

A Time to Celebrate Our Best State Bar of Michigan 2015 Award Winners

By Samantha Meinke

The State Bar of Michigan will honor exemplary representatives of the legal profession during the 2015 Awards Banquet, held from 6:30 p.m. to 9:00 p.m. on Wednesday, October 7 at the Suburban Collection Showplace in Novi. The banquet will take place in conjunction with the SBM Annual Meeting. Outgoing SBM President Thomas C. Rombach and incoming SBM President Lori A. Buiteweg will present the following awards during the banquet.

Roberts P. Hudson Award

Edward H. Pappas has been a tireless advocate for improving the legal profession and the services it provides to the public. He served for 10 years on the SBM Board of Commissioners, culminating in his year as president in 2008–2009. While president, he established the Professionalism in Practice Program, which began with 20 prominent lawyers and judges mentoring law students and has expanded to teach ethics and professionalism to students in every Michigan law school. He was also co-chair of the SBM Judicial Crossroads Task Force, which included more than 125 leaders of the bench, bar, and justice community and developed recommendations to transform, streamline, and modernize Michigan's justice system. He currently co-chairs the SBM 21st Century Practice Task Force Special Committee on Building a 21st Century Practice, which aims to help attorneys develop and maintain professional excellence in a dynamic legal marketplace.



Instructions Committee. He is an adjunct professor at Wayne State University Law School and regularly lectures to prosecutors' associations across the country.

When **Adam A. Shako**r was appointed to the 36th District Court in Detroit in 1981, he became the first Muslim-American judge in the United States or Canada. Elected to serve two terms as chief judge, he implemented a drug docket and an environmental court that cleared a 10-year backlog of cases, secured funding to allow for the full computerization of the court, and established offsite locations for paying traffic fines. He left the court in 1989 to become deputy mayor and chief administrative officer of Detroit. In this role, he developed the Boot Camp After Care Detention Program, which became a model statewide. Shako



The late **James L. Shonkwiler** began his career as court-appointed counsel for indigent defendants and spent his retirement working to reform Michigan's indigent criminal defense system. In between, he was appointed associate director of the Michigan Crime Commission, which created the Michigan Prosecuting Attorneys Coordinating Council, the first state-level office to train and support county prosecutors. In 1970, Shonkwiler became executive secretary of the MPACC. He served in that role for 27 years, simultaneously working as executive director of the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan. He was a founding member of the SBM Criminal Law Section and for decades edited and wrote the section's monthly newsletter, summarizing developments in state and national law. He also founded the section's biannual policy conference.



Courtesy photo

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

Timothy A. Baughman has served Michigan's citizens for 40 years. He joined the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office in 1975 and became chief of research, training, and appeals in 1985. He has argued more than 70 times in the Michigan Supreme Court, greatly influencing Michigan criminal law. He has argued seven times in the United States Supreme Court, prevailing on all but one occasion and helping to shape federal criminal law. He served on the Michigan Supreme Court Committee to Review the Rules of Criminal Procedure and the Michigan Supreme Court Model Criminal Jury



Photos by Mark Warner

Champion of Justice Award

In his 43 years practicing medical malpractice, motor vehicle accident, and defective products law, **David W. Christensen** has tried more than 100 jury trials, securing nine verdicts for his clients in excess of \$1 million. He has authored eight books to assist and instruct other plaintiffs' attorneys. He has served as an adjunct professor at Wayne State University Law School and University of Detroit Mercy Law School and as Michigan's honorary consul for Denmark. But those who have practiced law alongside him say none of that matters as much as his exemplary civility and professionalism that have enhanced the profession of lawyers in the eyes of his colleagues and members of the public who interact with him as jurors in the courtroom.



Stephanie Dawkins Davis has been an assistant U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of Michigan for 18 years. She goes above and beyond the call of duty to lead the office's efforts in crime prevention and community outreach. She steers a number of initiatives to these ends including Advocates and Leaders for Police and Community Trust, building trusting relationships between police and the community. She oversees Project Sentry, coordinating visits by prosecutors to middle schools to talk about the consequences of gun violence and drug use; Explorers, exposing at-risk high school students from Detroit to careers in the justice system; and Reentry, helping citizens returning to society from prison avoid recidivism. She also co-chairs the Detroit Youth Violence Prevention Initiative and Ceasefire Detroit.



Nora M. Hudson has worked as a solo practitioner in the Franklin Park/Grandale area of Detroit since 1988. Having watched many members of her community struggle to fully engage in society because of criminal records, she organized two Criminal Record Expungement Fairs with the Delta Sigma Sorority in February and March 2015 so indigent citizens could meet with attorneys and determine the necessary steps to expunge their criminal records for a fresh start in life. She created training materials for more than 30 attorneys who provided pro bono services to 1,450 people who attended the fairs. More than 600 motions to set aside convictions were drafted, allowing those who attended the fairs to gain employment, seek financial aid for higher education, and find and maintain public housing.



Alicia J. Skillman has devoted her career to fighting for human rights and has worked particularly hard to bring together the African-American and LGBTQ communities. She currently serves as executive director of Prevailing Community Development Corporation in Detroit. She also runs her own law firm, is vice chair for the City of Detroit Board of Ethics, sits on the Michigan Roundtable for Diversity and Inclusion Board of Trustees, and is a Central United Methodist Church staff minister. She previously served as executive director of Equality Michigan (formerly the Triangle Foundation), director of the Legal Aid and Defender Association Fair Housing Center, and co-founder of the Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays Family Reunion Detroit chapter, offering support to people of color with gay family and friends.



Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award



The 130 lawyer and judge members of the **St. Clair County Bar Association** have run a highly successful mock trial program, founded by attorney John Livesay and Judge Cynthia Platzer, for 10 years. The program is free for participants and involves 9–11 schools each year. The bar association partners with St. Clair and Macomb county high schools and sends attorney volunteers to serve as coaches. The attorneys teach students courtroom processes and how to develop, organize, and present case theories; speak effectively and persuasively; and demonstrate civility and respect to their opponents. Attorney volunteers also serve as competition judges and members of the jury (scoring judges). The best team receives mock trial varsity letter pins, and the students choose the team that displayed the most professionalism to receive an award.

John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award

Professor Joseph Kimble has taught an entire generation of lawyers how to become better writers and communicators. He taught legal writing and drafting for more than 30 years at Western Michigan University Cooley Law School. He has served as senior editor of *The Scribes Journal of Legal Writing*, longtime editor of the *Michigan Bar Journal* Plain Language column, past president of Clarity, and was a founding member of the Center for Plain Language. He has published several books about legal writing, including *Lifting the Fog of Legalese: Essays on Plain Language* and *Writing for Dollars, Writing to Please*. Since 1999, he has been the drafting consultant on all U.S. federal court rules and has led the work to redraft the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure and the Federal Rules of Evidence.



John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

From 2009 to 2013, **Paul E. Scheidemantel** recorded 1,190 hours of pro bono work and 291 hours of administrative time related to pro bono work for indigent or low-income people. All told, he has dedicated an average of 300 hours a year to pro bono work for the past five years. Almost all of the cases he takes are referred to his law firm, Clark Hill PLC, by the Legal Aid and Defender Association and require litigation. Scheidemantel has served on the SBM Pro Bono Initiative and plays a vital role on Clark Hill's Pro Bono Committee, identifying and coordinating pro bono opportunities for the firm's Detroit attorneys. His efforts at Clark Hill paid off in 2011 when the firm was named LADA's Pro Bono Law Firm of the Year.



Liberty Bell Award

Matthew R. Branding has taught speech, government, law, and advanced placement U.S. government at Caro High School for 17 years. He goes above and beyond the call of teaching duty by volunteering significant portions of his free time to enhance the education of his students. For 15 years, he has served as teacher liaison to the Caro High School Youth in Government Club, an organization that allows students to draft and present bills in a mock legislature at the Michigan Capitol in Lansing and participate in mock trials. He has facilitated Law Day for Caro High School juniors for nine years, working with local attorney presenters. He also lives an example of public service for students by serving on the Almer Township Planning Commission and the Tuscola County Recycling Board.



Representative Assembly Awards

The State Bar of Michigan Representative Assembly will present awards to two individuals during its business meeting on Thursday, October 8.

Michael Franck Award

The late **Vernon D. Kortering** built a solid reputation as a maverick who never shied away from tough, highly political and publicized cases. He founded a Muskegon law firm focused on workers' compensation, labor law, and disability law. Although he was a veteran of the U.S. Air Force, he represented those who felt the Vietnam War violated their philosophical and religious beliefs. He was known for doing a tremendous amount of pro bono work for indigent people and volunteered in his community for the NAACP, Planned Parenthood, and Every Woman's Place. When he died, the NAACP Muskegon branch crafted a resolution commending Kortering for "his zest for the rights of those underprivileged and downtrodden and commitment to the cause of law and civil rights."



Courtesy photo

Unsung Hero Award

The **Hon. Allie Greenleaf Maldonado** is chief judge of the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians and has worked tirelessly to improve her community. She saw huge gender disparities among graduates of the Waabshki Miigwan Drug Court, so she commissioned a study and changed the program to make it more flexible for parents to graduate, and has reached out to schools to increase the success of juvenile drug court participants. She fostered dialogue between tribal court and state leaders, enabling her tribal drug court to become the first in Michigan to return drivers' licenses to participants. She crafted the initial draft of the bill that became the Michigan Indian Family Preservation Act and now leads state-wide trainings for judges on compliance with MIFPA and the Indian Child Welfare Act.



Courtesy photo

Awards from Other Organizations

Four individuals will be honored by other organizations during the Awards Banquet. The Michigan State Bar Foundation will present the Founders Award to the late **Hon. Harold Hood**. Judge Hood receives this honor posthumously for his leadership in the justice system and in society. He was a Foundation trustee for 23 years, particularly helping a grants committee seeking to improve the administration of justice, public understanding about the law, and civil legal aid to the poor. He served as a trial judge in the 3rd Judicial Circuit Court in Wayne County before being appointed to the Court of Appeals. He was founding chair of the Association of Black Judges in Michigan, a founding member of the National Consortium on Racial and Ethnic Fairness in the Courts, chair of the Michigan Supreme Court Task Force on Racial and Ethnic Issues in the Courts, and co-chair of the State Bar's Open Justice Commission, among numerous other leadership roles. His many awards include the State Bar's Champion of Justice Award and the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Phillip A. Hart Award.



Courtesy photo

Marilyn T. Mullane receives the Foundation's Access to Justice Award honoring those who have significantly advanced access to justice for the poor in Michigan. For 20 years, she has been director of Michigan Legal Services, which provides impact-oriented legal aid to the poor in the metropolitan Detroit area. Under her leadership, the agency has prevented homelessness for thousands of indigent families and assisted many others with access to utilities, public benefits, health care, and mental health care. She has been legal counsel to a number of nonprofit agencies assisting the poor. She was a board member of many community organizations, including the Heat Warmth Fund, Michigan Community Resources, and the Cass Corridor Neighborhood Development Corporation. She has received many awards from the Detroit City Council for her work in housing, most recently on Tax Foreclosure Prevention, and the MICHUHCAN Community Health Hero of the Year award, among others.



Each year, the Michigan Association for Justice and the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel present a Respected Advocate Award to promote mutual respect and civility. The MAJ gives the award to a member of the defense bar for the purpose of recognizing and honoring the individual's history of successful representation of clients and adherence to the highest standards of ethics. The MDTC does the same for a plaintiff's practitioner.

The MAJ will honor **Robert F. Riley** with a Respected Advocate Award. Riley founded Riley & Hurley PC in Dearborn and focuses his practice on personal injury cases, professional malpractice claims, complicated corporate and commercial matters, intellectual property issues, contract matters, and employment disputes. He has served as legal counsel to the National Hockey League Players Association, Professional Hockey League Players Association, North American Hockey League, and the Central Collegiate Hockey Association as well as many Hockey Hall of Fame-inducted players. He received his bachelor's degree from Albion College and his juris doctor from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law.



The MDTC will present a Respected Advocate Award to **George T. Sinas**, who practices with Sinas Dramis Brake Boughton & McIntyre PC in Lansing and focuses on personal injury and auto no-fault insurance litigation. Sinas is also an adjunct professor at Michigan State University College of Law and has served as an executive board member of MAJ, general counsel to Coalition Protecting Auto No-Fault, board member of Brain Injury Association of Michigan, and chair of the SBM Negligence Law Section. He received his bachelor's degree from the University of Michigan and his juris doctor from Wayne State University Law School.

