

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

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.

Committee Name: Law and the Media

- Jurisdiction:**
- Develop, recommend, and support programs that promote a positive relationship between the legal community and the media, and accuracy in the reporting of news concerning the law.
 - Study and identify sources of friction between the courts, lawyers, and the electronic and print press and recommend solutions.

Chair(s) and Committee

Members:

Officer	Name	Address	Telephone	Email
Chair	Robin Luce Herrmann	41000 Woodward Ave Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304-5130	(248) 593-3044	luce-herrmann@butzel.com
State Bar Liaison	Nancy Brown	306 Townsend StLansing, MI 48933-2083	(517) 346-6350	nbrown@mail.michbar.org
State Bar Liaison	Samantha Meinke	306 Townsend StLansing, MI 48933-2012		smeinke@mail.michbar.org

Member/Advisor/Other	Member/Advisor/Other
Jienelle Raye Alvarado	Robin Luce Herrmann
David Ashenfelter	Neil J. Lehto
Daniel J. Cherrin	Elizabeth M. Madigan
Laura B. Danielson	Jason C. Miller
Brett DeGross	Naomi N. Oglesby
Douglas I. Durfee	Hal G. Ostrow
Abigail Elias	Patrick Shellenbarger
Elizabeth A. Favaro	Lori K. Shemka

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

Committee Meeting Schedule:

Please describe the meeting type and purpose, including the date, time and location. Any additional information required should be attached as an addendum.

November 4, 2014 3:30 conference call
January 13, 2015 3:30 conference call
March 10, 2015 3:30 conference call
May 19, 2015 3:30 conference call

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

Staff oversees the arrangement and coordination of seminars, preparing and providing materials for seminars, preparing media kits, administering the Wade H. McCree Awards for the Advancement of Justice for journalists who cover law-related matters from the initial announcement to post-banquet publicity.

Wade H. McCree Awards for the Advancement of Justice process:

November: Review, edit, update language and graphics of brochure announcing the McCree Awards competition and containing the entry form. Help committee find judges for the contest.

Early December: Send press release containing a link to the McCree Award brochure and entry form to a list of journalists at over 845 media outlets, including dailies, weeklies, monthlies, legal news outlets, cable television outlets, local television stations, and radio stations across Michigan. Also mailed printed brochures to 150 selected news outlets. We also disseminated information via social media sites, SBM publications, SBM Blog, and the SBM website. SBM staff also drafted social media posts for committee members to share throughout the next few months to promote the contest.

Early January: Formal invitation extended by staff to judges. We have three judges each year – this year they included recently retired Michigan Supreme Court Justice Michael Cavanagh, retired Detroit Free Press Editor Ron Dzwonkowski, and Central Michigan University Journalism Professor John Hartman.

Get in touch with contacts at the journalism school at MSU to touch base about the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame Banquet, where the awards are handed out. Also get in touch with the SBM president and executive director to schedule the banquet date on both their calendars. The SBM president presents the awards, and the SBM executive director attends the banquet to meet journalists and also to serve as a back-up in case the president can't make it.

February: Let awards supplier know that the awards are coming up again. Awards needed two weeks prior to banquet.

Send out reminder news release about the upcoming submission deadline – give journalists one last chance to enter the contest.

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

Second week in February is submission dateline. Organize entries into four packets – three go to judges one stays in-house. Send judging criteria and score sheet along with entries to the judges. This year, we allowed for electronic-only entries – meaning journalists could host entries on their websites and email them to us. Had to create a new page on the website containing links to all of these entries, so the judges could see them. Try to give judges about 2-3 weeks to judge.

First week in March: When score sheets are back, total the number of points received by each entry. Refer to list on how winners are decided (based on point totals). Determine winners. Let committee members know the results at the teleconference. Let the judges know the results.

Third week in March – Order awards and give supplier the names of the winners, and media outlet name. Send thank you notes/gift to the judges. Inform winners they've won by email and invite them to the banquet. Phone winners – get bio for press release and correct spelling of name.

Send email to non-winners. Send invitations to the banquet to special guests, including Law & Media committee chair and members, SBM president and executive director, contest judges.

April – Awards Banquet: Write speech for president.

Send memo detailing what to expect at banquet to president, executive director, committee members, judges and winners of awards.

Secure photographer for banquet, and send instructions on what to shoot

Get ribbons for name badges of winners and bring awards to banquet and set up

Take photos and do follow up publicity in SBM publications, on SBM website, SBM Blog, and on social media sites.

Educational event support:

SBM staff provides publicity for all educational events in news releases, on SBM website, on SBM Blog, and on social media sites. Prepare handouts to be given out at educational events. Staff participates in the seminar by offering help as media relations staff to both reporters and attorneys. Staff handle whatever audio/visual needs there are for the seminar – setting up requests for A/V equipment, and making sure it is all functioning on site. Staff makes videos and takes photographs of all sessions, and then does follow-up publicity in the Bar Journal, on the SBM website, SBM Blog, social media sites and elsewhere.

Website support:

SBM staff updated the Law & Media portion of the website for the committee to make it work better for visitors by adding a pdf of a Guide to Legal terms booklet that can be downloaded for free now, rather than only purchased in printed form. SBM Staff also made committees easier to find based on a suggestion made by this committee – by putting committees on the home page of the website, along with sections. Now both sections and committees are available to find from the home page of the website.

Committee Activities:

STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE

This year committee divided into three subcommittees: McCree Awards subcommittee, New Educational Programs Subcommittee, and McCree Award Review Subcommittee.

McCree Subcommittee: The members found three judges for the contest, and worked to promote the contest to journalists across the state on social media, by making phone calls and sending emails to their contacts in journalism, and by attending journalism conferences and passing on materials about the contest.

Because of their efforts we got an outstanding turnout in the contest. Four teams have won top honors in the State Bar of Michigan 41st Annual Wade H. McCree Jr. Awards for the Advancement of Justice.

The first McCree Award goes to a Michigan Radio team, including Jennifer Guerra, Sarah Alvarez, and Sarah Hulett. Their series, called "Finding Home: A Documentary about Foster Care in Michigan," investigated improvements made to Michigan's foster care system, which oversees the care of over 13,000 children and has been under federal oversight since 2008. The series of reports introduced listeners to the system by examining the lives of the Kley family, who adopted three foster children. The series also expanded in scope to inform and educate listeners about the difficult situations faced by the children in the foster care system, the role of the law and the courts in the system, a general overview of the state's child welfare system and suggestions to improve it, and legal and legislative efforts needed to update and modernize laws surrounding broken adoptions in the foster care system.

The second McCree Award goes to Detroit Free Press reporters Nathan Bomey, John Gallagher, and Mark Stryker for a special report about Detroit's bankruptcy, called "How Detroit Was Reborn." The piece, marking the end of months of Free Press coverage of the historic bankruptcy, told the backstory of the behind-the-scenes conversations and deals that ended in Detroit's Grand Bargain. A companion story profiled bankruptcy Judge Steven Rhodes and the role he played keeping the city's survival in the spotlight as negotiations ensued. The reports served as the centerpieces of a multimedia experience that included photos, videos, infographics, and other integrated content, and drew 70,000 desktop views and more than 3,500 shares on Facebook.

The third McCree Award goes to a team of WDET journalists, including Joan Isabella, Sandra Svoboda, and Courtney Hurtt, for the website, NextChapterDetroit.com, and a series of broadcast reports and open community forums on Detroit's historic bankruptcy case. The journalists at WDET and NextChapterDetroit.com created a valuable, easily understandable community resource about a very difficult topic that delivered breaking news about developments in the proceedings and daily updates about events in and around the courtroom. NextChapterDetroit.com will live on as a comprehensive archive of information for readers, legal researchers, and attorneys seeking a better understanding of the largest municipal bankruptcy in history.

The fourth McCree Award goes to MLive Media Group reporter Brad Devereaux for a series, "Small Town, Big Problems," that chronicled a number of legal actions involving a small town police chief and an unorthodox program to raise tens of thousands of dollars in unregulated funds. The alleged pay-to-play scheme has resulted in a small Saginaw County village of less than 300 residents having 100 reservist officers. The series examined the role and processes of local village government, local public policy issues, the role of courts in reviewing the actions of local government officials, and how local police agencies interact with state agencies.

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

An Honorable Mention Award goes to Detroit News reporter Mike Martindale for a story, "Judge on Leave to Quit After Re-election," that brought to light a deal worked out among court officials to allow a district judge suspected of improper behavior in his official position to seek re-election and then quietly retire from the court system. Martindale uncovered e-mails indicating that city, court, and state officials knew of the scandal and agreed to keep it from voters.

SBM President Tom Rombach presented the McCree Awards at the Michigan Journalism Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony on April 19 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. The McCree Awards are given each year to foster greater public understanding of the inherent values of the legal and judicial system.

The 2015 McCree Awards were judged by retired Detroit Free Press Editor Ron Dzwonkowski, Central Michigan University Journalism Professor John Hartman, and former Michigan Supreme Court Justice Michael Cavanagh.

The Wade H. McCree Jr. Awards for the Advancement of Justice are named for one of the most venerable lawyers and judges in Michigan's history. During his remarkable career, Wade H. McCree Jr. served as a federal judge, University of Michigan law professor, and solicitor general of the United States.

New Program Subcommittee: The State Bar of Michigan Law and the Media Committee and the Society of Professional Journalists, Detroit, collaborated to create "Covering the courts: What Detroit's top legal minds think." The program consisted of two panel discussions moderated by Michigan Radio Political Commentator and Wayne State University Professor Jack Lessenberry that featured prominent Michigan attorneys and judges. The first panel featured U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan Barbara McQuade and Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy. The discussion took place from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Nov. 10 at Crain's Detroit, located at 1155 Gratiot Ave. The second panel featured Hon. Nancy Edmunds, federal judge for the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan, and was supposed to feature the Hon. Robert Columbo, judge of the Third Circuit Court in Wayne County, but he was unable to make it at the last minute. Judge Edmunds and Jack Lessenberry continued the discussion on their own. The discussion took place from 6:30-8:30 p.m. Nov. 18 at Butzel Long, located at 150 W Jefferson Ave, Ste 100, in Detroit. The discussions were aimed at helping journalists better navigate the legal system. The prominent attorneys and judge shared their opinions of how reporters and news outlets can improve the quality of their reporting and build a better rapport with the members of the legal profession. Both discussions had about 50 people in attendance.

The subcommittee has had six teleconferences to plan another educational program, and the members decided to incorporate a story of major importance in order to attract more attendees and more interest in the program. In order to do that, the subcommittee has decided to create a panel discussion focused on free expression and legal aspects that unfold during intense events like those in Ferguson and New York. The conversation may also focus on the potential for body cameras on police officers. Four people will serve on the panel: Len Niehoff, a Honigman First Amendment lawyer who is a dynamic speaker; Darrell Dawsey, communications director for the Michigan ACLU; Jim Kiertzner, an investigative reporter for WXYZ in Detroit; Corey Williams, an Associated Press reporter. The panel discussion will be held September 10 at Wayne State University Law

**STATE BAR OF MICHIGAN
2014-2015 COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT
LAW AND THE MEDIA COMMITTEE**

School. The goal is to ensure good participation by creating an event that is convenient and interesting to both law and journalism students, as well as lawyers and reporters. The subcommittee will partner with Wayne State to promote the event.

McCree Award Review Subcommittee: The subcommittee is doing the first major overhaul of the McCree Awards in decades. The chairperson of the subcommittee and the staff liaison met many times to plot a start to the course of the review of the awards process. Then the subcommittee held four teleconferences, over the course of which they discussed and voted on many recommendations to improve the awards. They have created a seven page memo containing these recommendations that the committee will vote on in its May meeting. The recommendations include increasing the judging panel from three to five judges, doing a better job of identifying and recognizing the judges for their work, changing some wording on the scoring sheets to make judging easier, changing the categories from Print/Online and Broadcast, to merge those to just one category, creating a new category for students, and digitizing the entire process to give judges more time to work on the entries and dramatically reduce the paperwork.

Future Goals and Activities:

Continue running, developing and updating McCree Awards and educational events to keep them relevant and constructively achieving the goals of the SBM strategic plan into the future.