

A Time to Honor Our Best

Compiled and written by Mike Eidelbes and Samantha Meinke

Tributes will flow and memorable speeches will be made Wednesday, September 16 when State Bar members gather to applaud and honor the best in the legal profession. The annual awards banquet will be held from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency Dearborn. No winner was chosen for the Roberts P. Hudson Award this year. A new award named after the late State Bar President Kimberly M. Cahill will be presented for the first time. The annual awards banquet is held in conjunction with the State Bar Annual Meeting.

State Bar of Michigan 2009 Award Winners

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

Dennis P. Grenkowicz
Attorney, Grenkowicz and Associates;
Former Alpena County
Prosecuting Attorney



Dennis Grenkowicz, wrote an attorney supporting his nomination for the Frank Kelley Award, is the personification of the “small town D.A.” that Michigan Supreme Court Justice and author John D. Voelker—better known by his pen name, Robert Traver—described in his similarly named 1954 novel.

Grenkowicz was born and raised in Alpena and currently is in private practice there. Before that, he devoted 16 years as the Alpena County prosecuting attorney. Though he has worked in a bucolic corner of northeastern Michigan for more than two decades (also as an assistant prosecutor in Ogemaw and Alpena counties), he has been a key figure in shaping changes to state law during that time.

His career highlights include two appeals that progressed all the way to the Michigan Supreme Court. The first, *People v Faucett* in 1993, led to a change in the state's search and seizure law when the justices upheld a traffic stop based on an anonymous tip. The following year, Grenkowicz again appeared in front of the Supreme Court in *People v Lemcool*. The outcome of that case changed criminal procedure in Michigan by requiring the defense to disclose its evidence before trial in the same manner as the prosecution had always been required to do.

Grenkowicz is an innovator, too. In 2004, he used a relatively new legislative change in Michigan's law of marital privilege to ob-

tain the testimony of Jason Belanger against his defendant wife, Melissa Belanger, in a first-degree murder case. That same year, his suggestion led to a statute giving vulnerable adults in the state the same protections against abuse that children receive.

A former member of the State Bar of Michigan Board of Commissioners, Grenkowicz was honored by the Michigan Supreme Court in 2003 for distinguished service in that capacity. He's currently a member of the SBM Representative Assembly.

The scope of Grenkowicz's impact should come as no surprise, given his attitude toward his role. He is fond of saying, “We are not in the conviction business—we are in the justice business.”

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

Lloyd E. Powell
Washtenaw County Public Defender



Washtenaw County Prosecutor Brian Mackey has referred to Lloyd Powell as “foot soldier for the Constitution” and “a joyous crusader for justice.” An attorney for nearly four decades—including 29 years as the chief public defender in Washtenaw County—Powell has been a tireless promoter of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights, a message he spreads well beyond the courtroom.

Of particular interest to Powell is developing a close relationship with the county's police force and helping them foster race-neutral approaches to fighting crime. For nearly 10 years, he has orchestrated a public forum entitled “Enhancing Police and Community Trust” in conjunction with the Washtenaw County Bar Association's Bias Awareness Week. As part of the yearly gathering, law enforcement agencies interact with community members, exchanging ideas and information as well as making the police units aware of problems, issues, and concerns within their jurisdictions. He also regularly discusses racial profiling and bias awareness with Ann Arbor police.

During Powell's tenure as Washtenaw County public defender, the office has achieved economic parity with the Washtenaw County prosecutor. His office is part of the Judicial Oversight Demonstration Project dealing with domestic violence cases, which provides representation on domestic violence offenses after sentencing until case closure. Powell is a member of Washtenaw County's Criminal Justice Collaborative Council, the Community Corrections Advisory Board, and the Jail Overcrowding Task Force. He also works closely with county mental health providers and helped

create a plan to provide services to mentally ill inmates in the Washenaw County jail.

A frequent guest speaker at churches and schools in the county, Powell is especially devoted to causes involving children. If there's an event where kids want a speaker or need money for a program, he will be there. He's also an avid supporter of young lawyers, routinely offering his support and expertise as they learn to navigate the legal system.

Champion of Justice Award

Hon. Robert A. Benson
17th Circuit Court Judge (Retired)



Perhaps the ultimate testament to former 17th Circuit Court Judge Robert Benson's commitment to the legal system comes from the circuit's current chief judge pro tempore, Donald A. Johnson, who wrote in a letter supporting his former colleague's nomination for the Champion of Justice Award that he sees Benson more often around the courthouse now even though he's retired.

Indeed, even though he officially stepped down from the bench nearly a decade ago, Benson continues to serve as a visiting judge in several district and circuit courts in western Michigan. It's a familiar seat for Benson, who spent nearly two decades as a Kent County judge, including a turn as the court's chief judge from 1991 to 1994.

Benson was appointed to the bench in 1980 by then Governor William Milliken, and his tenure was highlighted by his judicial opinions relating to sentencing guidelines and the Open Meetings Act. A passionate supporter of appellate indigent defense, Benson served on the State Appellate Defender Commission for six years and chaired the panel from 2006 to 2008. He has a well-earned reputation as a legal scholar as both a private practitioner and a jurist, making him an invaluable resource for fellow judges, and exemplifying the highest levels of personal integrity and adherence to the traditions of the legal profession.

A member of the State Bar of Michigan since 1961, Benson was a partner at the law firm of Roach, Twohey, Benson and Brady for 13 years and spent 6 years with Cholette, Perkins and Buchanan. He has served the Grand Rapids Bar Association as a trustee and has been part of the American Inns of Court. Judge Benson has also been active in community organizations such as the Grand Rapids Urban League and Jellema House, a residential drug and alcohol abuse treatment facility in Grand Rapids.

Champion of Justice Award

E. Christopher Johnson, Jr.
Thomas M. Cooley Law School
Director of Graduate Program
in Corporate Law & Finance



As the former general counsel and vice president of General Motors North Amer-

ica, E. Christopher Johnson managed the delivery of all legal services that impacted the GM North America region, overseeing a staff of 250 employees and maintaining relationships with approximately 400 outside law firms that worked with the automaker. It was a demanding, high-profile position—one Johnson used to champion diversity in the legal profession and promote pro bono services.

Johnson has played a significant leadership role for the Council for Legal Education Opportunity, a national organization that aims to increase the number of practicing minority attorneys. In 2007, Street Law, a nonprofit dedicated to providing practical, participatory education about law, democracy, and human rights, presented him with its Corporate Legal Diversity Pipeline Award for heading a team of GM lawyers, paralegals, and support staff who worked closely with four Detroit public high schools. He is a member of the American Bar Association's Presidential Advisory Council on Diversity in the Legal Profession, the ABA Council for Legal Education Opportunity, and the Standards Review Committee for the ABA Section of Legal Education.

On the pro bono front, Johnson chairs the Corporate Pro Bono Committee for the State Bar of Michigan Access to Justice Initiative, and co-chairs both the Legacy Justice Campaign for the Detroit Legal Aid and Defender Office and the Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association Foundation.

Among the honors Johnson has received are the ABA Spirit of Excellence Corporate Award, the State Bar of Michigan Michael Franck Award, and the National Bar Association Clyde Bailey Award for Corporate Leadership. In 2008, he was inducted into the National Black Law Students Association Hall of Fame.

Champion of Justice Award

Hon. Leonia J. Lloyd
36th District Court Judge



The Honorable Leonia Lloyd has deep roots and a strong commitment to Detroit—the city where she was born and raised. She was educated in Detroit's public school system and earned her bachelor's and law degrees from Wayne State University. It should come as no surprise, then, that the longtime judge has been instrumental in a variety of programs aimed at tackling problems that plague the city.

Most notably, Lloyd presides over the 36th District's Drug Treatment Court, a post she's held since 2002. During that time, the court has consistently been named one of the top three drug courts in the nation, and this year Lloyd and her team received the prestigious Transformation Award from the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Lloyd has partnered with the Detroit Police Department to focus its efforts on reducing prostitution and illicit drug use in Detroit. She also collaborated with the Wayne County Sheriff's Department and the Detroit Health Department to initiate Project Fresh Start, designed to help men and women involved in the commercial sex trade to remain drug free and acquire permanent

housing, higher education, and employment in an effort to help them restore their self-respect and become productive members of the community. Lloyd also had a hand in establishing the Misdemeanor Morality Program, which educates participants about inappropriate conduct regarding sexual activity.

Judge Lloyd participated in the development of the 36th District Court's Handgun Intervention Program, designed to get illegal firearms off the streets and educate citizens on illegal gun activity. She also helped create the court's Dose of Reality Tour, which shows offenders the consequences of their behavior and the need to change their ways to avoid incarceration.

A recipient of the Detroit City Council's Distinguished Service Award this year, Lloyd sits on the boards of the Michigan Association of Drug Court Professionals and Alternatives for Girls. She was recently nominated to sit on the board of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals.

Champion of Justice Award

Paul Reingold
Director, Michigan Clinical Law Program; Professor, University of Michigan Law School



Over the course of his 30-year career, first as a legal services attorney and currently as a professor and director of the clinical law program at the University of Michigan Law School, Paul Reingold has handled only cases that involve poverty law or the public interest. A few of the cases he's argued have resulted in significant court decisions; more importantly, those decisions have been rendered in favor of segments of society that typically don't have a voice in the legal system.

The most notable of these cases was Reingold's victory in *Foster-Bey v Sampson* in which he took up the cause of inmates sentenced to life in prison with the opportunity for parole before 1992. Because of changes in parole law and the state parole board's policies, procedures, and standards, however, these inmates were rarely given serious consideration for parole.

Aided by a team of law students who communicated with clients, researched the law, wrote briefs, deposed witnesses, and argued motions on behalf of the plaintiff, Reingold argued in federal court that this treatment violated the U.S. Constitution. The court agreed and, as a result, hundreds of Michigan inmates who had been illegally denied parole review are now being considered for parole. In many cases, these prisoners have been released in accordance with the sentencing judge's expectations.

While the *Foster-Bey* case is significant, it's just one of Reingold's many successes on behalf of the state's most underserved citizens. In 1989, the United States Supreme Court ruled unanimously in favor of Reingold's client, a state prison inmate who claimed his civil rights had been violated. His work in *Jindo, et al. v Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners* in 1985 led to the creation of a free health insurance program that currently serves more than 10,000 people. Reingold also successfully argued a 1990 case that held HUD's public housing asset forfeiture program was unconstitutional.

Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award

Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit
Clifford Schrupp, Director



The numbers are staggering: the Fair Housing Center of Metropolitan Detroit, an organization founded in 1977 to seek equal access to housing for all without discrimination, has served more than 10,000 clients, investigated more than 5,000 housing discrimination complaints, and assisted in more than 400 court complaints, resulting in 320 successful suits and settlements and plaintiff awards in excess of \$10 million.

Over the past three decades, the Fair Housing Center has become the go-to organization for housing discrimination in southeastern Michigan. This effort is made possible in part by a network of over 250 cooperating attorneys, each of the state's law schools, and the collaboration of 150 governmental agencies, lending institutions, real estate firms, and apartment rental groups.

The FHC's vigilance in this area isn't limited to the legal system. The organization has spearheaded more than 35 major fair housing surveys on behalf of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development and other federal and state agencies, and sends testers—individuals recruited and trained to pose as home seekers—into the community to verify discrimination complaints. The FHC also makes a concerted effort to educate leasing agents, apartment owners, property managers, and real estate agents about their obligations under the federal Fair Housing Act, and holds an annual awards presentation to honor individuals in the housing industry who've demonstrated an exceptional commitment to fair housing.

Clifford Schrupp has been part of the FHC since its inception. The Hon. Linda V. Parker, Third Judicial Circuit Court judge and past director of the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, wrote in a letter nominating the FHC for this award that Schrupp is "viewed as the father of fair housing" across the country, and that similar organizations from coast to coast have emulated the strategies, programs, and procedures he has implemented.

John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

Joseph C. Basta
Attorney, Dykema Gossett



Although his practice at Dykema Gossett in Ann Arbor focuses on complex commercial litigation and emphasizes patents, copyrights, business disputes, and the environment, Joseph C. Basta has donated more than 1,500 hours of his time to clients in many other areas over the course of his 34-year legal career.

Most notably, Basta donated more than 700 hours of his time to represent Robert Newland, a man sentenced to death in Georgia. Newland suffered severe childhood trauma and brain damage, mitigating factors his lawyer failed to produce at trial. Basta stepped in after his sentence, traveled to visit Newland on

numerous occasions, and pursued every available argument, including a petition for a writ of certiorari he filed with the United States Supreme Court. Basta provided spending money to Newland while he was on death row, and was with his family and him this March, in the last hours before Newland was executed.

"To work on a death penalty case requires a stamina and steadfastness which is unparalleled," wrote a supporter of Basta. "The appellate judges are often elected and face extreme political pressure not to overturn a death penalty conviction. Despite this, the volunteer lawyer must remain steadfast.... Joe stepped forth over 20 years ago, and despite the huge challenges he has faced, he did not walk away, from this cause or any other."

Basta's pro bono work began when he argued a prisoner civil rights case in Michigan. Since then, he has provided more than 500 hours of his time as a pro bono mediator at Wayne Mediation Center. On average, he has handled two or more mediations there a month since 2004. He has also trained new mediators and addressed a mediation skills clinic at University of Detroit Mercy School of Law. He mentors young attorneys on pro bono matters, serves on the board of the Dispute Resolution Center, and contributes to Hope House, an agency that provides housing for Georgia families visiting death row inmates.

Liberty Bell Award

Edna Kinsey

"Every time I see this person," remarked Circuit Judge Michael A. Weipert during his introduction of Edna Kinsey at Monroe County's Law Day festivities in May, "I envision a Norman Rockwell painting."

The 80-year-old Kinsey, who has lived in Monroe her entire life, retired from Boy Scout Troop 579 in June after 50 years of service. She and her husband, Ed, got involved in scouting in 1959 when their oldest son, Greg, decided to join the Scouts. Ed passed away in 2001—he and Edna were married for 51 years—but Edna remained active with the troop. Over the years, she's worked with hundreds of Monroe County youngsters who've been a part of Boy Scouts of America and organized countless meetings, events, and dinners during that time.

Scouting has been a family affair for the Kinseys. In addition to Edna's and Ed's decades of involvement, all four of the couple's sons were Scouts, including two who became Eagle Scouts. At one point, there were four generations of Kinsey boys in the troop at the same time. The Kinseys' two daughters were active in 4-H; Edna and Ed were involved in that organization as well.

So synonymous is the Kinsey name with Boy Scouts in the area that the troop's building on the grounds of the Monroe Rod and Gun Club is named after Edna and her husband.

"The 50 years went really fast," said Kinsey, known by many as "the Queen of Scouts," at the Law Day ceremony. "They were all good boys because they wanted to be there. Some of them I'll never forget."



Representative Assembly Award Winners

The Representative Assembly's Michael Franck and Unsung Hero Awards will be presented on Thursday, September 17 at 9:35 a.m. during the RA's general meeting.

Michael Franck Award

Dan Bonner
Managing Attorney,
Legal Aid of Western Michigan

"So the last shall be first, and the first last."

That line from the book of Matthew is likely familiar to Dan Bonner, a graduate of St. John's Provincial Seminary in Plymouth and former clergyman at St. Mary's Catholic Parish in Grayling. It can also be used to describe the focus of Bonner's legal career. In 26 years as a lawyer with Legal Aid of Western Michigan in its Muskegon office—including the last decade as managing attorney—Bonner has earned a reputation for providing high-quality legal service to people who cannot afford representation.

"Dan is a highly skilled lawyer who chooses to use his skills not for great personal gain, but for service to those less fortunate," wrote John R. Bulgur, Mason County Family Court referee, in a letter supporting Bonner's nomination. "In a profession where our growing lack of civility is a concern, Dan is the epitome of courteous but effective representation."

Bonner views the law as a way to improve people's lives. Those who've worked with him note that he treats his clients with dignity and respect, which he also extends to opposing counsel and their clients. Despite working with people struggling with financial and emotional strains, he maintains a positive outlook and an upbeat demeanor.

"When Dan's name [is] on the docket, I look forward to seeing him," said Mason County Judge Mark D. Raven. "He has an uncanny ability to brighten up the day and I have commented many times that he is the happiest lawyer I have ever met."

In addition to his work with Legal Aid of Western Michigan, Bonner is active in numerous community organizations. He is a former president of the Muskegon County Bar Association; a member of Law-to-Teens Bar Committee, which works to keep teens out of trouble; part of the Tri-County Protection Team devoted to the protection of vulnerable victims and senior citizens; and he served on the board for the Muskegon County Habitat for Humanity.



Unsung Hero Award

Brian Barkey
Attorney

Over the past 17 years, Brian Barkey has treated Genesee County residents to more than 10,000 free dinners. He's not one with an endless desire to fulfill epicurean needs; rather, the Flint attorney is a humanitarian who strives to give the less



fortunate in his community a reason to celebrate during the holiday season.

"Brian Barkey saw a need in our community and did something about it," a supporter wrote on his behalf. "Now, 17 years later, the dinner continues, having more than doubled in size."

Since 1992, Barkey, the founder of Genesee County Bar Association's Community Holiday Dinner, and his team of volunteers—more than 1,500—have provided a traditional holiday feast to attendees free of charge. The magnanimity doesn't end with dinner, however. Each year, children who go to the dinner get their photograph taken with Santa Claus and receive a gift from the jolly old elf, too. At last count, more than 5,000 kids have gotten a present from Santa. Staying true to his promise that the dinner would be self-sufficient, his group has raised more than \$75,000 to fund the program.

Barkey's primary volunteer endeavor, in addition to feeding people, is helping others get in shape. He's been part of the Crim Fitness Foundation for more than two decades, including 15 years on the group's board of directors and five years as the festival's president. Currently, he volunteers as a leader for the Crim Training Program, a 15-week effort that helps runners and walkers prepare for the Crim Festival of Races, which supports the Special Olympics.

Unsung Hero Award

Kelly Burris

Attorney, Brinks Hofer Gilson and Lione

"I need flying just like I need oxygen," attorney and aviator Kelly Burris told a magazine reporter recently. Interesting that Burris would connect her passion for flying with survival, because she uses her skill as a pilot to provide a lifeline for others.



Burris has been a volunteer for the Air Charity Network, also known as Angel Flight, since 2003. Angel Flight volunteers use private aircraft to transport people with medical conditions who are unable to fly commercially to and from appointments with specialists. Angel Flight pilots such as Burris, who covers the central and mid-Atlantic regions of the country, also deliver medical supplies.

Last summer, Burris helped raise about \$12,000 for Angel Flight by flying her 1962 Beechcraft Debonair, which she affectionately calls "The Deb," more than 2,400 miles from Bozeman, Montana to Mansfield, Massachusetts in the Air Race Classic, an all-female race whose origin dates back to 1929. This year, she won that air race and has come close to achieving her goal of raising \$25,000.

Burris's fondness for flying isn't new. Her father, who served as an air traffic controller on an aircraft carrier, got her hooked on aviation by taking her and her brother to air shows and building models of World War II aircraft. She earned an aeronautical engineering degree from Western Michigan, then worked in St. Louis for aircraft manufacturer McDonald Douglas for 11 years, picking up a master's degree in materials engineering from Washington University in St. Louis during that time.

During industry downturn in the early '90s when layoffs were prevalent, Burris enrolled in law school at St. Louis University with

a focus on patent law. After passing the Missouri bar exam in 2000, Burris worked in St. Louis for a couple of years before returning to Michigan and joining Harness Dickey and Pierce in Troy. In 2007, Burris went to the Ann Arbor office of Brinks Hofer Gilson and Lione and became a shareholder in the firm in January.

Michigan State Bar Foundation Founders Award

Hon. Avern L. Cohn
U.S. District Court
Eastern District of Michigan



The Michigan State Bar Foundation selected the Hon. Avern Cohn to receive its highest honor in 2009. The Foundation's Founders Award recognizes professional excellence and exemplary contributions to society. Past recipients have included Dennis W. Archer, Wallace D. Riley, Charles R. Rutherford, Hon. Julian A. Cook, Jr., Kimberly M. Cahill (posthumously), and Patrick J. Breutsch.

Foundation President Margaret Nichols said "Judge Cohn represents the highest traditions of the legal profession through his distinguished service to the justice system and selfless contributions to society. He has had a profound impact on jurisprudence and on the many public and community efforts to which he has so generously given his leadership and support. Particularly gratifying to the Foundation are his activities and support for law-related public education which benefits areas such as citizenship, delinquency prevention, critical thinking, and ethics education." Chief Justice Marilyn Kelly will present the Founders Award to Judge Cohn on behalf of the Foundation during the State Bar Awards Banquet on September 16.

President Carter appointed Judge Cohn to the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan in 1979. He practiced law in the Office of Irwin I. Cohn (1949–1961) and at Honigman Miller Schwartz and Cohn (1961–1979). Judge Cohn has held the following public positions: Michigan Social Welfare Commission (1963), Michigan Civil Rights Commission (1972–1975; chairperson 1974–1975), and Detroit Board of Police Commissioners (1975–1979; chairperson 1979). Judge Cohn is a member of the Detroit Bar Association, State Bar of Michigan, Federal Circuit Bar Association, Federal Bar Association, American Bar Association, the Bar of the Supreme Court of the United States, and the American Law Institute. He was chairperson of the State Bar Special Committee on Court Congestion (1977–1978) and Representative Assembly (1973–1979). He is a past trustee or director of the Detroit Bar Association Foundation, Detroit Bar Association, and American Judicature Society; he is also a past president of the Jewish Welfare Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Judge Cohn attended the University of Michigan, John Tarleton Agricultural College, Stanford University, and Loyola School of Medicine. He served in the United States Army from 1943–1946. He received his JD from the University of Michigan Law School in 1949.

MAJ/MDTC Respected Advocate Award Winners

William W. Jack, Jr. and William F. Mills are the 2009 recipients of the Respected Advocate Awards. Each year, the Michigan Association for Justice and the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel present these awards to members who 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 the counsel on the opposing side of the bar.” Both of this year’s recipients were nominated “in recognition of their superb skills as courtroom adversaries, whose civility and decorum distinguishes them as outstanding advocates on behalf of their clients.”

William W. Jack, Jr. has practiced health law, medical malpractice defense, general litigation, and professional liabilities actions defense since 1975 with Smith Haughey in Grand Rapids. He served as its CEO from 1991 to 1997, and is president of its Board of Directors and chair of its Diversity Committee. He has served as a certified facilitative mediator for more than 300 cases in state and federal courts. He earned his JD with honors in 1973 from George Washington University, is listed as a Michigan Super Lawyer and a member of the Best Lawyers in America, and won the 2002 MDTC Excellence in Defense Award. He served as president of the West Michigan Chapter of the Federal Bar Association in 1991, president of the Grand Rapids Bar Association in 1998–1999, on Planned Parenthood Centers of West Michigan’s board of directors from 1995 to 2000, a fellow in the American Bar Foundation, a fellow in the Michigan State Bar Foundation, and as vice president of Kent Medical Foundation.



William F. Mills practices law with Gruel, Mills, Nims & Pylman in Grand Rapids, and concentrates in personal injury law, product liability law, civil rights, medical malpractice, construction site negligence, complex commercial litigation, and automotive liability. He has won several of west Michigan’s largest jury verdicts in cases in these areas, including the largest product liability verdict in Kent County, totaling \$8.2 million; and one of the largest commercial verdicts in Kent County, totaling \$3.3 million. He earned his JD in 1974 from the University of Michigan Law School, is listed in Woodward & White’s Best Lawyers in America, and also listed as one of the Top 100 “Super Lawyers” in Michigan. He served as an artillery officer in Vietnam and was awarded two Purple Hearts. He also volunteers in his community: from 1984 to 1995 he served as a trustee on Hope Network’s Board, served on the Holland Home Executive Board, and served on the boards of his church, Heartside Ministries, and the school district.

