

# State Bar of Michigan 2006 Award Winners

The limelight will shine on some of the State Bar's most outstanding members September 13 and 14 in Ypsilanti during the Annual Meeting. The following are this year's winners of major State Bar awards:

## Roberts P. Hudson Award

### Thomas G. Plunkett Attorney; Williams, Rattner and Plunkett



The State Bar of Michigan will award its highest honor, the Roberts P. Hudson Award, to Thomas G. Plunkett for his 18 years of devoted service as a very valuable and distinguished member of the Board of Commissioners. Considered by his colleagues and others as the very embodiment of a great lawyer, he set the standard for others to follow in the profession.

He served the Bar with distinction on many committees and led the Public Policy Committee for many years during a time of transformation and change. Plunkett was a steady force for thoughtful and constructive initiatives to advance the Bar's mission and goals. He also guided the State Bar in developing timely, measured, and effective responses to threats to the interests of the profession, the public, and the efficient administration of justice. He enjoys bi-partisan recognition and was appointed by Michigan governors Milliken and Blanchard to five special commissions involving law-related issues. Plunkett continues to serve as special counsel to the Attorney Grievance Commission, a role he has had since 1978.

Additionally, his public service as Oakland County Prosecutor was exemplary and brought great credit to the legal profession. Mr. Plunkett is a shareholder in Williams, Williams, Rattner and Plunkett in Birmingham.

## Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

### Philip A. Balkema Attorney; City of Grand Rapids



Colleagues statewide know Philip A. Balkema, now in his 27th year as a city attorney, as "the Dean of City Attorneys." This State Bar award is a testament not only to his longevity but also to his fairness, integrity,

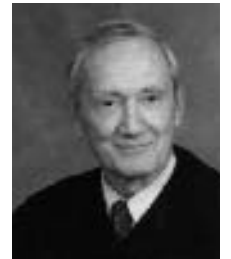
and leadership in his role with the City of Grand Rapids. These characteristics, and more, have allowed him to work under five mayors and dozens of city commissioners.

Among Balkema's notable achievements are the establishment of a Civilian Appeals Board to independently review cases filed against police officers on behalf of Grand Rapids citizens, the creation of positions in his department to serve as liaisons to the city's police department and neighborhoods, and his role in establishing Michigan's Metro Act, requiring telecommunications providers to compensate local governments for using public right-of-ways.

Balkema has served the Michigan Association of Municipal Attorneys in numerous capacities and he's also former chairman of the Michigan Municipal League's Legal Defense Fund. He created the Williams L. Stuede Memorial Award, presented to a member of the Michigan Municipal League for outstanding achievement in the area of local government ethics. The Municipal League honored him in 2001 by presenting him with its Special Award of Merit.

## Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

### Hon. Douglas W. Hillman U.S. District Judge (retired); Western District of Michigan



Douglas W. Hillman practiced as a trial lawyer in Grand Rapids for more than three decades and spent another 23 years as a judge for the U. S. District Court for the Western District of Michigan. But his greatest legacy may be the program he founded to help young lawyers develop trial skills and foster civility and professionalism—a creation that now bears his name.

Formerly known as the Trial Skills Program, the Hillman Advocacy Program is an annual three-day seminar that has provided affordable, high-quality professional training to hundreds of trial lawyers. The program, sponsored by the West Michigan Chapter of the Federal Bar Association and the judges of the United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, celebrated its 25th anniversary earlier this year.

The State Bar of Michigan has previously honored him with the Champion of Justice Award in 1990. In 1996, the Young Lawyers Section of the State Bar of Michigan presented him its Professional and Community Service Award.

## Champion of Justice Award

### Jon T. Ferrier Referee; 17th Judicial Circuit Court

In his role as referee for the 17th Judicial Circuit Court, Jon T. Ferrier has helped shape the way family law is practiced in Michigan.

“The law at its best serves as a foundation of principles that all men and women are treated equally,” wrote a colleague in support of Ferrier’s nomination for the Champion of Justice Award. “Jon’s idealism and altruistic personality have made him a protector of the underdog.”

A dedicated public servant since 1981, Ferrier was instrumental in helping to revise entire sections of the Michigan Court Rules pertaining to family law. He frequently testified before Senate and House committees on pending legislation. One colleague remembers knocking on legislators’ office doors with Ferrier to present them with information that would help them improve state laws.

Ferrier is a co-founder and past president of the Referees Association of Michigan. He also created the Domestic Relations Education Program in Grand Rapids, a free, monthly family law forum that is open to the public and attorneys working in the field.



## Champion of Justice Award

### Elliott Hall Attorney; Dykema Gossett PLLC

As a college student, Elliott Hall wanted to get a summer job at Ford Motor Co., but his dad—a Ford employee—forbade him to do so. He feared his son would start making money and not finish school.

The younger Hall finished school, earning his bachelor’s and law degrees from Wayne State University. He eventually got that job at Ford, too, becoming the first African-American vice president in company history—first as chief of the company’s Washington affairs office and later taking over as its head of dealer development.

Born and raised on Detroit’s lower west side, Hall used his many roles to trumpet equality, fairness, and justice. As corporate counsel for the City of Detroit, he pushed for the police department to promote women and minorities to lieutenants and sergeants. During a time of racial uneasiness in the city, he helped diffuse tension by advocating cooperation and trust. In the 1970s, he defended one of 16 men identified as an associate of the Black Panther Party in the death of a Detroit police officer. As president of the Detroit NAACP, he fought for cross-district education on behalf of segregated school children. And he expanded Ford’s dealer network to include more women and minorities.

Hall’s commitment to these and other causes led his former law partner, Horace Stone, to say, “No one in the city of Detroit has done more pro bono work than Elliott Hall.”



## Champion of Justice Award

### Daniel P. Malone Attorney; Butzel Long PC

After participating in a Leadership Detroit program more than 20 years ago, Daniel P. Malone recognized the polarizing effects that racial segregation had on the region, and set out to do something about it. Using Leadership Detroit—a program operated by the Detroit Regional Chamber to build leaders who can affect change in the community—as a model, he launched Generation of Promise in 1987.

Malone’s goal was to bring together high-school age students from diverse backgrounds to build a community of young leaders who celebrate diversity and are dedicated to the elimination of racial divides in metropolitan Detroit. Since Generation of Promise’s first class of participants in 1990, nearly 700 students from 18 high schools have taken part in the program. Malone’s efforts have brought hope and fostered friendship between all human beings.



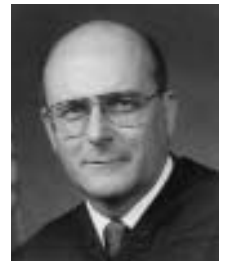
## Champion of Justice Award

### Hon. Fred M. Mester Oakland County Circuit Court

The list of honors and awards Hon. Fred M. Mester has received during his nearly 25 years as a judge is lengthy and impressive. His record as a devoted community servant, however, is even more remarkable.

Among the many causes Mester has championed is Oakland County’s Community Corrections Committee. The committee chair since 2001, he has been in charge of an innovative program that helps felons prepare for a return to society as responsible citizens, and he spearheaded an effort called “Reading to Reduce Recidivism,” which provides literacy training for convicts.

Students in more than 100 high schools have viewed Mester’s videotaped presentation on the consequences of drinking and driving. He is a leading force behind the Pontiac Alumni Foundation (PAF). Comprised of some of the school district’s distinguished alumni, the nonprofit organization assists in various ways the community’s troubled and at-risk youths. One of the PAF’s many endeavors is a peer-mentoring program for Pontiac junior-high students, which launched in 2004–05. The program was so successful—among the 38 at-risk kids who were first-year participants, attendance increased 90 percent and grades rose by 70 percent—it was expanded in 2005–06 to include an adult mentoring component.



## Champion of Justice Award

### Gail M. Pamukov Attorney



“For the first time in nearly eight years, I had a real sense of hope.”

That’s how Ken Wyniemko, who faced up to 60 years in prison after being wrongfully convicted in 1994 of breaking into a Clinton Township home, raping a woman, and stealing about \$3,000 from her, described his first meeting with attorney Gail Pamukov in 2001. Through her association with the Thomas M. Cooley Law School Innocence Project—whose mission is to identify, provide legal assistance to, and gain the release of those wrongfully imprisoned for crimes they did not commit—Pamukov agreed to take Wyniemko’s case on a pro bono basis.

After months of meticulously poring over files, court records, and transcripts, Pamukov discovered that DNA evidence had been withheld from Wyniemko’s trial. Eventually, she convinced Macomb County Circuit Court Judge Edward Servitto to grant an order allowing for the testing of the biological evidence. In June 2003, lab results proved Wyniemko’s innocence. The case was dismissed. After nearly a decade in jail, he was free. Pamukov is a reminder that “lawyers are the defenders of the constitution, proponents of liberty and true advocates of justice.”

## John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

### Michael S. Callahan Director of Operations/ General Counsel; Stiles Machinery, Inc.



Nearly 25 years after being sworn in to the State Bar of Michigan, one could say that Michael S. Callahan has come full circle. His sponsor at that ceremony in 1982 was John W. Cummiskey, whose Grand Rapids law firm hired him fresh out of the University of Indiana School of Law. This year, Callahan has been chosen as winner of the award bearing Cummiskey’s name.

Callahan, who now serves as director of operations and general counsel at Grand Rapids-based Stiles Machinery, Inc., has been an active participant with Legal Aid of Western Michigan since 1983. During that time period, Callahan accepted many referrals, most in the areas of bankruptcy and divorce, the program’s biggest areas of need.

According to Legal Aid of Western Michigan, Callahan is the group’s lone attorney employed within a corporate setting who accepts case referrals. In the 23 years he’s offered his services to the organization, he’s donated more than 415 hours of his time to handle cases for those who can’t afford an attorney.

## Liberty Bell Award

### Jeffrey Montgomery Executive Director; Triangle Foundation



Jeffrey Montgomery, nominated by the Stonewall Bar Association, is the executive director of the Triangle Foundation, a leading voice of advocacy for gay concerns. He has a national reputation and regularly provides commentary and witness on the evolving gay culture and the myriad issues related to the safety and equality of gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people.

In May 2003, Gov. Jennifer Granholm honored Montgomery’s work with a special tribute, calling him a “hero and a living legend.” He has received accolades too numerous to mention and serves on many boards and organizations, including being a co-chair and spokesperson for the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs.

## Liberty Bell Award

### Kim Trent Regional Manager; Detroit office of Sen. Debbie Stabenow



The D. Augustus Straker Bar Association nominated Kim Trent for this award. Ms. Trent is well known for her pursuit of equal justice and opportunity for all members of our society.

She travels regularly throughout Michigan to speak about affirmative action to organizations and conducts training seminars for supporters of affirmative action policies.

Ms. Trent first became engaged in the struggle to preserve affirmative action in Michigan in 2002, when she served as co-chairwoman of the Coalition to Defend Equal Opportunity, a group best known for organizing more than 100 busloads of people for a rally to support the University of Michigan’s affirmative action admission policies at the U.S. Supreme Court. Ms. Trent is also very active on many boards and organizations and has received various awards and accolades for her work.

## Representative Assembly Award Winners

### Michael Franck Award

**Hon. William Leo Cahalan**  
Wayne County Circuit Court (retired)

In his letter endorsing William Leo Cahalan for the Representative Assembly's Michael Franck Award, Judge John B. Collins recalled the funeral of a judge many years ago, and the rhetorical question posed by a priest during the eulogy. "What kind of man makes a good judge?" the priest asked. "He must be a good man, but not so good that he doesn't understand human weakness."

Judge Leo, as his friends call him, has earned a well-deserved reputation for helping substance abusers. He was one of the first judges in the state to recognize the link between drug and alcohol addictions and criminal behavior; before the term "drug court" even existed, Cahalan was sentencing addicted felons to rehab in addition to serving jail time.

His concern for drug and alcohol abuse is not confined to criminals. As a member of the State Bar Lawyers and Judges Assistance Committee, Cahalan has worked tirelessly to assist those in the legal community in their battles to overcome substance abuse. He's received many late-night phone calls from colleagues struggling with addictions seeking his advice, guidance, and encouragement. Countless lawyers and judges across the state can attest to Cahalan's message that recovery is possible and life is not over for those seeking help, but just beginning.



### Unsung Hero Award

**Jay D. Kaplan**  
LGBT Legal Project Staff Attorney;  
ACLU of Michigan

Jay D. Kaplan has spent his entire legal career of more than 20 years working for the benefit of others. He has always stood up for the under represented, the poor, and the unpopular, and serves as an extraordinary example of kindness and selflessness.

His is a major voice in discussions and debates regarding issues facing the lesbian, gay, bi-sexual, and transgender community. As staff attorney for the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-Sexual, and Transgender Legal Project operated by the ACLU of Michigan, Kaplan is often involved in high-profile, hot-button issues such as insurance benefits for same-sex partners and same-sex marriage. In fact, the plight of the gay and lesbian community has been Kaplan's focus for the better part of two decades.

During his nearly 13 years as a staff attorney with the Michigan Protection and Advocacy Services, a disability rights agency, he founded the HIV/AIDS Advocacy Program, an effort that offered legal help to people living with HIV or AIDS, and the Human Rights Project, which provided legal assistance to gays and lesbians. ♦



### Charles R. Rutherford is Founders Award Recipient



The Michigan State Bar Foundation selected Charles R. Rutherford as its 2006 Founders Award recipient. Prior recipients include two past State Bar presidents: Wallace D. Riley and Dennis W. Archer, Jr.

The Founders Award recognizes a lawyer who exemplifies the Foundation's Fellows criteria of professional excellence and outstanding community contributions. The Fellows program has 1,200 attorneys and judges and has contributed over \$1 million to the Foundation's public service programs. Mr. Rutherford is Fellows secretary.

Mr. Rutherford's public service record includes trustee and president of the Michigan State Bar Foundation. He was Senior Lawyers Section chair, receiving their inaugural Charles R. Rutherford Award. He is a Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society trustee and an American Bar Foundation Fellow. He is currently of counsel to Dykema Gossett, specializing in intellectual property law.