

UpFront

By Naseem Stecker

AWARDS! AWARDS! AWARDS!

September is awards season—a time when outstanding lawyers and judges are honored and applauded for their contributions to society and the profession. Join us for the awards banquet on Wednesday, September 17, from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency, Dearborn. The banquet, held in conjunction with the State Bar Annual Meeting, will begin with recognition of the winners of the Respected Advocate Award that is given annually by the Michigan Defense Trial Council and the Michigan Association of Justice. For more awards coverage, see page 38.

MDTC/MAJ Respected Advocate Awards

Norman D. Tucker and Bruce E. Bigler are the 2008 recipients of the Respected Advocate Awards. Each year, the Michigan Defense Trial Council and the Michigan Association of Justice present these awards to members that have a “history of success in civil litigation matters, unflinching adherence to the highest standards of ethics and candor in dealing with the court and with counsel, and the respect and admiration of counsel on the opposing side of the bar.”

Norman D. Tucker has more than 30 years’ experience in plaintiff medical malpractice, product liability, and complicated litigation. He focuses on birth trauma litigation and has co-authored the two definitive reference books on the subject, *Handling Birth Trauma Cases, Volume I and II*. His meticulous attention to detail and evaluation of medical research has resulted in numerous multi-million dollars settlements for clients. He is also committed to educating legal and medical practitioners on current issues in the field and has presented more than 100 seminars and workshops. He has been a key participant in several state task forces on tort reform, physician peer review, and national health care. Mr. Tucker joined Sommers Schwartz in 1975, and is currently a senior shareholder in the firm. ■



Bruce E. Bigler is a founding partner of Bigler Barker PLLC in Troy and a highly respected defense attorney in Michigan. After graduating from Wayne State Law School in 1973, Mr. Bigler worked in the Oakland County Prosecutor’s Office, where he rose to senior trial attorney status and received the Brooks Patterson Award for Distinguished Service. After four years of intense trial experience, he accepted a position with a Troy firm and began defending medical care providers. Over the past three decades, Mr. Bigler has devoted his trial skills to the defense of the firm’s clients, which include hospitals and doctors. He is knowledgeable in all fields of alleged medical malpractice, with special concentration in obstetrics. His talents have resulted in not only the successful defense of dozens of trials, but also hundreds of cases that have been resolved by means of summary disposition motions and favorable settlements. ■



Anatomy Tribute Celebration Honors Voelker’s Life and Works

A stamp unveiling, exhibit, forum, talk, video presentations, and even a fly-fishing demonstration are planned for September 26–27 in Lansing to commemorate the 50-year anniversary of the 1958 novel *Anatomy of a Murder* by former Supreme Court Justice John D. Voelker (1903–1991). Better known as author Robert Traver, Voelker published a number of novels and short stories with legal themes, but achieved the most success with *Anatomy of a Murder*, which turned out to be a best seller. It was made into an Academy Award-nominated film and is re-

garded as one of the best trial movies ever made. Planned events to highlight Voelker’s life and works will take place at the Hall of Justice and the Library of Michigan. Upper Peninsula events will take place in Marquette and Ishpeming September 18, 19, 26, and 29 as well as October 14 and 20. All events are free and open to the public. Voelker was born, practiced law, fly-fished, and spent most of his life in the U.P. A film series, walking tours of “Voelker sites” in Ishpeming, a free concert, and displays at the Peter White Public Library are planned.



Photos courtesy of Central Upper Peninsula and Northern Michigan University Archives. Design by Michael Maurer Smith.

For a review and reflections on Voelker’s work by Fred Baker, see page 50. For event details, visit the *Anatomy* website at www.nmu.edu/anatomy50 or contact the Library of Michigan at librarian@michigan.gov or (517) 373-1300. ■

Teen Court Becomes Part of Wayne Memorial High School Curriculum

Starting this month, students at Wayne Memorial High School will have the opportunity to pass judgment on their peers, as part of an in-school Teen Court program. The 29th District Court, in conjunction with the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office, started the Teen Court two years ago, but the program seemed in jeopardy because of problems with transportation and other commitments after school.

Early this year, 29th District Judge Laura Mack approached the Wayne-Westland School District for approval to include the program as part of the regular curriculum in the Business and Personal Law classes already being offered as electives. When she received approval, she approached the Wayne Rotary Club about funding the renovation of a classroom to resemble a courtroom. "I thought, the more the classroom actually looks like a real courtroom, the more the jurors and juvenile offenders will respect the proceedings," Judge Mack said. The Wayne Rotary Club enthusiastically approved her request, and the renovations are now complete. So, instead of student jurors having to find transportation to the 29th District Court, Judge Mack will travel to Wayne Memorial High School to conduct the weekly Teen Court sessions.

These sessions will include juvenile offenders that would otherwise be placed on probation through the 29th District Court's juvenile diversion program, which has been in place since 1998. Teen Court is a "peer review" model that functions as an alternative to the formal juvenile justice system. Juvenile offenders appear before a jury panel made up of high school students. The "jury" does not make a determination of "guilty" or "not guilty." Rather, the teen jury's sole function is to fashion a sentence to be imposed on a juvenile offender. If the juvenile complies with the sentence imposed by the teen jury, he or she will not have a juvenile record for the offense. For more information contact Linda Gable at lgable@ci.wayne.mi.us or (734) 722-5220. ■

A ribbon-cutting ceremony was held on August 26 to dedicate the classroom/courtroom. Left to right: Beth Johnson, Wayne Memorial High School; Dr. Greg Baracy, Superintendent, Wayne Westland Community Schools; Martha Pitsenbarger, President, Wayne Westland School Board; Judge Laura Mack, Chief Judge, 29th District Court; Linda Gable, Court Administrator, 29th District Court; Valerie Orr, Principal, Wayne Memorial High School.



ABA Appoints Cooley's Nussbaumer to Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity



John Nussbaumer

The American Bar Association has named Thomas M. Cooley Law School Associate Dean John Nussbaumer to its prestigious Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity in the Profession. The 26-member council is charged with enhancing racial and ethnic diversity in the legal profession and within the ABA, encouraging students of color and foreign nationals to pursue and successfully navigate the path to a legal career.

"At a time when almost two-thirds of all African-American applicants and half of all Hispanic applicants are totally shut out from every law school they apply to, it's more important than ever for us to work to make sure that all applicants who have a reasonable chance of success in law school are given the opportunity to prove through performance that their LSAT score is not, neces-

sarily, the best measure of law school success," Nussbaumer said.

He has written extensively on issues affecting diversity in legal education and has presented research findings at the National Bar Association's 2006 and 2007 national conventions. Cooley Law School is one of the nation's most diverse law schools.

"We are proud of Dean Nussbaumer's work and achievements toward improving diversity in legal education," said Don LeDuc, president of Cooley. "This appointment recognizes his work and illustrates the trust the legal profession has in him to advise on this subject at a national level."

Dean Nussbaumer is a 1976 honors graduate of the University of Michigan Law School. Before joining the Cooley faculty in 1984, he served as a law clerk to former Michigan Supreme Court Chief Justice Mary S. Coleman and as an assistant public defender for the State Appellate Defender Office. ■

Correction

In the elections for the Young Lawyers Section Executive Council, **Alexandra Nassar** of Flint won in District 3, along with Erika Lynn Anderson of St. Johns.