

MLA Invites All Lawyers' Spouses to Join

This has been a very active year for the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary. We are a fun group that enjoys creating better citizen awareness of the law through education.

We assist and support local lawyers' spouses' organizations. We produce the annual State Law Day Essay contest, organize and finance the annual Law Day Luncheon in Lansing, serve as members of the State Bar Association Public Outreach Committee and help promote the Center for Civic Education Through Law. This year we produced and distributed many copies of the 7th revision of the "You and the Law" book (downloadable at: <http://www.michbar.org/publications/y&l.pdf>). This book is designed to explain specific rights and responsibilities to high school students. We help distribute the "Law School and the Careers that Follow" book published by the State Bar Public Outreach Committee (downloadable at: <http://www.michbar.org/publications/lawschool.pdf>). We supply to any lower elementary grade in the state of Michigan a copy of an American Lawyers Auxiliary teaching unit called "Laws, Rights and Responsibilities." If a school requests assistance in law-related education, we see that they get help from MLA members and/or lawyer mentors.

The year started out with our annual meeting and installation of officers held during the State Bar of Michigan Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids. Pictures of the convention can be viewed in a picture album on the web: <http://community.webshots.com/album/53171952yElxnP>. Our second meeting of the year, an executive board meeting, was held in October at the State Bar building in Lansing. During the meeting our members stuffed and folded letters to mail to 3,000 schools and school districts in Michigan. These letters introduced the 31st annual State of Michigan Law Day Essay Contest to

teachers and students. Teachers were directed to go to the State Bar Law Day website for the materials to enter the contest: <http://www.michbar.org/meetings/lawday03/welcome.html>. We received over 6,000 hits on the website before the essays were due. This link will now allow you to view the nine winning essays and pictures of the Law Day celebration. The students answered public policy "should" questions that fit into the Law Day 2003 Theme (set by the ABA): "Independent Courts Protect Our Liberties." Nine possible "should" questions along with related Supreme Court cases were provided to the students. Writing the essays helped students understand that judicial independence (with courts and judges free from political interference) is an essential characteristic in a free society. This contest is directly aligned to Michigan social studies standards and benchmarks and directly related to the Michigan Educational Assessment Program test (MEAP.) The students used Supreme Court cases to help them answer one of the nine possible "should" questions.

Thirty-three judges selected nine student winners for the Law Day Essay Contest. Well over 1,000 essays were sorted, judged, and read. Many communities and local bar associations had local contests that sent only their top three winners in each category (6th, 7th, and 8th grades) to the state essay contest. On May 1, 2003 the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary and the State Bar Public Outreach Committee sponsored a Law Day Luncheon celebration at the Hall of Justice. The Law Day Luncheon has found an ideal location.

Chief Justice Maura Corrigan was the keynote speaker. The nine winners of the essay contest, their teachers, principals, parents, and the Crystal Apple teacher winner were honored guests. The students enjoyed the new Learning Center in the first floor of the Hall of Justice before lunch. (If you have not

been to the new Learning Center, it is a must see when you visit Lansing!) After lunch, the students read their essays aloud to all of the distinguished guests. During the luncheon, Chief Justice Corrigan made a point to talk to each student individually. It was very interesting to watch the student's faces as she talked to them. They were absorbing everything that she said to them. I am sure they will remember what was said and it will influence their lives in the future. Michael A. Fahy, Ph.D., from the University of Michigan, (one of the parents of a winning student) said, "as an educator, I think Law Day is an exemplary event—I want to say, 'institution'—and I reiterate my admiration; as a parent, I feel honored and appreciative of the fine work." After the luncheon, students and parents were able to go on a VIP tour of the State Capitol building. If you would like to attend this event next year, look for an invitation next winter in the *Michigan Bar Journal* or let me know at fmaunique@aol.com. The Hall of Justice has already been booked for the May 1, 2004 Law Day Luncheon.

The Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary has 238 paid members. The auxiliary started a new tradition of "Cyber Meetings" this year. Through trial and error we have set some rules for holding legal auxiliary meetings via the internet. Ninety percent of our board members and delegates do have the ability to receive e-mail. The executive board members that are not on the internet are phoned or snail-mailed (depending on how fast we need an answer.) Once we started "Cyber" meetings, I realized that this is an important tool to disseminate information to the entire membership. We are now regularly sending minutes from all of our regular meetings to all members.

Congratulations are in order for one of our local auxiliaries, the Saginaw County Lawyers Auxiliary (SCLA)! The SCLA received

an award as one of the best auxiliaries in the country from the American Lawyers Auxiliary (ALA). Activities that the SCLA sponsors may be viewed at their website: <http://community.mlive.com/cc/scla>. I had the privilege of accepting the honor on behalf of the SCLA at the mid-year ABA/ALA convention in Seattle on February 5th. Pictures of my experiences at the Seattle convention, the dinner, and the cruise attended by the American Lawyers Auxiliary members and their spouses may be viewed at: <http://community.webshots.com/user/fmaunique/1> (the bottom three albums on the page).

I have thoroughly enjoyed my year as the 46th president of the Michigan Lawyers

Auxiliary. I plan to maintain active membership and support for the organization in the future. I would like to invite all spouses of attorneys to attend our next annual meeting during the State Bar Annual Meeting in Lansing in September. We will have our meeting and installation of officers at the State Bar building and then go to the Lansing Center to join the Bar for lunch. Maggie Frankland from Lansing, Michigan, will become the 47th president of the MLA. If a spouse wants more information please e-mail me at fmaunique@aol.com. Come and join us at the annual meeting on Friday, September 12, 2003. If you want to contact MLA, visit our home page at <http://www.michbar.org/localbars/mla/home.html>. ♦



Mary Ann Farris is president of the Michigan Lawyers Auxiliary, State of Michigan Law Day Chairman, and a member of the Bar's Public Outreach Committee. She has been Co-Law Day Chairman in Saginaw

County and Saginaw County Lawyers Auxiliary Law Day Chairman for the last six years. She recently received the F. H. Martin award in Saginaw. She has three grown children and one grandchild. She has an Art Education and Education degree from the University of Kansas.

