influenced me more," he said.

Wayne County Circuit Court Chief Judge Robert J. Colombo Jr., who also worked with Roumell on the busing case, agreed.

"Much of what Professor Roumell taught me I have used for the last 33 years [as a judge]," he said. "He was an inspiration to me."

Joan Howarth, dean and professor of law at MSU College of Law, said Roumell's accomplishments are nearly unparalleled, but noted he's not slowing down.

"[His] legacy continues to grow," she said. "But, for what he has already achieved, he richly deserves the John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award."

John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

Leo Goddeyne has devoted himself tirelessly to pro bono work for more than 40 years.

A highly regarded business and commercial lawyer at Miller Canfield in Kalamazoo, Goddeyne has focused a tremendous amount of his pro bono efforts counseling nonprofit and charitable organizations that serve low-income communities working to obtain and maintain tax-exempt status and complying with state registration and charitable solicitation laws.

"Leo has been a leader of the firm's pro bono efforts as a member of the Pro Bono Committee since its inception, and during that time he has undertaken at least 75 separate pro bono matters and recorded at least 2,000 hours of pro bono service in the past 15 years," Miller Canfield CEO Michael McGee said in his nomination. "His impact in the pro bono community is unequalled, in my experience."

Organizations served by Goddeyne include Barrier Free Housing for Independent Living, the Community Teen Center, Friends of the Kalamazoo River, the Black Arts and Cultural Center, the Kalamazoo Center for Youth and Community Service, Cancer Families United, Art Serve, Home Repair Services for Kent County,



Northeast Michigan Affordable Housing, and Fresh Fire African Methodist Episcopal Church, among many others.

He has also served organizations outside the Kalamazoo area.

"We affectionately call Leo our pro bono ninja," wrote Wendolyn Richards, vice president of operations and general counsel for Michigan Community Resources. "He is a champion for organizations in distressed areas outside of large legal markets, where needs are high and volunteers are hard to find. For MCR alone, he has helped a struggling affordable housing organization in Rogers City, made connections for us to bankruptcy attorneys in the Bay City area, and provided advice to an economic development program in Grayling."

Goddeyne has also served as a leader with the Kalamazoo County Bar Association and Legal Aid of Western Michigan. He played an integral part in starting weekly pro bono legal clinics, and as chair of the KCBA Pro Bono Committee oversaw their continued growth. The clinics currently facilitate approximately 80 lawyers offering close to 300 hours of free legal services to the community each year.

"As important as Mr. Goddeyne's work with clinics and non-profits has been, his most significant contribution is the support and encouragement he has given to his successors on the KCBA Pro Bono Committee," Donald Robert, managing attorney for Legal Aid of Western Michigan's Kalamazoo office, wrote in his nomination. "He has worked tirelessly to recruit young lawyers to participate in pro bono activities."

Liberty Bell Award

David Britten is a law, government, and world history teacher.

He is also a chauffeur, college tour planner, mentor, and support system for current and former students.

"Relentlessly, he encourages Detroit Public Schools students to dive in and participate as leaders and difference makers, not simply gawk from the proverbial sidelines of citizenship," Wayne County Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Danton Wilson wrote in his nomination letter. "He has coached winning mock trial teams and has contributed hours of leadership and service to the Teen Leadership Institute, the combined student council leaders from all DPS high schools."

Britten's students don't just survive. They thrive.

One of his students, Kyra Porties, led her Denby High School classmates in hosting a Detroit mayoral debate at their school. Denzel Washington, one of Britten's mock trial students at Northwestern High School, became citywide student council president, was named Michigan High School Student of the Year by the Michigan Center for Civic Education, and is now "Democracy Matters" chapter leader at Marygrove College in Detroit. Anthony Huston, another of Britten's mock trial students, was vice president of the citywide student council and teamed with another student to raise \$100,000 to develop an incubator for young entrepreneurs in Detroit. And yet another student, Jayla Emerson,



graduated from Michigan State University, where she founded the African American Criminal Justice Association. She will soon start law school.

One of Britten's best known students was Balaal Hollings, who was an honor student, senior class president, student body president, and a star football player. At a friend's party, Hollings was shot in the head while trying to break up a fight. When he arrived at the hospital, doctors said he was the "clinical definition of dead" with no brain activity. He underwent surgery and was in a coma for weeks. Britten sat vigil by his bedside and provided continuous support as Hollings woke up and moved to a local rehabilitation center.

Two months later, Hollings stunned his classmates by showing up to deliver his president's address at graduation.

"Mr. Britten is the best teacher I ever had," Hollings wrote in his nomination. "For a while in high school, he picked me up every single day for school. I would have failed my senior year had he not done that....He makes learning fun. He just has so much passion for what he does."

"There is no keener revelation of a society's soul than the way in which it treats its children," Nelson Mandela once said.

Using Mandela's logic, there is no keener advocate for society in Grand Rapids than **Teresa Weatherall Neal**.

Neal has devoted herself to educating and inspiring young people. She has dedicated her entire career to the Grand Rapids Public Schools—beginning in her teenage years as a student worker and rising through the ranks to become a compliance officer, director of student activities, and superintendent in 2012.

Under her leadership, the Grand Rapids Public Schools instituted the 3Rs program—Rights, Responsibilities, and Realities—the goal of which is to create better citizens and expose students to careers in the legal field. The program, funded by the Grand Rapids Managing Partners Diversity Collaborative, is a partnership between the Grand Rapids Public Schools and the Grand Rapids Bar Association. Teams of attorney volunteers visit ninth grade social studies classrooms to present eight separate sessions between October and May each school year, working with small groups of students to improve their understanding of the rule of law and the Constitution, increase interest in civic and government issues, provide practical career counseling, and improve the pipeline of minorities going into legal careers.

Neal also oversaw the founding of Parent University, a community initiative that helps parents in Grand Rapids learn skills to become full partners in their children's education. The program offers classes, family events, and other activities to empower families with skills and resources.

In 2014, she received the Award for Inspiration from the West Michigan Center for Arts and Technology. In 2015, she received a Women of Achievement and Courage Award from the Michigan Women's Foundation. Earlier this year, she was named the Giant



Among Giants by Grand Rapids Community College for contributing to the city's quality of life.

The anonymous person who nominated Neal for the Giant Among Giants Award said of her, "Our superintendent is bold and courageous, a community leader, a listener, a collaborator, and one of our community's own as she drives fundamental and extensive change."

In her acceptance speech for that award, Neal said, "I want to thank our community partners. We cannot educate children without all of you. Because to lead a system—to do what's best for children—it does take a community....The children we raise today will lead us tomorrow."

Representative Assembly Awards

The State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly presented awards to three individuals during its business meeting on September 22.

Michael Franck Award

Michigan is one of only four states that does not have mandatory continuing legal education. Yet, thanks in large part to **Lynn Chard**, our state is a leader in the industry.

Chard's dedication to meeting the needs of Michigan lawyers over the last 30 years along with her unique vision and skill have ensured that Michigan is among the most advanced and prepared legal communities in the country.

According to Jeff Kirkey, Chard's education director at the Institute of Continuing Legal Education, she is the reason Michigan has CLE resources that are "envied by practitioners throughout the United States and emulated by CLE organizations around the world."

Her colleagues and customers agree.

"The fact that she's built one of the most admired and emulated CLE organizations in North America in a state where lawyers aren't even required to take CLE is amazing by itself," wrote attorney Barron Henley in a letter of support.

Perhaps her greatest accomplishment, and the best evidence of her vision and foresight, was the way she shepherded ICLE and the legal community through the industry's major shift from print to online resources.

"Lynn envisioned online books, kits, and forms to help lawyers provide legal services to their clients more effectively and efficiently," Kirkey wrote in his nomination letter. "Lynn led ICLE to collect all of these resources in a subscription 'partnership' that enhances effective access to all of ICLE's online resources and better meets the legal research and practice support needs of Michigan lawyers."

Jack Reilly, executive director of Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education, echoed Kirkey's sentiments.



“Under Lynn’s leadership, ICLE has become arguably the best CLE operation in the nation, and certainly a model organization, to which all others (including mine) repeatedly look for guidance,” he wrote in his letter of support. “She’s been a trailblazer and a visionary, always willing to push the envelope and take risk to improve the way lawyers (whom she refers to as her partners) learn and develop professionally.”

Chard is also a tireless volunteer for the profession, collaborating regularly with the State Bar of Michigan and local and special-purpose bar associations.

“She takes on every task presented to her by one State Bar president after another,” Kirkey noted.

According to John Reed, law professor and Thomas M. Cooley professor of law emeritus at the University of Michigan Law School, Chard is a unifier.

“Her excellent relations with bar groups and individual lawyers and judges...have contributed to the esprit and sense of unity of the bar at large,” he wrote.

Unsung Hero Award

Tessa Hessmiller doesn’t just fight crimes against children; she also works tirelessly to prevent them.

As an advocate for and board member of the Kent County Children’s Assessment Center, which provides a safe haven for children who are victims of sexual violence, she helps educate the community on how to recognize and prevent such heinous crimes against children.

As chairperson of the Kent County Human Trafficking Task Force, which helps victims of human trafficking, she teaches community leaders how to recognize the signs of human trafficking.

As a board member of the Grand Rapids Junior League, which exists “to improve children’s physical health by increasing access to safe, cooperative play for children in situations or neighborhoods where it is needed most,” she helps the staff understand the dangers of human trafficking and how they can become advocates in their daily lives for children’s safety. She can also be seen regularly leading the organization’s efforts to build safe play areas, educating children on healthy eating, and helping them improve their overall health.

And although she can’t prevent everything, she’s there again when justice needs to be done.

A graduate of Georgetown Law and former Judge Advocate General’s Corps attorney, Hessmiller became an assistant U.S. attorney for the Western District of Michigan in 2013. Since then, she has spent the majority of her time prosecuting crimes involving human trafficking and child pornography. In this short time, she has successfully prosecuted several big cases, including preventing a grandmother from acting as a “madam” for her grandchild, stopping a radio host from engaging in further illegal acts with children, and empowering a teenage boy to speak out against his attacker on the witness stand.



“Tessa works tirelessly to reach justice for those children who have been wronged and truly obtains justice for them,” said Erin Toburen in a letter.

Of course, her advocacy does not stop there.

“Her dedication to improving the lives of others does not end at sentencing,” Toburen said. “Rather, Ms. Hessmiller enthusiastically serves the community improving the lives of all those she touches.”

Jerrold Schrotenboer believes that the key to justice is the competence of those involved in the process.

Because of this philosophy, he spends a great deal of time giving back to the legal profession through coaching, mentoring, and simply holding himself out as a resource to others, not to mention hundreds of hours of pro bono work and volunteerism.

Jennifer Lamp, a colleague of Schrotenboer’s, said in her nomination letter that he is “by his own selfless giving of his time and talent, a huge asset to the members of the Michigan bar who have the pleasure of knowing him.”

His wife, Karen Lewthwaite, concurs, describing his “zeal to help other members of the bar as being rooted in his honest belief that justice is best served when everyone knows what they’re doing. In other words, if everyone does their job well, a just outcome is more likely.”

That’s why Schrotenboer has spent countless hours talking with, training, helping, and mentoring law students, paralegals, attorneys, and anyone else who wants to learn and get better.

Attorney Megan Smith is one of those people. She noted in a letter that when she first began working as a law clerk for the court, Schrotenboer immediately took her under his wing, providing practice advice, assisting her with research, and giving her invaluable career contacts.

“He always has time for young lawyers, and I can say for certain that I have learned more from Jerry about practical lawyering than I ever did in law school. He was always more than willing to spend time with me. His wealth of knowledge and his drive to impart that knowledge to me is something for which I will be forever grateful.”

Meanwhile, the only things that might match his desire to help others are his legal acumen and ability to say a lot by saying a little.

“Jerry does not believe in wasting time with extra language or extra words,” Lamp said. “Whenever I find legalese trying to sneak its way into a brief I am writing, I think, ‘Jerry Schrotenboer would not approve.’”

She also said he has a great sense of humor, and...

“Did I mention that he also is remarkably intelligent?” Lamp queried, noting it is “not uncommon in Jackson County to argue a motion (especially when it is on an obscure issue) and have the court listen to both sides and then ask, ‘What does Jerry Schrotenboer think?’”

The court is not alone.



Awards from Other Organizations

Four individuals were honored by other organizations during the Awards Banquet.

Michigan State Bar Foundation Founders Award

The Michigan State Bar Foundation has selected **George Googasian** and **Jon Muth** as 2016 recipients of its highest honor, the Founders Award.



“Both George Googasian and Jon Muth represent the highest traditions of our profession,” Foundation President Margaret Nichols said. “No two Michigan lawyers could better exemplify the Founders Award criteria of professional excellence and outstanding community contributions.”



Googasian and Muth are good friends who greatly admire each other, and each described the special qualities of the other. Muth said Googasian is a true gentleman, a consummate professional, a talented lawyer of the highest ethics, and a fierce competitor. Googasian said Muth was one of the finest bar leaders in Michigan, a great trial lawyer with common sense, knowledge of the law, and a sense of fairness. Those who know Googasian and Muth know these depictions are accurate and are why we look to both as examples of the best in our profession. That best goes beyond legal excellence to bar leadership and generous commitments to access to justice. Both are past recipients of the Roberts P. Hudson Award, the State Bar’s highest honor; Life Fellows of the Foundation; and past presidents of the State Bar of Michigan. And both have provided leadership to local bars and prestigious professional associations.

Googasian is a Fellow in the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, the American College of Trial Lawyers, and the American Board of Trial Advocates. He has received major awards for service from the State Bar of Michigan, the Oakland County Bar Association, and the American Judicature Society, among other groups. He also is a former vice president of the Oakland County

chapter of the American Inns of Court. Googasian worked as an assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Michigan for the U.S. Department of Justice in Detroit before becoming a private practitioner concentrating in trial work and serving as a mediator and arbitrator. He has served numerous hours as president of the Oakland County Bar Association and in state-level efforts to assist the profession and its obligations to the public. Much of this work was done quietly and would not appear on a résumé; one example is his quick agreement to host a benefit to honor a longtime legal aid lawyer, which raised funds to support legal aid law interns.

Similarly, Muth has made a difference for those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer, a key example being his leadership in establishing the Kent County Legal Assistance Center, which now helps more than 18,000 self-represented persons annually navigate the legal system in civil matters. He also served on the Michigan State Bar Foundation’s board and on its Legal Services Grants Committee during years in which the foundation, the State Bar, and providers collaborated to build the Access to Justice Fund and other delivery innovations. His creative ideas are still being implemented by those working on access to justice; last year, he served on the Access Committee of the State Bar’s 21st Century Practice Task Force. He has received awards and recognition for his bar leadership, which has included many local and State Bar committees. He has been a master with the American Inns of Court, a member of the Federal Bar Association, and a member of the American Bar Association, including serving on its House of Delegates. He chaired the Grand Rapids Bar Association’s Pro Bono Committee and was organizational chair of the Kent County Legal Assistance Center, where he remains a trustee.

Foundation Executive Director Linda Rexer said, “George and Jon have been models of able and generous professionals. They have both long inspired me and many others more than they know in our work to make access to justice a reality for all.”

The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and grants to improve access for all to the justice system, including support for civil legal aid to the poor, law-related education, and conflict resolution. For more information, visit www.msbf.org.

Each year, the Michigan Association for Justice and the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel present a Respected Advocate Award to promote mutual respect and civility. The MAJ gives the award to a member of the defense bar for the purpose of recognizing and honoring the individual's history of successful representation of clients and adherence to the highest standards of ethics. The MDTC does the same for a plaintiff's practitioner.

Michigan Association for Justice Respected Advocate Award

The MAJ will honor **Michael R. Janes** with a Respected Advocate Award. Janes is a shareholder and president of Martin, Bacon & Martin PC in Mt. Clemens. His practice includes all areas of personal injury defense with emphasis on the defense of medical malpractice causes of action. Janes obtained his undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame in 1979 and his juris doctorate degree from the University of Detroit School of Law in 1981. In addition to his longtime membership in the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel, he is also past president of the Association of Defense Trial Counsel, a current council member for the State Bar of Michigan's Negligence Law Section, a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, a Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, and a member of the Michigan Society of Health Care Attorneys.



Michigan Defense Trial Counsel Respected Advocate Award

The MDTC will present a Respected Advocate Award to **Jules B. Olsman**. Olsman is president of Olsman MacKenzie & Wallace and has practiced personal injury law in Michigan for 36 years, representing clients in cases involving nursing home negligence; medical malpractice; assisted living claims; group home injuries; truck, car, and vehicle accidents; police misconduct; and wrongful death cases. He has helped clients obtain tens of millions of dollars for their injuries. Olsman was named in *Best Lawyers in America* from 2007 to 2016, named the 2016 Personal Injury Litigation—Plaintiffs "Lawyer of the Year" in Troy by *Best Lawyers in America*, listed as a Super Lawyer from 2007 to 2015, and named to the Michigan Top 50 Consumer Super Lawyers list in 2013–2015 and the Michigan Top 100 Super Lawyers list in 2009–2015. Olsman has been ranked at the highest level of professional excellence by Martindale-Hubbell, recognized as a Leading Lawyer in Michigan from 2014 to 2015, and selected as a 2015 *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* "Leader in Law."



community service

access to justice

pro bono

