

A Time to Celebrate Our Best

State Bar of Michigan 2017 Award Winners

By Mike Eidelbes, Lynn Patrick Ingram, and Samantha Meinke

The State Bar of Michigan honored exemplary representatives of the legal profession during the 2017 Awards Banquet, held on September 27 at the Cobo Center in Detroit in conjunction with the SBM NEXT Conference. Outgoing SBM President Lawrence P. Nolan and incoming President Donald G. Rockwell presented the following awards during the banquet.

Roberts P. Hudson Award

Although he is the founding partner of Mantese Honigman, PC, **Gerard V. Mantese** is never too busy to show support for his community, colleagues, and former students.

"I really don't know how Gerard does it all; his energy and passion are beyond compare," wrote Judge Frank Arnold in a letter supporting Mantese's nomination. "I was a student of Gerard's in the early '90s when he was an adjunct professor at UDM with a trial practice course, and I found his instruction and words of wisdom encouraging at a personal level and at a time when I needed it most, about to enter into practice of the 'real world.' Many years later, I saw him again upon my taking the bench in 2010, when he took the time out of his busy schedule to come all the way down to Monroe to offer personal congratulations. I truly believe that I am not the only former student of his that he shared in celebrating individual growth and success over the years."

Mantese has a stellar reputation as an attorney. He and John J. Conway successfully prosecuted a class-action lawsuit in favor of autistic children that resulted in a landmark settlement in June 2009, requiring Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan to reverse its policy and provide applied behavioral analysis therapy for autistic children. Such therapy, previously denied because Blue Cross considered it "experimental," has been shown to be beneficial and necessary early in life.

Mantese has also served the profession and the Bar over the years. He was a voluntary hearing panelist for the Attorney Discipline Board from 1994 to 2015 and has been a member of the SBM Publications and Website Advisory Committee for 23 years.

He has dedicated hundreds of hours to working with his daughter and her school classmates to create three film projects for Law Day; each won first prize in the State Bar's annual



Law Day Contest in 2012–2014. The first film was composed of a dramatization of the *Roosevelt v Newett* trial, the second a documentary about the *Korematsu v United States* case, and the third focused on *United States v Sinclair*.

Mantese has published several books, including *Women Who Changed the World—The Journey and the Joy*, *Alexandra and the Amazing History Book*, and *Fabulous Fables*. He regularly donates time and money to many organizations, including Habitat for Humanity, Wayne State Free Legal Aid Clinic, Care House, Capuchin Soup Kitchen, and Gleaners.

He served on the board of directors for Goodwill Industries and has devoted more than 300 pro bono hours to establishing the First Step legal advocacy project, which provides free legal advice to those who have suffered domestic violence.

"Gerard is dedicated, industrious, and skilled in the law," wrote Conway in a letter supporting Mantese's nomination. "His tenacity is tempered with compassion for the rights of people. In my interactions with Gerard, I have found him to be conscientious, precise, and dedicated to his clients. His ethical standards are not only above reproach, but also above the standards set by the Bar."

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

Hon. Robert Holmes Bell has served the public in an exemplary manner for more than 47 years.

"Judge Bell has effectively modeled and encouraged decorum, respect for the law, and civility among practitioners and litigants in court and throughout government," wrote William Azkoul in his nomination. "The virtues modeled and taught by Judge Bell have made a permanent, lasting impact on the West Michigan legal community."



Bell began his career in 1969 as an assistant prosecuting attorney in Ingham County. In 1972, he ran for election against an Ingham County district court judge and won. He was elected to the Ingham County Circuit Court bench in 1978.

In 1987, Bell was appointed by President Ronald Reagan to the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, serving as chief judge from 2001 to 2008. He is highly regarded among federal judges and was appointed chair of the Criminal Law Committee for the United States Judicial Conference by United States Supreme Court Chief Justice John Roberts.

His cases have ranged from allocating responsibility for the cleanup of PCBs in the Kalamazoo River to deciding whether public lands in Benton Harbor could be used as a golf course to balancing historic motor boat use against the U.S. Forest Service's designation of a lake as a wilderness area. He oversaw the prosecution of Marvin Gabrion, the first person sentenced to death in the state of Michigan since 1937. He also oversaw the prosecution of 31 members of the Latin Kings for gang activity in Holland. Perhaps his biggest challenge and success arose when he was the only active district court judge from 2005 to 2007, when he and Senior Judge Gordon Quist successfully maintained the entire court docket.

Bell has worked to pass on legal education to others by serving as a lecturer for the Federal Judicial Center and as a distinguished professor of law at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School in Grand Rapids. He has also volunteered for the Hillman Advocacy Program, an educational program that helps new lawyers develop trial skills.

"I participated in the program 22 years ago and met Judge Bell then," wrote Molly McManus in a letter supporting Bell's nomination. "His words and demeanor made quite an impression on me during that first year of my law practice—the awe of being treated with such respect by a federal judge and the weight of the expectations that were placed upon us. Throughout my practice, I have strived to live up to those expectations."

Hon. Bernard A. Friedman has dedicated nearly four decades of his legal career to public service.

He began his legal career in the United States Army JAG Corps. After his military service, he became a trial attorney in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. Two years later, with Holden Roberson and Bob Harrison, he formed the second integrated law firm in Detroit. The firm's first clients were police officers the trio had met while working at the prosecutor's office, who had been caught up by federal agents tapping a phone in the Anchor Bar. Friedman helped the officers unionize, and that's how he got his start in labor law. He also expanded his practice to represent the cities of Inkster and Southgate.

Friedman served as a judge in the 48th District Court in Oakland County from 1982 to 1988. In the spring of 1988, he was nominated by President Ronald Reagan to the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, serving as chief judge from 2004 to 2009. He has become one of the most highly respected judges in Michigan.



"In chambers, Judge Friedman often reiterates that our job is to serve the public, and he truly embodies this principle every time he takes the bench," wrote Brittany Mouzourakis, one of Friedman's judicial law clerks, in her nomination letter. "Judge Friedman is incredibly kind and considerate to all parties, attorneys, jurors, and observers who come into his courtroom."

Although he has decided many memorable cases, Friedman's best-known case will forever be *DeBoer v Snyder*. In deciding that case in March 2014, Friedman struck down Michigan's gay marriage ban as unconstitutional.

"Many Michigan residents have religious convictions whose principles...inform their own viewpoints about marriage," Friedman wrote in his opinion. "Nonetheless, these views cannot strip other citizens of the guarantees of equal protection under the law. The same Constitution that protects the free exercise of one's faith in deciding whether to solemnize certain marriages rather than others, is the same Constitution that prevents the state from either mandating adherence to an established religion...or enforcing private moral or religious beliefs without an accompanying secular purpose."

In November 2014, the U.S. Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals overturned Friedman's decision. Then, on June 24, 2015, the United States Supreme Court overturned the Sixth Circuit's decision, abolishing gay marriage bans across the country.

On August 22, 2015, Friedman officiated the wedding of April DeBoer and Jane Rowse, the women who challenged Michigan's same-sex marriage ban.

As United States attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan, **Barbara L. McQuade** has developed a reputation for being tough, highly competent, and fair.

"Barbara McQuade has never seen a problem she does not believe can be addressed, and she has never shied away from hard work, no matter how much of a personal sacrifice she must make to achieve her goals," wrote Susan DeClercq, Daniel Lemisch, and Kevin Mulcahy in their letter supporting McQuade's nomination. "Barb inspires people to work hard, to work fair, and to seek justice. She asks hard questions of everyone around her and she listens to their answers. She holds everyone to the highest standards of integrity, and sets an example in her own life. Advancing the ideals of democracy, social justice, and achieving equality across all possible barriers are at the core of what motivates Barb."

As U.S. attorney from 2010 to 2017, McQuade oversaw more than 100 attorneys who handled in excess of 1,000 cases a year. Some of the most notable cases include the conviction of former Detroit Mayor Kwame Kilpatrick and 30 others on public corruption charges, the conviction and life sentence of an al-Qaeda operative who attempted to blow up a commercial aircraft on Christmas Day 2009, the conviction of Dr. Farid Fata in one of the largest Medicare fraud cases in U.S. history, the conviction and \$4.3 billion fine against Volkswagen AG for falsified emissions tests, the conviction and \$1 billion fine against Takata Corp. for fraudulently concealing defective airbags, and settlements



with local municipalities regarding enforcement of religious land use laws.

“She has made it clear...that the rule of law applies to everyone—having a high position or holding public office does not exempt you from the law,” DeClercq, Lemisch, and Mulcahy wrote.

McQuade also created the first-ever fully staffed Civil Rights Unit in a U.S. attorney’s office and prioritized work that would level the playing field in housing, education, accessibility for the disabled, and voting. She worked with community leaders in Flint, Saginaw, and Detroit to quell violent crime through such programs as Detroit One, a violence reduction strategy and community partnership. Since Detroit One began, homicides in the city are down 20 percent, nonfatal shootings have dropped 25 percent, and carjackings have fallen by 50 percent.

Before serving as U.S. attorney, McQuade was an assistant U.S. attorney and deputy chief of the National Security Unit. She now teaches national security, criminal law, and criminal procedure to students at the University of Michigan Law School.

Champion of Justice Award

Whenever there’s a crisis in Michigan, **Michael C. McDaniel** is often summoned to help.

Currently, the former Michigan National Guard brigadier general and assistant state attorney general is playing a key role in helping Flint residents after the city’s drinking water was tainted by lead-leaching pipes. As the head of the city’s Fast Action and Sustainability Team, McDaniel has been the primary liaison between Mayor Dr. Karen Weaver and Gov. Rick Snyder, and is spearheading efforts to replace Flint’s 7,000 water pipes.

“[He] is passionate about redressing the wrongs done to our city and to making sure that every Flint resident can be assured that their lead damaged-service line will be replaced,” Weaver wrote in a letter of support for McDaniel, who also sits on the city’s Water Interagency Coordinating Committee.

In 2013, McDaniel led a review of another public utility crisis, guiding a team investigating the Lansing Board of Water and Light’s response to a massive power outage that affected 40 percent of the company’s customers. The review team found that the utility was not prepared to deal with an outage of that magnitude and offered 75 recommendations to prevent a repeat, all of which BWL implemented.

A current Western Michigan Thomas M. Cooley Law School associate dean and professor of law, McDaniel is a nationally recognized expert in homeland and national security law. He chaired the task force that reviewed Michigan laws for gaps in protection against terrorism in the wake of the 2001 World Trade Center attacks, became the state’s first homeland security advisor in 2003, and served as the U.S. deputy assistant secretary for homeland security from 2009 to 2011. He also created WMU Cooley’s



homeland and national security master of laws degree program, the only one in the country outside of Washington, D.C.

In five years with the Wayne County prosecutor’s child abuse unit and nearly a quarter century as a juvenile court referee in Michigan’s 3rd Judicial Circuit Court, **Hon. Kelly A. Ramsey** has seen children in the worst possible situations—heartbreaking stories of kids who are delinquent or have been abused and neglected.



Over the years, some of those same children have returned to Ramsey’s courtroom to talk about their successes later in life and to thank her for her time and the lasting impression she made on them.

“Although many lucrative opportunities have come her way,” wrote one person supporting her nomination, “she has chosen to remain committed to making a better world for this state’s children.”

Ramsey’s commitment to the children of metropolitan Detroit doesn’t end when she leaves the courtroom. While taking part in a task force about pro bono services for foster children years ago, she realized that those kids need more than just legal help.

“Our court is designed to take care of the basic needs of foster children,” Ramsey wrote on the website of For the Seventh Generation, a not-for-profit organization she started in 2005. “Sadly, these kids have a lot of needs that go far beyond the court’s ability to solve, and with our limited resources, we can only do so much.”

For the Seventh Generation was established in 2005 by the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association in cooperation with the 3rd Judicial Circuit Court and the state Department of Human Services. Its primary aim is matching volunteers who donate time, talent, services, or goods with foster children, who have received everything from eyeglasses to orthodontic care to prom dresses.

The organization has expanded to operate Play it Forward!, which provides free lessons and instruments to children, and the Help Closet, a drop-off location for donated clothing, furniture, technology, and toys where foster families can shop for items they need at no cost.

Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award

As the only student-athlete in Michigan State history to play in both the NCAA Men’s Basketball Final Four and the Rose Bowl, **Patrick J. Wilson** is the answer to a relatively obscure trivia question.



In Traverse City and beyond, however, he’s better known as a man whose exemplary civic and legal career has spanned more than a half century.

“Without Pat Wilson in our community for the past 50 years, Traverse City would have had to look elsewhere for ethical and

professional leadership, both in the community and in the practice of law,” wrote one person supporting Wilson’s nomination.

A former U.S. Army pilot who served in Korea before enrolling at the University of Michigan Law School, Wilson notably helped launch Traverse City Rotary Charities in the 1970s; since its creation, it has given out more than \$56 million to not-for-profit organizations in five northwestern Michigan counties. In his role as attorney for Munson Healthcare, he helped the region’s primary health provider lay the groundwork for its long-term care facility in Traverse City as well as much-needed property redevelopment and infrastructure improvements.

Wilson assisted in creating a partnership between Northwestern Michigan College and the Park Place Hotel that allowed the school to form a culinary arts program at the venerable Traverse City landmark. He also aided Traverse City’s public and parochial schools in navigating the legal system to participate in cost-saving joint programs, and he facilitated the founding of Leelanau County’s Northwestern Michigan Horticultural Research Station.

Wilson’s civic leadership includes terms as president of the Traverse City Area Chamber of Commerce, Grand Traverse-Leelanau-Antrim Bar Association, and Michigan Society of Hospital Attorneys and stints on the Michigan State University Board of Trustees, the State Officers Compensation Commission, and the State Board of Ethics. He is a past winner of the Traverse City Chamber of Commerce Distinguished Service Award.

John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award

Holy goods and services! It’s VATMAN!

Law professor **Alan S. Schenk** doesn’t have much in common with Bruce Wayne. He has, however, taught at Wayne State University Law School for more than 50 years. During that time, the Chicago native has devoted his academic career to tax law and is widely recognized as one of the world’s foremost authorities on value-added taxation—hence the VATMAN moniker.

Schenk, whose writings on value-added taxation have appeared in a dozen books, is frequently called on to dispense his expertise and depth of knowledge worldwide. He has taught special tax courses at universities ranging from Harvard to the University of Sydney to the University of Pretoria in South Africa, and has spoken at tax conferences and symposia in Australia, China, and the U.K.

A certified public accountant who earned his LL.B. from the University of Illinois and his LL.M. in taxation from New York University, Schenk has testified on tax proposals before both the U.S. House Ways and Means Committee and the U.S. Senate Finance Committee. He’s also a technical advisor to the International Monetary Fund, where he drafts and reviews tax legislation and regulations for countries in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Caribbean.



In spite of his globetrotting, Schenk always comes back to Wayne State, where he most recently taught classes in federal income taxation, corporate taxation, business planning, consumption-based tax, and accounting for lawyers.

“I’ve taught many places, but I always return to Wayne, in large part because of our students,” Schenk told the *Oakland County Legal News* in 2011. “We have traditionally had a diverse student body, consisting of many children of immigrants or children of families without lawyers.

“It’s the intangible rewards that I continue to receive from my students that prompt me to resist any temptation to retire.”

John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

When it comes to qualified domestic relations orders (QDROs) and domestic relations orders (DROs), nobody does it better than **Robert (Bob) Charles Treat Jr.**

As the owner of QDRO Express, a law firm that concentrates in the preparation of QDROs and DROs, Treat is the go-to guy for everyone—lawyers, law professors, law students, and clients—in need of help with QDROs and DROs, which are required in divorce cases when one party is ordered to share a pension with the other party.

But perhaps more importantly, Treat is the go-to guy when it comes to preparing these orders for those who are truly in need. For many years, he has helped low-income people in Michigan, including military members, remain in their homes, buy food, and enjoy a greater quality of life thanks to the benefits they are able to secure as a result of the QDROs being prepared pro bono.

Treat has served the QDRO program for the SBM Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Project for more than 12 years. In the last five years alone, his firm has accepted and fulfilled more than 80 requests for QDROs/DROs.

“His expertise is sought out in the most challenging cases and he always obliges,” said Rebecca E. Shiemke, managing attorney for the Michigan Poverty Law Program, in her letter of nomination. “His commitment to justice for all is inspiring. His passion and willingness to go the extra mile is endearing and admirable.”

Dustin Foster, director of the Family Law Assistance Project, agreed, noting that with Treat’s assistance and knowledge his organization has been able to assist numerous clients with life-changing assistance.

“In addition to the preparation of countless QDROs, Robert has always made himself available to attorneys and staff for questions and follow-up,” Foster wrote in his letter of support. “The legal profession needs more attorneys like Robert Treat, willing to donate their time to the assistance of low-income individuals.”

Meanwhile, Ashley Lowe, CEO of the Pontiac office of Lakeshore Legal Aid, for whom Treat has provided QDROs in 33 cases since 2005, said in her letter of support that his service and dedication are inspiring.



"Mr. Treat's contribution to legal aid programs and their clients throughout the state is exemplary," she noted. "His quiet leadership and professionalism are exactly the kind of traits that the John W. Cummiskey Award was designed to honor."

Liberty Bell Award

Charlevoix High School teacher **Annemarie Conway** is not your average government and economics teacher.

As the high school's principal tells it, Conway, who also teaches sociology and psychology at the school and works as an adjunct professor at Baker College, "immerses herself in professional growth and provides opportunities for students to learn more about different facets of local and state government."

She "is a highly talented, passionate teacher who has a unique way of motivating all students to perform at their highest potential," wrote Principal Suzanne Klinger in her nomination of Conway.

In addition to her work in the classroom, Conway spends countless hours making herself, her colleagues, and especially her students smarter, better prepared, and more well-rounded, and getting everyone genuinely excited about government.

Not only does she donate her time to improving testing and educational materials, but she gets out in the field with her students,



participating in workgroups, helping with local campaigns, organizing a Teen Court, visiting the Michigan Supreme Court, and attending with her students the last five presidential inaugurations. She even took her students to Cuba in 2016.

Stuart Fenton is president of the Emmet Charlevoix Bar Association, which recently honored Conway with its Liberty Bell Award, given every year to a nonlawyer who demonstrates outstanding public service in strengthening the effectiveness of the American system of freedom, justice, and government. He told the *Petoskey News* in an article that she was a perfect candidate.

"We were very pleased to recognize this outstanding teacher, who encourages students not just by words, but by their actions to get involved with important legal and governmental issues," Fenton said. "It is teachers like this who inspire students to get involved in their government that generate future leaders of our society."

Retired Charlevoix County Circuit Judge Richard Pajtas, who nominated Conway, agreed, noting it is her "extraordinary reputation and commitment to her students" that made her the perfect candidate.

William Arthur Ward once said, "The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires."

It is Conway's ability to inspire our future leaders that makes her truly great.

Representative Assembly Awards

The State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly presented awards to two individuals during its business meeting on September 28.

Michael Franck Award

Mark L. Teicher believes in protecting the legal profession by protecting the public, and vice versa.

Because of this philosophy, he has dedicated more than 30 years volunteering to make the legal world a better place for both lawyers and their clients.

Recognized as a Super Lawyer and in *Best Lawyers in America*, Teicher stays busy running his successful Bloomfield Township law firm, but he is equally dedicated to his work with the State Bar, where he has volunteered for nearly his entire career.

He was elected to the State Bar's Representative Assembly in 1986 and has never looked back. Since 1986, he has been appointed once and elected eight times to represent his colleagues in Oakland County. During this time, he has also served on a variety of State Bar committees, including a six-year term on the



SBM Client Protection Fund Standing Committee, followed by six more years advising the committee. In addition, he spent more than 18 years as either a hearing panelist or hearing panelist chairperson for the Attorney Discipline Board.

But his efforts don't end there. Teicher also writes, speaks, and teaches on a variety of legal topics. And he still finds time for community service, including volunteer work with Big Brothers/Big Sisters of Metropolitan Detroit and several other organizations.

Teicher's wife, Julie Beth Teicher, also an attorney, said his hard work and desire to serve has made a big difference for everyone in the legal community and the community at large.

"Mark has been very dedicated to making sure that the practice of law in Michigan is performed at the highest ethical standards, and has demonstrated his commitment by his longtime service to the State Bar," she said in her letter of nomination. "I believe that it is appropriate to recognize his commitment, and undoubtedly, Mark's commitment has made an outstanding contribution to the improvement of the legal profession in Michigan."

Representative Assembly Awards (continued)

Unsung Hero Award

F. Martin (Marty) Tieber is truly a lifesaver.

Just ask Dennis Tomasik, a hardworking husband and father with no criminal record who was wrongfully accused and convicted of sexual assault and spent nine years in jail.

Tomasik's time behind bars would have been significantly longer if not for the heroic efforts of Tieber and his son, Kris, who, on a pro bono basis, wrote the brief and successfully argued the case before the Michigan Supreme Court. Their belief in Tomasik never wavered, and they worked tirelessly for his release, which they finally achieved earlier this year.

Mary Chartier, one of two attorneys who handled Tomasik's retrial, noted in her nomination letter that without Tieber's work, there never would have been an opportunity for retrial and exoneration.

"While we were the ones standing by Mr. Tomasik when he was exonerated by the jury, it was Mr. Tieber who stood beside [him] for nine years," she said.

According to his colleagues, that's just the kind of person Marty is.



"It is not necessarily Marty's expertise as a practitioner that qualifies him for the Unsung Hero Award," wrote attorney Ron Bretz in a letter signed by more than a dozen prominent lawyers. "Instead, it is his consistent dedication to justice and the rights afforded to all under our constitution that warrants the greatest consideration."

Chartier, who calls Tieber her "hero and the hero of many," said this is what Tieber has been doing throughout his entire career.

"Mr. Tieber has been dedicated to defending the rights of men and women in criminal defense cases for over 40 years," she wrote, noting that he "is unanimously regarded as one of the nation's top appellate attorneys, and has the respect of all who know him."

For a quarter century, Tieber directed the Lansing office of the State Appellate Defender. He has handled hundreds of appeals, served on various committees, taught law, and been recognized over and over again for his expertise. But his crowning achievement might be the role he played in establishing Michigan's Innocence Project in 2002.

His commitment to justice "resulted in an innocent man being released from prison, clearing his name, and getting his life back," Chartier noted. "There can be no bigger accomplishment than saving a person's life."

Awards from Other Organizations

The following individuals and associations were honored by other organizations during the Awards Banquet.

Michigan State Bar Foundation Founders Award

The Michigan State Bar Foundation presented its Founders Award to **Linda K. Rexer**. The Founders Award recognizes lawyers who exemplify professional excellence and outstanding community contributions.

For nearly three decades, Rexer directed the Foundation in its mission to provide leadership and funding to improve access to justice, particularly through civil legal aid for the poor, and for improvements in the administration of justice. Rexer served as the Foundation's first executive director. During her tenure, the Foundation grew to an entity that has awarded up to \$11 million



annually. Established in 1947, the Foundation has made more than 1,950 grants and distributed more than \$190 million.

Rexer provided state and national leadership for access to justice. She was a founding member of the State Bar's Access to Justice Task Force in 1997, and though now retired, is completing her term as co-chair of the Committee on Justice Initiatives. One of her many legacies and proudest accomplishments was creating the national award-winning Michigan Legal Help Program. Rexer had the visionary leadership and fortitude to understand the continuum of services needed and the necessity of a statewide online resource for pro se litigants to access information. She has received many national and State Bar awards. In 2016, she received the State Bar's highest award, the Roberts P. Hudson Award, honoring her legacy overflowing with long-lasting improvements to access to justice for all in Michigan.

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Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Award

The Foundation presented its Access to Justice Award to **Angela Tripp and Michigan Legal Help** and **Ari Scharg and Edelson PC**. This award honors persons who have significantly advanced access to justice for the poor in Michigan.



Tripp has devoted her career to serving the poor. After receiving her law degree from Northeastern University School of Law in 2003, she immediately started working as a staff attorney for Prison Legal Services of Michigan. In 2005, she was hired by Legal Services of South Central Michigan as a staff attorney and in 2012 became co-director of the Michigan PLP, the entity that administers several statewide advocacy organizations, including the Michigan Poverty Law Program. Tripp also is the director of the Michigan Legal Help Program and has been involved since its inception and led its implementation. The Michigan Legal Help Program is responsible for MichiganLegalHelp.org, the statewide website for self-represented litigants and its affiliated self-help centers around the state. Since the public launch of MichiganLegalHelp.org through June 30, 2017, the website has had more than 11.4 million views and 3.78 million visitor sessions; in June 2017, visits to the website averaged 28,000 a week. Tripp has been invited to speak nationally about the Michigan Legal Help Program and in 2015 was a presenter at Legal Services Corporation's Fourth Annual White House Summit

on Increasing Access to Justice. She has received many awards; most recently, she was nominated for *Michigan Lawyers Weekly's* Leaders in the Law.

Edelson PC is a consumer privacy and technology firm that actively promotes and advocates for access to justice. In 2017, low-income individuals in Michigan benefited from two large cy pres awards that were directed to the Access to Justice Fund by Ari Scharg, a partner at the firm. The cases were both federal class-action lawsuits involving the personal privacy rights of Michigan residents. Scharg is proud to support access to justice in his home state. Edelson PC has been recognized as "pioneers in the electronic privacy class-action field" and for its unwavering commitment to access to justice by the Chicago Bar Foundation and the Illinois Bar Foundation. Scharg co-chairs the firm's Case Development and Investigations Group, sits on the Executive Oversight Council for the Array of Things, and chairs the Illinois State Bar Association's Privacy and Information Security Section.



The Michigan State Bar Foundation is pleased to recognize the contributions of these award recipients. Foundation President Hon. Alfred Butzbaugh said, "These award recipients represent the highest traditions of the legal profession through their dedication to their profession, their community, and to access to justice."

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.

Respected Advocate Awards—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

The MAJ honored **J. Brian MacDonald** with its Respected Advocate Award. MacDonald maintains a trial practice that includes the areas of personal injury law, professional licensure defense, healthcare law, hospital and medical malpractice defense, and workers' compensation litigation.

Born and raised in Flint, MacDonald earned his undergraduate degree at Michigan State University and received his juris doctor at St. Mary's University School of Law in San Antonio, Texas. MacDonald is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, the State Bar of Texas, the Genesee County Bar Association, the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel, and the Michigan Society of Hospital Risk Managers. He is also a member of the State Bar Workers' Compensation Law, Negligence Law, and Master Lawyers sections. He has been listed as a Super Lawyer from 2011 to 2016 and a Best Lawyer from 2013 to 2017. He received the MDTC's Excellence in Defense Award in 2016.



Michigan Defense Trial Counsel

The MDTC presented its Respected Advocate Award to **Vernon (Ven) Johnson**, who has been representing victims against insurance companies, big business, and government for 30 years. He has handled cases in state and federal courts in most Michigan jurisdictions and in courtrooms throughout the United States. He has worked on some of the biggest, most complex and high-profile injury cases in America, winning more than \$100 million in jury verdicts and achieving case settlements of more than \$300 million.

Originally from Saginaw, Johnson earned his undergraduate degree at Kalamazoo College and his juris doctor from the University of Detroit School of Law. He is a member of the State Bar of Michigan, secretary of the SBM Negligence Law Section, past president of the MAJ, a member of the American Board of Trial Attorneys, part of the American Association of Justice's Leaders Forum, and on the executive board for the Police Misconduct Litigation Section.

