

State Bar of Michigan | 2015-2016 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT

Article VI § 6, Bylaws of the State Bar of Michigan

No later than May 1 of each year, the chair of each committee and sub entity of the Bar, with the assistance of the staff liaison, shall report to the Executive Director on a form provided by the State Bar on the activities and accomplishments of the committee or sub entity.

Justice Initiatives

- Jurisdiction: · Develop and recommend proposals for the effective delivery of high quality legal services in Michigan, equal and fair to all. This committee will include several initiatives whose activities include:
- o Analyzing and making recommendations for positions on proposed legislation, court rules, and other policies relevant to the committee's jurisdiction.
 - o Developing policies and programs to benefit underserved populations, including juveniles and those with special needs.
 - o Encouraging and coordinating free or discounted civil legal services.
 - o Raising money for and otherwise working to increase resources for civil legal aid programs.
 - o Examining collateral civil consequences of criminal convictions and representational issues in the criminal justice system.

Co-Chair

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P60753 Lorry S.C. Brown, Ann Arbor
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P60458 Kirsten A. Inquilla, Kalamazoo
P47291 Valerie R. Newman, Detroit
P28571 Linda K. Rexer, Lansing
P71349 Maya K. Watson, Detroit

State Bar Liaison

- P32078 Candace A. Crowley, Lansing
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State Bar Liaison Assistant

- Gregory P. Conyers, Lansing
Peter Cunningham, Lansing

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Michelle Erskine, Lansing
Robert G. Mathis, Jr., Lansing
Carrie Sharlow, Lansing
Jennifer Williams, Lansing

Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

Meeting Type		Date	Location
Meeting Type	Regular	June 8, 2015	Teleconference
Description	At the June 8 meeting, members reviewed the civil right to counsel work undertaken by Equal Access Initiative (EAI) and moved to the 21st Century Practice Task Force. It reviewed a justice initiatives leadership development report prepared by EAI. It learned more about the progress of the 21st Century Practice Task Force, with a special focus on the Access Committee co-chaired by CJI co-chair Linda Rexer. It received concrete information about the new partnership with MSU College of Law and Frank J. Kelley Ethics Lecture Series to present the annual JI summit on October 28 at MSU Law. It received reports from each of the initiatives; more information on those is found in the separate initiative reports. It received a report from the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee (DIAC) with follow up from the Brunch for Bars. It looked forward to the booth and programs planned for the October Annual Meeting.		
Meeting Type	Regular	October 20, 2015	Teleconference
Description	Members received more information on the upcoming JI Summit and Kickoff combined event in partnership with MSU Law. It revised its process for reviewing policy to include review by the CJI co-chairs for their determination if items should be referred to additional initiatives and positions shared promptly with other initiatives before submitting to CJI for review. Members reviewed leadership development ideas and progress through activities like involvement at the Annual Meeting booth, partnership with the November 12 joint program between the State Bar Young Lawyers Section (YLS) and the Oakland County Bar with a focus on pro bono and access to justice. Members also agreed to tweet using the #sbmjusticeinitiatives throughout the year. It received reports from each of the initiatives.		
Meeting Type	Annual Summit and Kickoff - Legal Futurism and its Impact on Access to Justice	October 28, 2015	MSU College of Law
Description	New York Chief Judge Jonathan Lippman addressed over 150 lawyers, law students and law professors at MSU College of Law on the occasion of the 7th Annual Kelley Ethics Lecture and the JI 6th Annual Summit and Kickoff. The program combines two celebrated justice system events into a joint gathering to consider legal futurism and its impact on access to justice. Judge Lippman's remarks were inspiring and included "The judicial and the profession must stand for something, and even in the light of budget cuts and layoffs, financial support for legal services must continue because 'we might as well close the doors to the courthouse if it's not open to all.'" Judge Lippman's remarks and a written report can be viewed at http://www.michbar.org/programs/summit2015		
Meeting Type	Regular	December 16, 2015	Teleconference
Description	Samantha Meinke, SBM communications manager, provided information on social media tools including three SBM blogs. She explained the use of hashtags on twitter and especially #sbmjusticeinitiatives. She cautioned people not to speak on behalf of the Bar as that role is reserved for the president and executive director. It received reports from the initiatives. It supported the CJI position on HB 4766 authorizing teen courts. It supported in concept HB 4406 and HB 4407 to make juries more representative of the community. It did not support the bill as drafted by suggested a legislative work group be formed to discuss the issue. It also heard of the CJI intention to follow up on the Annual Meeting program on collateral consequences of juvenile adjudications. It received a report from the DIAC and the November 9 Blind Spots training. It reviewed a power point presentation from Linda Rexer on the progress of the 21st Century Practice Task Force and the Access Committee.		
Meeting Type	Regular	February 17, 2016	Teleconference
Description	The committee received reports from the initiatives and from the DIAC. It heard a detailed progress report on the work of the 21CPTask Force, including the January 29 Town Hall meeting and the involvement there of Erika Davis, Angela Tripp, Chris Hastings and Maya Watson on behalf of the Access Committee. It identified possible topics for the 2016 JI Summit, with an emphasis on items supported by the Task Force recommendations. It reviewed information on the Equal Access Conference and attendance by Wendy Richards, Rob Mathis, and Erika Davis as our representative to the Access to Justice Chairs meeting there. It also heard of Greg conyers and Judge Cynthia Stephens as participations in this year's National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts. Committee members were introduced to Connect as our communication portal.		
Meeting Type	Regular	April 27, 2016	Teleconference
Description	CJI received reports from the initiatives and the DIAC. It conducted a preliminary review of its new policy review process. It received a report from Peter Cunningham on the SBM delegation to ABA Day. The delegation consisted of Reggie Turner, Lori Buiteweg, Judge Ward Clarkson, Bradley Gayton, Rob Mossel, and Thom Linn. They met with nearly the entire Michigan delegation, and support for LSC funding is stronger than ever among our congressional delegation. It received a more detailed report on the recommendations of the 21CPTask Force and the process going forward. It confirmed its interest in addressing the topic of unbundling, triage, and possible the Justice Innovations Guidelines for its 2016 Justice Initiatives Summit. If timing and resources allow, the Summit will likely occur in later June.		

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Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:

The State Bar provides the Committee on Justice Initiatives (CJI) with staff support and a budget to facilitate phone and in-person meetings and a wide breadth of projects. CJI is an umbrella group comprised of the co-chairs of the Pro Bono Initiative, the Equal Access Initiative, the Criminal Issues Initiative, and the Justice Policy Initiative. The executive director of the Michigan State Bar Foundation is also a CJI member. The umbrella format is a resource to coordinate the efforts and interests of those most heavily involved in the State Bar's longstanding access to justice work. It also serves to identify common and emerging areas of focus among the initiatives, and coordinate and present programming and communications for those areas. The annual reports of those initiatives, including information on policy positions taken by CJI, are included with this cover report.

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Future Goals and Activities:

CJI will continue contribute to the work of the 21st Century Practice Task Force as a focus for improving access to justice. It has identified unbundling/limited scope representation, triage, and the development of Justice Innovations Guidelines as immediate areas of focus. It remains interested in the challenge of collateral consequences of juvenile adjudications.

It continues its partnership with the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee, and is still looking for the right opportunity to reexamine its structure and work to respond to the changing landscape.

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Committee Activities:

In addition to the activities and meetings described above, the CJI Co-chairs and staff met on August 27, 2015, in Brighton for the purpose of assessing its overall structure and work, reviewing the proposed CJI and initiative membership for the upcoming bar year, understanding the budget, and reviewing the robust proposals for leadership development provided by staff and the Equal Access Initiative.

To encourage leadership development within the initiatives, it was agreed that, among other items,

1. The chairs would ask members to sign up for the Annual Meeting booth.
2. They would encourage involvement in emerging substantive issues like the deaf/blind/hard of hearing matter brought to our attention by the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.
3. They would encourage attendance at events that focus on ATJ and pro bono, like the November 12 2015 Novemberfest sponsored by the Young Lawyers Section and the Oakland County Bar Association.
4. They would create opportunities for law students to attend the diversity reception.
5. We will use social media and A Lawyer Helps/Greater Expectations to publicize the work of CJI, and building from the popular national hashtag #justiceinitiatives, we will use #sbmjusticeinitiatives to publicize our work.
6. We will identify candidates to participate in the Bar Leadership Forum.

Other Information:

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Approved by	Approved	Name
Chair		
Co-chair		
Staff Liaison		
Other		

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Justice Initiatives: Criminal Issues Initiative

Jurisdiction: Examines collateral civil consequences of criminal convictions and representational issues in the criminal justice system.

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P54840 Jolene J. Weiner-Vatter, Grand Rapids

State Bar Liaison

Peter Cunningham, Lansing
Carrie Sharlow, Lansing

Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

Meeting Type		Date	Location
Description			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	5/19/15	
Description	Collateral Consequences Workgroup		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	5/21/15	
Description	Regular Initiative Meeting		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	7/9/15	
Description	Regular Initiative Meeting		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	9/17/15	
Description	Regular Initiative Meeting		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	10/21/15	
Description	Regular Initiative Meeting		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	12/10/15	
Description	Regular Initiative Meeting		

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Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:

The Initiative receives staff support from Peter Cunningham and Carrie Sharlow.

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Future Goals and Activities:

The Initiative will continue reviewing public policy items, discussing matters relating to Juvenile Justice, and looking for opportunities for UCCCA.

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Committee Activities:

The Criminal Issues Initiative also met January 14, 2016; February 11, 2016; March 10, 2016; and May 12, 2016. It expects to meet at least once in the summer.

The Initiative hosted a program at the State Bar's Annual Meeting in Novi on Friday, October 9, 2015. The program--titled "Collateral Consequences of Juvenile Adjudication"--included a panel of interested stakeholders, led by Judge Mabel Johnson Mayfield. The group focused on juvenile pleas a adjudications; collateral consequences to benefits, services, and rights due to a plea or criminal action; real-life lessons and examples from attorneys, judges, and parents; and ideas and movement for improvement.

The program was well attended, and there is ongoing discussion of the possibility of a repeat in different locations.

Throughout the year, the Initiative discussed various pieces of legislation and proposed court rule amendments, and submitted several position for consideration by the Board of Commissioners.

Other Information:

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Approved by	Approved	Name
Chair		
Co-chair		
Staff Liaison		
Other		

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Justice Initiatives: Equal Access Initiative

Jurisdiction: Develops policies and programs to benefit underserved populations, including those with special needs, cognitive disabilities, and juveniles.

Co-Chair

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P42695 Mark A. Cody, Lansing
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Michelle Erskine, Lansing
Robert G. Mathis, Jr., Lansing
Carrie Sharlow, Lansing
Jennifer Williams, Lansing

Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

Meeting Type		Date	Location
Description			
Meeting Type	Committee Chair Orientation	October 16, 2015	SBM
Description	Orientation at the State Bar for Committee Chairs. Reviews processes and the year's calendar to prepare chairs for the bar year ahead.		
Meeting Type	Jl Summit	October 28, 2015	MSU
Description	In correlation with the Frank Kelley lecture series. Provides a common meeting for the Justice Initiatives and the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Committee.		
Meeting Type	Blind Spots Program	November 9, 2015	Detroit MI
Description	Program in conjunction with DIAC to improve decision making and outcomes in regards to diversity and inclusion. Over 100 attendees.		
Meeting Type	Equal Access Initiative Meetings	November 30, March 16	teleconference, SBM
Description	The Equal Access Initiative has met twice this bar year, once in person and once by phone. EAI meetings provide an agenda for the coming months in the world of equal access and brings a diverse look to equal access in Michigan.		
Meeting Type	Workgroup teleconferences	see below	teleconferences
Description	Feb 8, Feb 12, Feb 25, March 7, March 22, March 25, April 4 The EAI Disabilities workgroup, Faces of Justice workgroup, Juvenile Outreach workgroup, and Underrepresented Populations workgroup have had phone conferences to move their work forward this bar year. The workgroups work to assist the larger group in meeting common goals and objectives.		
Meeting Type	Brunch for Bars	April 17, 2016	Detroit MI
Description	Event presented in conjunction with DIAC to bring bar associations together for collaboration, information sharing, and to raise awareness of diversity and inclusion.		

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Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:

The State Bar offers administrative assistance in planning in-person meetings and teleconferences as well as offers administrative support through each of the meetings. The Bar also provides record keeping and archiving for the Equal Access Initiative as well as the other Justice Initiatives as needed. State Bar staff continues to maintain and update the Equal Access area of the website and offers on-site support for events as well.

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Future Goals and Activities:

The Equal Access Initiative is working with DIAC and the Grand Rapids Bar Association to host another Blind Spots program, this time on the west side of the state. All of the workgroups have monthly meetings running up to Annual Meeting and will be pleased to offer recommendations to the larger EAI and CJI. The Disabilities workgroup is working on a new version of the e-newsletter. The Faces of Justice workgroup is planning a day-long event in October at the Hall of Justice to help encourage students to consider the legal profession. EAI has also examined legislation according to the new public policy process and is set to report to CJI before the next meeting.

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Committee Activities:

There are four EAI workgroups for the 2015-2016 Year: Disabilities, Faces of Justice, Juvenile Outreach, and Underrepresented Populations. The Disabilities workgroup focuses on persons with disabilities having equal access in the justice system; they are currently working on mental health court issues, ADA policy implementation, school-to-prison pipeline, ongoing diversity and inclusion Outreach, and e-newsletters .

The Faces of Justice workgroup, formerly the Jury Curriculum workgroup is spearheaded by Hon. Michelle Rick and is adapting national programming to fit Michigan's outreach needs. Law Related Education and Public Outreach Committee members have joined the previous Jury Curriculum group as well as new Faces of Justice participants to promote diversity, civic engagement, and improvement of access to the legal system. The group is planning a pilot program focused on interacting with students to expose them to the legal profession. A new EAI workgroup, Juvenile Outreach, works on issues within the school systems, non-mental health based school to prison pipeline issues (probably in collaboration with Criminal Issues Initiative), workforce reentry, and is looking to address the treatment of juveniles. EAI's other new workgroup, Underrepresented Populations, is brainstorming and working to address issues that relate to underrepresented populations accessing the legal system.

On May 18, 2016 there is another EAI meeting to addressing furthering the goals and objectives of the group as a whole and as smaller workgroups.

On June 29 the group will be presenting another Blind Spots program on the west side of the state with assistance from the Grand Rapids Bar Association. EAI hopes to engage participants beyond the initial discussion that happened in Detroit on November 9, 2015 and to allow further evaluations and analysis of potential solutions. The original event had over 100 registered attendees and feedback can be found here: <http://www.michbar.org/file/diversity/pdfs/binderfactsfeedback.pdf>

on April 17, 2016 EAI in conjunction with DIAC presented the 2nd annual Brunch for Bars. There were over 70 people in attendance and the event received positive reviews. In addition to networking, discussions on bias, collaboration, and leadership were presented. We were also thankful to have ABA President Paulette Brown give the keynote address reviewing the ABA's Diversity 360 efforts.

Other Information:

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Other		

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Justice Initiatives: Justice Policy Initiative

Jurisdiction: Analyzes and recommends positions on proposed legislation, court rules, and other policies relevant to the Justice Initiatives.

Co-Chair

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P39152 Daniel M. Levy, Detroit
P44713 Nancy L. Mullett, Battle Creek
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P63475 Tonya Myers Phillips, Detroit
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State Bar Liaison

Peter Cunningham, Lansing
Carrie Sharlow, Lansing

Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

Meeting Type		Date	Location
Description			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	6/5/15	
Description	3 court rules amendments, 1 piece of legislation discussed.		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	10/22/15	
Description	5 pieces of legislation discussed.		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	12/11/15	
Description	1 court rule amendment, 4 pieces of legislation discussed.		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	2/12/16	
Description	1 court rule amendment, 11 pieces of legislation discussed.		
Meeting Type	Teleconference	5/13/16	
Description			
Meeting Type			
Description			

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Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:

The committee receives staff support from Peter Cunningham and Carrie Sharlow.

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Future Goals and Activities:

JPI would welcome more opportunities to participate in discussions about important policy positions with other bar entities.

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Committee Activities:

The Initiative discussed twenty-six bills and proposed court rule amendments and offered several position recommendations to the Committee on Justice Initiatives.

Other Information:

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Approved by	Approved	Name
Chair		
Co-chair		
Staff Liaison		
Other		

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Justice Initiatives: Pro Bono Initiative

Jurisdiction: Encourages and coordinates free or discounted fees for civil legal services.
Pro bono service is a way that Michigan attorneys assist low-income individuals in need of legal assistance.

Co-Chair

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P59026 Sandra D. Parker, Troy
P57191 Kimberly A. Paulson, Detroit
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Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please attach any additional information needed regarding Committee meetings as an addendum.

Meeting Type		Date	Location
Description			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	06/24/2015	n/a
Description			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	9/23/2015	n/a
Description			
Meeting Type	JI Kick-Off	10/28/2015	In-Person / MSU Law School
Description The 2015-2016 JI Kick-Off was held in conjunction with the Frank J. Kelley Lecture Series. The keynote speaker was Judge Jonathan Lippman, Chief Judge of the State of New York.			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	12/17/2015	n/a
Description			
Meeting Type	Teleconference	3/17/2016	n/a
Description			
Meeting Type			
Description			

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Resources provided by the State Bar of Michigan in support of committee work:

The State Bar of Michigan provides the Pro Bono Initiative (PBI) with staff support and an initiative budget to facilitate projects and meetings.

Benjamin Ensroth and Eisha Vatsal, law student interns with the PBI, also provided staff support.

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Future Goals and Activities:

Most of the project work described in this report occurs annually, and efforts will be directed to replicating and improving those projects. In the coming year, the PBI will continue efforts to improve the delivery of pro bono services to the poor throughout Michigan.

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Committee Activities:

The PBI has numerous committees and workgroups, including:

1. ABA Day (Governmental Relations)
2. Assessment of Pro Bono in Michigan Report and Implementation
3. ATJ Fund Eligible/PBI Approved Organization—Application Review
4. Circle of Excellence—Yearly Application Review
5. Homelessness Workgroup
6. John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award
7. MI-LAPP Malpractice Insurance for Pro Bono Administration
8. MI-LAPP Patent Pro Bono Project Administration
9. MI-LAPP Tax Pro Bono Program Administration
10. MI-LAPP QDRO Pro Bono Panel Program Administration
11. Celebrate Pro Bono Month
12. Pro Bono Reference Manual/Law Related Organizations Search Database
13. Spring Pro Bono Workshop
14. Veteran Resources Workgroup

The 2015 John W. Cummiskey Award was presented to attorney Paul Scheidemantel of Clark Hill at the SBM awards dinner at the SBM Annual Meeting in Novi. The award included a \$3,000 donation to an ATJ program to be made through the Access to Justice Fund. Paul asked that the award be designated to Legal Aid and Defender Association.

Nominations for the 2016 John W. Cummiskey Award were reviewed and a nominee identified in April 2016.

Michigan Pro Bono Assessment Report: The Assessment Report has been publicized and is now widely known by Michigan's pro bono community and other key stakeholders. Members of the PBI have been pleased with the reaction to the report.

With the guidance and support of consultant John Tull, the group continues discussions and anticipates the development of a self-assessment tool which will allow each program to look critically at its own delivery of pro bono services, one of the recommendations contained in the Assessment Report.

The Seventh Annual October as Pro Bono Month Celebration occurred in 2015, which included more than 60 events throughout Michigan during the Pro Bono Month 2015 season. The Pro Bono Month website included a list of upcoming pro bono month events, talking points, a sample speech, and many other resources. Looking forward to 2016, the work group wants to continue to increase the number of pro bono events and the promotion of the need for pro bono legal services for the poor. The work group will also explore expanded collaboration with law firms, attorneys, and LSPs on pro bono events.

Michigan Governor Rick Snyder signed a proclamation declaring October 2015 as Pro Bono Month.

The Eighth Annual October as Pro Bono Month is set for October 2016.

The 2015 JI Kick-Off was held in conjunction with the Frank J. Kelley Lecture Series on October 28, 2015. The event was recorded and is available on the Justice Initiatives website. The keynote speaker was Judge Jonathan Lippman, the current chief judge of the state of New York. Judge Lippman gave a compelling and moving speech on the need for and some of the steps the ATJ community can take to ensure access to justice for all. Initiative members and staff were also very pleased with the large number of law students that attended the event.

Other Information:

The State Bar's "A Lawyer Helps" website continued to highlight the good work of many Michigan attorneys, with 28 stories posted on the website in 2015. "A Lawyer Helps" focuses first on the legal profession's priority of pro bono—free legal help for the poor and financial donations to help nonprofit legal aid agencies. But "A Lawyer Helps" also honors lawyers who additionally volunteer time to other efforts that benefit their communities. Please visit <http://www.michbar.org/alawyerhelps> for information on how to submit stories for inclusion on the website.

2015 was another successful year for MI-LAPP's QDRO Referral Program. In 2015, the program closed more than 40 QDRO cases and received more than 50 cases referred to the QDRO program by Michigan legal services providers. The great success of the program in 2015 was due in very large part to the program's dedicated volunteer drafters. In 2015, the program's volunteers included Joseph Cunningham, Robert (Bob) Treat, Nancy Keppelman, David and Jackie Roessler, and John Mooney. Each QDRO case that is prepared by a drafter, on average, requires four hours to complete. MI-LAPP continues to rely on the leadership of the QDRO Administration Committee, spearheaded by Joseph Cunningham of Joseph W. Cunningham JD, CPA, PC and Bob Treat of QDRO Express LLC.

Expansion of the MI-LAPP Malpractice Insurance Program continued. Lawyers without malpractice insurance coverage can apply for coverage through the State Bar/MI-LAPP Malpractice Insurance Program. Also, lawyers that accept cases from ATJ & non-ATJ programs without malpractice insurance can also be provided coverage. In 2014, many pro bono attorneys utilized the MI-LAPP malpractice insurance program, attorneys that otherwise would have been unable to offer pro bono legal services due to their lack of malpractice insurance.

The Seventh Annual Spring Pro Bono Workshop, "The Power of Pro Bono," occurred on May 19, 2015. More than 55 people attended the workshop, including pro bono attorneys and representatives from various legal aid agencies. The special guest speaker was State Bar of Michigan President-Elect Lori Buiteweg. The evaluations from the workshop were all very positive, with all attendees reporting that they would attend the 2016 workshop.

The Eighth Annual Spring Pro Bono Workshop is slated for May 24, 2016 at the State Bar building. The workshop sessions are designed to encourage interactive discussions, with increased opportunities for attendees to network to discuss strategies for increasing pro bono legal services in Michigan.

The 2015 Circle of Excellence has appeared in the Michigan Bar Journal multiple times throughout 2015. For the 2015 Circle of Excellence, which considers service and donations made in 2014, there were 50 firms and two corporations on the Circle. The 2015 COE also included the Leadership and Excellence Levels, which recognized firms whose aggregate financial contributions reflect \$300 and \$500 per lawyer, respectively. Of the 50 firms on the COE, about half of those firms are on the Leadership Level. In April 2016, personalized letters were mailed to law firms that have previously appeared on or applied to the COE. The letters, which included a message from SBM President Lori Buiteweg, were intended to advise firms of the 2016 COE applications, which were due on April 4, 2016.

In September 2015, Circle of Excellence luncheons were held in Detroit (09/22/15) and Grand Rapids (09/30/15). The COE luncheons were an effort championed by Thom Linn of Miller Canfield. The goal of the luncheons was to get the leaders at the larger law firms and corporations talking and more interested in the COE and pro bono. At the Detroit and Grand Rapids events, more than 30 firms were in attendance. At the Detroit luncheon, Thom facilitated a conversation among the group about the COE. At the Grand Rapids luncheon, Joy Fossel of Varnum facilitated the conversation. From the discussion, several thoughts and ideas were shared. There was a consensus that top management at firms and corporations must support pro bono for the effort to be successful. The Detroit and Grand Rapids luncheons were just the beginning of more COE discussions.

Tax Pro Bono Referral Panel Program. On Thursday, June 25, 2015, attorneys participated in the third annual program training. The training was offered via webinar. There are currently more than 100 attorneys on the Tax Program's pro bono panel. The program opened eight cases in 2013, 38 cases in 2014, and 48 cases open in 2015. Another tax training webinar is slated for June 21, 2016.

The work of the 21st Century Practice Task Force continued throughout 2015, looking at how the State Bar can best serve the public and support lawyers' professional development in a rapidly changing legal marketplace. The task force looked at the potential for modernizing Michigan's attorney regulation in response to those changes. SBM Past Presidents Bruce Courtade, of Grand Rapids, and Julie Fershtman, of Farmington Hills, co-chaired the Task Force. Task Force committees included the "Affordability of Legal Services: New Tools for Breaking Through the Access Barrier," "Building a 21st Century Practice—Developing & Maintaining Professional Excellence in a Dynamic Marketplace," and "Modernizing the Regulatory Machinery: Building Economic Resilience & Capacity in the Delivery of Legal Services." PBI member Linda Rexer served as co-chair of the Affordability/Access Committee, along with the Honorable Libby Hines.

On April 25, 2016, a reception was held at the State Bar building to thank the members of the 21st Century Practice Task Force and its three committees, and to celebrate the incredible work of the task force.

The Patent Pro Bono Project continued to grow throughout 2015, receiving more than 50 requests for assistance. The Patent Project has been able to place 11 low-income inventors with patent pro bono attorneys to assist in patenting their inventions.

Robert Mathis attended the 2015 ABA Equal Justice Conference in Austin, Texas, along with Justin Sheehan (Michigan Community Resources). Erika Davis attended the Access to Justice Chair's meeting on behalf of the CJJ.

The Michigan Legal Help website (michiganlegalhelp.org) continued to help people handle simple civil legal problems without a lawyer. The website features articles for people to learn about a specific area of the law and toolkits to help them prepare for self-representation in court. Some forms available on the website are completed automatically once simple questions are answered. The Michigan Legal Help website does not provide legal advice, and it is not intended as a substitute for having a lawyer. PBI members applauded MichiganLegalHelp.org as an incredible service that has proven to be very helpful for people that cannot afford an attorney and cannot get assistance from an LSP. MLH recently surpassed seven million total page views and receives 23,000 page views per week. MLH also recently received an LSC Technology Initiative Grant to support the development of a triage module and a legal health check-up tool.

The Pro Bono Reference Manual continues to offer the searchable Michigan Law Related Organizations Search function which allows users to search by legal service area and county. The information in the search function is verified and updated frequently.

The Homelessness Workgroup continues to research and determine what legal resources are available for Michigan's homeless, what barriers currently exist that prevent the homeless from accessing legal services, and suggest strategies for overcoming these barriers. The workgroup will continue to focus its attention on the coordination of efforts between pro bono lawyers and the existing legal services programs in each of the different areas of the state.

In March 2016, the PBI went live on the SBM Connect communication portal. SBM Connect is a program that allows sections, committees, and other organizations to share ideas and information. Connect will allow PBI members to access materials saved to the library. PBI members can also start discussion questions, and get notifications when discussion items are posted.

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