

UpFront

By Naseem Stecker and Samantha Meinke



SBM photo

Assessing the Needs of the Justice System in Changing Times

Members of the Judicial Crossroads Task Force Access to Justice Committee met November 13 at the State Bar of Michigan in Lansing. The committee is one of four supporting the work of the Crossroads Task

Force as it begins its assessment of the needs of the court system in the face of major economic and demographic changes in Michigan. The task force will also get input from committees addressing business

impact, court structure and resources, and technology. A long-term recommendation is expected in the fall of 2010. ■



Photo courtesy of Bodman LLP

Michelle Thomas is "Pro Bono Attorney of the Year"

Legal Aid and Defender Association, Inc. (LAD), Michigan's oldest and largest provider of free legal services to low-income people, has named Michelle T. Thomas of Bodman LLP its Pro Bono Attorney of the Year for 2009. Thomas, of Bodman's Detroit office, focuses her legal practice in commercial litigation matters.

In announcing the award, LAD cited a complex expungement matter Thomas recently handled on behalf of a 32-year-old single mother of four children who could not find work because of a criminal conviction. Thomas devoted more than 80 hours to the case, removing a serious barrier in her client's quest for employment. ■

October Pro Bono Month Celebration Honors Attorneys for Their Services

Pro Bono Month events culminated at the Michigan Hall of Justice October 29, where speakers, including Michigan Supreme Court Justice Diane Hathaway and Georgetown Law School's Peter Edelman, highlighted the importance of pro bono service locally, statewide, and nationally. The celebration was organized by the State Bar Pro Bono Initiative. ■



(L-R) Terri Stangl, executive director of the Center for Civil Justice in Saginaw, and Hon. Cynthia Stephens of the Michigan Court of Appeals look on as Justice Diane Hathaway is acknowledged for her support of pro bono services.



(L-R) Hon. Alfred Butzbaugh, of the Berrien County Trial Court Second Judicial Circuit, and Nelson Miller, associate dean and professor at Thomas M. Cooley Law School in Grand Rapids, enjoy the celebration.



Detroit Building Rich in Legal History Celebrates 100th Birthday

Detroit's Ford Building, which celebrated its 100th birthday on November 12, has housed many notable figures in Michigan's legal history.

In 1925, Clarence Darrow made it his headquarters as he worked to defend Dr. Ossian Sweet and his family in a murder trial that set a civil rights precedent when the African-American family was acquitted of the murder of a member of a white mob who tried to drive the Sweets from their neighborhood.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, Dorothy Comstock Riley, the first Hispanic person elected to the Supreme Court of any state, and her husband, Wallace Riley, a former State Bar of Michigan and American Bar Association president, held offices here. Their partner, George Roumell, Jr., a former State Bar of Michigan president, founded the Michigan Legal Milestones program.

And America's first Muslim judge, Adam Sha-koor, who is also former deputy mayor of Detroit, still holds an office in the Ford Building. ■

Bar Makes Structural Changes to Justice Initiatives Program

The State Bar Justice Initiatives program has been integrated into the SBM Executive Office. This administrative change will better coordinate and deploy resources dedicated to increasing access to justice to each person in our judicial system. A team approach

will be emphasized that will allow for more direct collaboration with staff from governmental relations, outreach, external development, and research and development. The move will also strengthen the Bar's partnership with the Michigan State Bar Founda-

tion and legal aid providers to raise money for civil legal aid to low-income people through the Access to Justice Fund. A new position of Director of Diversity has also been created to address diversity issues across the board. ■

New Masi Cup Golf Tournament Gets Off to Winning Start for Michigan

Michigan and Ohio attorneys started a new golfing tradition this fall when they met to take part in the first ever Masi Cup Golf Tournament at courses in the Battle Creek area. The Michigan golfers won the tournament and the cup named after Steven Mason, the first governor of our state who helped to resolve a boundary dispute between Ohio and Michigan many years ago. All participants agreed that the most valuable aspect of the tournament was the development of friendships and opportunities for exchange. Next year, Ohio will host the tournament in Findlay in mid-October. ■



Back row, left to right: 62-A District Court Judge Steven M. Timmers; Adam Vernon, Grayling; James Mequio, Kalamazoo; Brian Hilderly, Jackson; Brian Makaric, Saginaw; and Neil McQuarrie, Livonia. Front row, left to right: Daryl Mumford, Battle Creek; Jason Bomia, Marshall; David Anderson, Lansing; Roscommon County Probate Judge Douglas C. Dossan; and Todd Flood, Royal Oak. Not pictured: Peter Smith, Niles; Jim Verplog, Troy; and Monroe County Probate Judge John A. Holeman, Jr.

Michigan Supreme Court Goes on the Road for Education

As part of the Michigan Supreme Court's "Court Community Connections" program, all seven justices traveled to Thomas M. Cooley's Auburn Hills campus, where they heard arguments in *Woodman v Kera* in front of nearly 300 high school students, lawyers, and members of the public. The program was simulcast to all four Cooley campuses. ■



Photo courtesy of Thomas M. Cooley Law School

Students from Pontiac High School, Oakland University, and Thomas M. Cooley Law School look on as attorney Paul McCarthy argues on behalf of Sheila Woodman, as Next Friend of Trent Woodman, a minor, in front of the Michigan Supreme Court at Cooley's Auburn Hills campus.

Judge Marable Honors Student for Academic Achievement

Flint 68th District Judge Herman Marable, Jr. and his Citizens Advisory Committee have chosen Cierra Haynie as Judge Marable's Student of the Year for 2008–2009. Haynie, 16, is an advanced dual enrollment student at Mott Middle College in Flint, serves as a mentor in a program for ninth and tenth graders, and is a member of the band. She is the fifth Student of the Year and will receive a \$500 U.S. Savings Bond, trophy, and certificate. Haynie's name will be engraved on a plaque permanently displayed at the 68th District Courthouse. ■



Courtesy photo

Flint 68th District Judge Herman Marable, Jr. and Cierra Haynie.