

MLA—Key Players on the State Bar Team

By Pat Smith, MLA Convention Co-Chair and Jan Tableman, MLA President

One of the many information sessions John Berry attended when he came on board as the new executive director of the State Bar of Michigan was a meeting with the president of the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary, Jan Tableman. After getting a rundown of all the services the MLA provides, Mr. Berry remarked, "These are exactly the kind of activities our members are asking us to do in our local communities."

In spite of dwindling membership rolls, the MLA and its local auxiliaries continue to provide a number of services designed to promote law-related education in Michigan schools and a positive image of the legal profession in our communities. Members of the Bar need to be aware of the MLA's key role on their team.

The recent publication of the revised edition of the *You and the Law* booklet is an excellent example of the teamwork that exists between the MLA and the State Bar of Michigan. The MLA initiated this project more than 30 years ago in an effort to provide high school students with a good overview of their legal rights and responsibilities as U.S. citizens. Over the years the booklet has undergone several revisions drafted by committees composed of volunteers from the State Bar and the MLA, and staff members from the State Bar. The MLA provided a \$5,000 grant to the State Bar this spring for the first printing of the most recent revision. Most of those copies have already been distributed, and school districts statewide are clamoring for more.

The MLA also works closely with the State Bar to sponsor Law Day activities across

the state. The Law Day Essay Contest is consistently a successful event that promotes law-related education. In addition, the MLA sponsors the Crystal Apple for the Teacher Award to recognize the outstanding efforts of teachers in our communities who provide law-related education to their students.

Other activities of the MLA and its local auxiliaries include sponsoring "The Late Show," a bedtime reading program for residents of local juvenile homes; offering courthouse tours; distributing the American Lawyers Auxiliary's third grade teaching unit; supporting the Center for Civic Education through Law, especially the high school mock trial competitions; and partnering with the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society. All these activities require the dedicated support of volunteers.

A woman who epitomized all the positive attributes of a great volunteer—commitment, competence, leadership and dedication—was recently lost to us all. Frances Mary Lewis Ryan died on April 26, 2001 and was buried on May 1. How appropriate, because Law Day was only one of the many law-related activities for which she used her time and considerable talent throughout her 60 years of bar auxiliary volunteerism.

As the life partner of Theodore Ryan, a Lansing attorney and administrative law



Frances Mary Lewis Ryan

judge, Fran was committed to promoting all the positive works of those in the legal profession. In the Ingham County Bar Auxiliary, she worked tirelessly on all projects and in all capacities, ultimately becoming president of the more than 100 members in 1968. She became a member of the newly-formed MLA in 1956, and working in similar fashion at the state level, she was elected president of the MLA in 1980. At the

young age of 94, Fran was the current co-chair for the MLA Annual Meeting and Convention this year in Lansing in September.

Fran Ryan was a woman who always encouraged others and reminded us of the importance of volunteerism. As the numbers of committed members decreased over recent years, she was a role model for us all. In her eulogy she was described thus:

"She accomplished her goals by developing, guiding, and mentoring others in the organizations (she supported) to carry on after her. She had a talent for persuasion and for convincing others that they could do much more than they thought they could. Leaving competent, confident leaders in charge meant more to her than all the accolades for her service."

Recently, the highest award for service in the Ingham County Bar Auxiliary was renamed the Frances Ryan Volunteer Service Award. We all have a responsibility to carry on the Ryan legacy of resolve, integrity, and dedication. Contributions may be made to a special project fund in her honor to **ICBA Special Projects (Ryan), c/o Pat Smith, 7427 Delta River Drive, Lansing, MI 48906.** ♦

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