

UpFront

By Mike Eidelbes, Lynn Ingram, and Samantha Meinke

Share the joy and celebrate with our 2013 award winners on Wednesday, September 18. The place: Lansing Center. The time: 6:30 p.m.–9:00 p.m. This banquet is held in conjunction with the State Bar Annual Meeting.

A Time to Honor Our Best

State Bar of Michigan Awards



Kurt E. Schnelz
Roberts P. Hudson Award



Hon. Donna T. Morris
Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award



Eugene Driker
Champion of Justice Award



Michele L. Halloran
Champion of Justice Award



Valerie R. Newman
Champion of Justice Award



Ann L. Routt
Champion of Justice Award



A. Kay Stanfield Spinks
Champion of Justice Award



James (J. J.) White
John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award



Robert G. Mossel
John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award



Elizabeth A. Kitchen-Troop
Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award



Marge Palmerlee
Liberty Bell Award

Representative Assembly Awards



Martin P. Krohner
Michael Franck Award



James E. Brenner
Unsung Hero Award



Elizabeth A. Stafford
Unsung Hero Award



Steven B. Galbraith
MAJ Respected Advocate Award



Jesse M. Reiter
MDTC Respected Advocate Award



Hon. Chad C. Schmucker
Access to Justice Award

Respected Advocate Awards

MSBF Access to Justice Award

State Bar of Michigan Awards

Roberts P. Hudson Award

The Roberts P. Hudson Award is presented periodically to commend one or more lawyers for their unselfish rendering of outstanding and unique service to and on behalf of the State Bar of Michigan, the legal profession, and the public. It signifies unusual and extraordinary help and assistance to the Bar and the legal profession, which has been given generously, ungrudgingly, and in a spirit of self-sacrifice. It is awarded to a member of the State Bar of Michigan who best exemplifies that which brings honor, esteem, and respect to the legal profession. The Hudson Award is the highest award conferred by the State Bar.

Kurt E. Schnelz
Roberts P. Hudson Award



Author Trenton Lee Stewart once wrote, “Family members can be your best friends... and best friends, whether or not they are related to you, can be your family.”

These are words to which Hudson Award winner Kurt Schnelz can relate.

Schnelz has been deeply involved in Bar work for more than 20 years. He’s held just about every position one can hold and done just about everything one can do.

But when asked which of his many accomplishments stands out the most, he quickly says, “The friendships I’ve made and how much closer I’ve grown to my dad.”

Schnelz’s dad, retired Oakland County Circuit Judge Gene Schnelz, blazed the path of service for his son.

“It’s a family tradition,” Schnelz said. “To be a professional means you give back. There was never a second guess.”

He credits his father’s example for that, noting his dad won the Hudson Award in 1994, making them the first father-son pair to do so.

He also credits the friends he’s made at the State Bar, including current President Bruce Courtade, who raved about Schnelz’s ability to balance family and business.

“Family is of paramount importance to Kurt,” Courtade said. “He’s never happier or more engaged than when talking about his kids and their latest endeavors.”

At the same time, Courtade said, Schnelz has been a key player on hundreds of issues over the years and a great mentor to new Bar leaders, not to mention a great dresser.

“Kurt was always one of the best-dressed, best-coiffed attorneys on the Board of Commissioners, but it was definitely not a matter of style over substance,” Courtade noted. “He was an integral part of several executive committees, chaired or co-chaired many BOC work groups, and always offered solid, sound input on issues before the Board.”

Schnelz says his mission has always been to protect the public and serve the profession, and he admits he has a special place in his heart for solo practitioners and lawyers in smaller firms.

“Those groups make up a large percentage of our members,” he noted. “It’s up to us to make the practice of law easier and the profession better for all lawyers, but for these lawyers in particular.”

As for winning the award, Schnelz said he cannot describe how touched he is.

“To say I’m humbled would be an understatement,” he said.

Of course, in true Kurt Schnelz fashion, he deferred to his father.

“I’m even more honored that my dad received it.”

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award

This award recognizes extraordinary governmental service by a member of the State Bar of Michigan and is presented to individuals demonstrating the highest standards of integrity, fairness, leadership, excellence, dedication to principle, and dedication to the ideals of democracy. Criteria for the award include service in public office in a way that has strengthened the American system of justice under the law and a significant lasting contribution to the nation, the state, or the community in which the public servant lives or serves.

Hon. Donna T. Morris

Frank J. Kelley Distinguished
Public Service Award



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Frank J. Kelley Distinguished Public Service Award *(Continued)*

To many of her wards, Donna T. Morris is Grandma Judge.

To Midland, she is the conscience of the community.

To her former colleagues at Midland County Probate Court, she is Mother Earth.

"Judge Morris is a quiet legend," wrote her nominators, Julia A. Close and Joseph G. Sepsey. "She worked to avoid attention and notoriety and instead spent her career on the bench committed to helping those most in need—she is a friend of the forgotten, the lonely, and the needy."

Upon her appointment to the Midland probate bench in 1980, Morris was always willing to go the extra mile for the individuals appearing in her courtroom. She sat up nights with detained youths who had nowhere to go. She has invited wards with no family into her home for holidays and monthly dinners for decades, providing a family structure to the most needy in her community. She even once performed a marriage ceremony for two of her wards and took the couple and their witnesses out to dinner so they could have a wedding reception.

In addition to providing support for individuals, Morris has worked to improve the systems that serve the neediest members of her community.

She led the battle to build a juvenile detention center in Midland. For more than 12 years she headed up efforts to plan, fund, construct, and operate the Midland County Juvenile Care Center, now the cornerstone of the probate court.

She also fought for the dignity and safety of mentally ill people who were transported from the hospital by sheriff's deputies to attend competency hearings at the courthouse, causing them to act out and need restraints—a humiliating and often painful experience. So Morris worked with the Michigan legislature to update the Michigan Mental Health Code, allowing judges to travel to hospitals for competency hearings.

Morris also established the Dorothy Dow Arbury Pinecrest Endowment Fund for the operation of Pinecrest Farms, a facility that provides assisted living care to elderly, mentally ill, and developmentally delayed people. She has served on countless boards of directors, among them 1016 House, the Counsel on Domestic Violence, United Way of Midland County, and Midland Area Community Foundation.

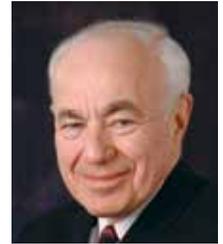
"She has never stood on ceremony and always goes right to the heart of the problem," wrote Thomas E. Brennan, former Michigan Supreme Court chief justice and founder of Thomas M. Cooley Law School, in a letter supporting her nomination. "Willing to take risks and to stand against criticism and opposition, she fought for the victims of abuse and neglect without apology or timidity."

Champion of Justice Award

This award is presented to practicing lawyers and judges who show integrity and adherence to the highest principles and traditions of the legal profession, superior professional competence, and extraordinary professional accomplishments that benefit the nation, the state, or the local community in which they live.

Eugene Driker

Champion of Justice Award



Most lawyers agree it's important to give back to the legal profession.

And many lawyers give back plenty.

Then there's Eugene Driker.

Driker sets the bar on giving back, and at 76 years young he's still raising it higher.

"When many other individuals Gene's age have decided to slow down or cut back, he instead moves forward with new tasks and responsibilities," wrote Jules Olzman in his nomination of Driker.

Among those tasks and responsibilities is chairing Carl Levin's Federal Judicial Selection Committee, which he has done brilliantly for 35 years.

Sen. Levin said in a letter of support for Driker that there is no task he takes more seriously than his role in recommending candidates for these important positions.

"[A]nd that is why Sen. Stabenow and I turned to Mr. Driker to help us carry out that responsibility," he wrote.

Olzman said Driker's chairmanship of the committee has demonstrated "a commitment to fairness, honesty, and integrity...unparalleled by any other group," adding that his efforts distinguish him as a leader "in an era where selection of judges through the ballot box is frequently debated and criticized."

Incredibly, Driker's chairmanship is only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to his philanthropic efforts.

He is also passionate about his college and law school alma mater, Wayne State University, where he has served on the Board of Governors for more than 10 years, including a stint as chair in 2007–2008.

Wayne State University Law School Professor Robert Sedler, winner of last year's John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award, commended Driker for his exemplary work as chair of the law school's Campaign for the 21st Century, which raised more than \$15 million and resulted in a major expansion of the building despite many skeptics.

"That the campaign was so successful and all the skepticism overcome is attributable in large part to the extraordinary leadership and limitless effort that Mr. Driker brought to the campaign," Sedler noted.

Meanwhile, Driker's colleagues marvel at his ability to give back so much while maintaining a high-level practice.

"[W]hile his time has always been in extremely high demand because of his professional acumen, Eugene has always found a way to devote more time, talent, and energy to professional, community, religious, and philanthropic endeavors than anyone I know," said State Bar Commissioner Dennis Barnes, one of Driker's partners. "He is a role model not only for those of us who enjoy the privilege of practicing law with him, but also for the entire bar."

Of course, Driker—who says his inspiration was his immigrant parents who always gave back despite humble means—takes it all in stride.

"We're privileged to be in such a wonderful profession, and I'm privileged to be able to contribute to the betterment of it," he said.

And that, his colleagues say, is exactly what makes him special.

Michele L. Halloran
Champion of Justice Award



Michele Halloran does whatever it takes to help those in need.

Just ask Stella Shimamoto.

A few years ago, Shimamoto was a law student representing an impoverished client through the Michigan State University College of Law Tax Clinic, which Halloran oversees. The client's finances were in terrible shape—her phone had been turned off and she could only communicate via postal service mail—and Shimamoto was concerned the client couldn't even afford stamps. She sought Halloran's advice on what to do.

"Without a moment of hesitation, Michele gave me some of her own personal stamps and told me to send them to the client to help alleviate the financial burden of buying stamps to mail information to us," Shimamoto said. "This small act of generosity really

touched me, as I saw that Michele cared about her clients as real people and she understood and sympathized with their plight."

Halloran also helps her community and employer on a much larger scale by volunteering on numerous boards and committees. She has served on the MSU Curriculum Committee, University Steering Committee, Faculty Senate, University Council, and as faculty coach for MSU teams that took first place in the American Bar Association Student Tax Challenge competitions. She served as a founding member and first president of the Michigan Women's Tax Association and was on the Michigan Department of Transportation's Business Tax Advisory Group, the East Lansing Children's Film Festival Board of Directors, and the Advent House Ministries Board of Directors.

But it is in her day job as director of clinical programs at MSU College of Law where she truly excels.

When Halloran stepped into this role in 2000, she oversaw two clinics. She has since expanded them to eight, dealing with immigration, civil rights, pleas and sentencing, small businesses and nonprofits, chance at childhood, First Amendment issues, housing, and low-income taxpayer law. In addition to overseeing the clinics, Halloran also teaches and supervises second- and third-year law students representing taxpayers in cases before the IRS and the U.S. Tax Court.

She and her students find creative ways to work with the more than 200 clients they serve on a pro bono basis. They purchased a motor home to function as a clinic on wheels to provide legal services to those without transportation, like the migrant worker population in the state. Since Hurricane Katrina, Halloran has taken her tax clinic students to New Orleans every year for an alternative spring break, helping residents fill out tax returns.

"Michele Halloran has been a tireless voice and a devoted advocate for the rights of low-income people both here in Michigan and nationally," wrote MSU College of Law Dean Joan W. Howarth in her nomination. "She exemplifies the highest standards of dedication and devotion to the practice of law."

Valerie R. Newman
Champion of Justice Award



Valerie Newman believes the justice system can be better.

"I don't think it should be defense attorney versus prosecutor and police," Newman said. "We all have an ethical obligation to make

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Champion of Justice Award *(Continued)*

the system work the way it should so innocent people are not caught up in it or, if they are caught up in it, at the earliest stage possible we have the proper procedures in place. It makes the system a better system, and it makes us feel better and more confident about what we're doing."

As an assistant defender with the State Appellate Defender Office and Criminal Defense Resource Center and an adjunct professor at the University of Michigan Law School, she works daily to improve the system, and lately has been getting big results for her efforts.

She argued *Lafler v Cooper* at the United States Supreme Court, and the justices ruled 5–4 in her client's favor last March. The ruling, acknowledging that the vast majority of criminal cases are decided during the plea negotiation process rather than in trials, sets a precedent giving criminal defendants the right to effective attorney representation during plea negotiations. *The New York Times* reported *Lafler* is the most important criminal justice decision since *Gideon v Wainwright*.

Newman has also fought for justice on a much smaller, more personal scale.

She was on the defense team that worked to overturn the conviction of the Highers brothers, each of whom had already served 25 years in prison for a murder they adamantly maintained they did not commit. Wayne County Circuit Court Judge Lawrence Talon vacated their first-degree murder convictions, sent them home, and found there was enough evidence to grant them a new trial.

In addition to her exemplary law practice, Newman devotes countless hours to volunteer work. She has served for years as co-chair of the SBM Eyewitness Identification Task Force, a group that prepared and lobbied for legislation mandating the recording of custodial interrogations in serious felony cases. She is also co-chair of the SBM Criminal Issues Initiative, a member of the SBM Committee on Justice Initiatives, and president of the Michigan Chapter of American Constitution Society. She created the Culinary Challenge, an event that raises money to support Alternatives for Girls, Crossroads for Youth, and the Women Lawyers Foundation Scholarship Fund.

"She holds herself first and foremost personally accountable for the changes she wants to see in society and the legal system, not by preaching to the choirs of the world, but by rolling up her sleeves and working to stand up for those who need a voice in the legal system," wrote Dana Warnez. "I consider the traditions of the legal profession to include advocacy, service, teaching, and sharing knowledge with others, and having the integrity to do what you say you are going to do. Valerie Newman exemplifies all these qualities and traditions."

Ann L. Routt
Legal Services of
South Central Michigan
Champion of Justice Award



Ann Arbor can be a tough place for an Ohio State graduate. Thanks to the work of Ann Routt—deputy director of Legal Services of South Central Michigan—the city, its surrounding counties, and the state are better off.

Not long after graduating from The Ohio State University with her law degree in 1985, Routt joined Legal Services of South Central Michigan, became its managing attorney in 1991, and ascended to her current post in 1996. During her nearly three decades with the organization, Legal Services has grown from an organization serving four counties to one covering thirteen counties and overseeing five statewide programs—the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, the Michigan Poverty Law Program, Farmworker Legal Services, Michigan Law Help, and the Michigan Elder Justice Initiative.

Her career arc and the organization's growth during that time are certainly impressive; even more inspiring is Routt's work on behalf of domestic violence survivors, low-income parents, and others who would otherwise fail to get the legal representation they desperately need. In her tenure with Legal Services, she has represented more than 1,200 clients, concentrating in cases dealing with third-party custody, termination of parental rights, and domestic violence cases.

"She is a resource not only for legal-aid attorneys, but for community organization and private attorneys who call her for assistance in developing cases," wrote Legal Services board member Delphia Simpson, who spearheaded Routt's nomination for the award. "[She] always challenges attorneys to dig deeper and help the client not only solve the problem they might describe, but also look at other legal issues that might be a barrier to employment, housing, and safety."

Routt's dedication to domestic violence victims and low-income families extends beyond the boundaries of her job. In a volunteer role, she helped found the Ann Arbor-based Fair Housing Center of Southeastern Michigan—which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary—and Family Counseling and Shelter Services, Monroe County's domestic violence shelter. She has also been active in state and local bar associations and nonprofit agencies.

"Routt is well known for her patience, integrity, respectful treatment of everyone, and quiet, even temperament at the same time she is a vigorous advocate," Simpson wrote. "She always makes time to listen to clients, opposing counsel, and staff. Quite simply, Routt embodies what is best about the legal profession."

**A. Kay
Stanfield Spinks**
(posthumously)
Champion of Justice Award



A. Kay Stanfield Spinks was a woman of firsts.

Not long after earning her law degree from the University of Michigan, the Detroit native became the first female attorney at the Southeastern Michigan Transportation Authority, eventually rising to senior assistant general counsel. More than a decade later, she was the first African-American female jurist in Oakland County; she was appointed a 46th District Court magistrate in 1987 and held the position for 23 years while maintaining a private practice.

"The percentage of female lawyers at that time was so small it almost didn't register, but that didn't stop me or other women from wanting to pursue our dream of becoming involved in the law," she told *Legal News* reporter Tom Kirvan in a 2010 interview.

In 1990, Stanfield Spinks cofounded the D. Augustus Straker Bar Association with the goal of promoting career opportunities for minorities and women and advancing the mission of equal justice for everyone. In addition to serving as the association's first female president, Stanfield Spinks developed innovative programs such as the Corporate Counsel Breakfast, allowing Straker members to network with representatives of large law firms and corporations, and the first joint board meeting between the Straker Bar Association and the Oakland County Bar Association.

"Kay was a strong leader," wrote Stephanie Jones, a General Motors staff attorney and a past Straker Bar Association president, "but she always led with a servant's heart."

Eight years later, Stanfield Spinks became the first president of the D. Augustus Straker Bar Foundation and spearheaded its law school scholarship fund. She also worked with the Straker Bar Association, the Wolverine Bar Association, and the Association of Black Judges of Michigan to co-create the Martin Luther King Jr. Drum Majors for Justice Advocacy Competition, which awards scholarships to Michigan high school students based on their performance in oral and written essays centering on legal and social justice topics. The competition has since been adopted by the National Bar Association and expanded across the country.

A. Kay Stanfield Spinks died in December, succumbing to cancer on her 60th birthday. The scholarship program she helped create was renamed the Kay Stanfield Spinks Law Student Scholarship in her honor.

"Kay demonstrated a commitment to the principles of justice and service, and made positive contributions to the bar and legal professions that will last for generations to come," wrote Erica Bell, current Straker Bar Association president.

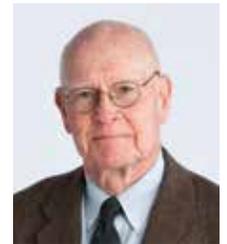
She was a woman of firsts, but A. Kay Stanfield Spinks' vision and devotion ensure there will be others like her.

John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award

This award is named after a professor who over the course of his decades-long career at the University of Michigan Law School earned a reputation as a preeminent scholar, teacher, and gentleman. Reed also served as dean of both the University of Colorado Law School and Wayne State University Law School. This award in his name is presented periodically to an educator from a Michigan law school whose influence on lawyers has elevated the quality of legal practice in our state.

James (J. J.) White

*John W. Reed
Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award*



How many of us can say our Commercial Transactions professor literally wrote the book on the Uniform Commercial Code?

Honigman attorney Jennifer Zbytowski Belveal can say it. So can attorney Jason Forge, law student Aaron West, and thousands of other attorneys across the country and around the world.

These lawyers all took Professor James (J. J.) White's Commercial Transactions class at the University of Michigan Law School.

And for those who didn't take White's class or haven't heard of him, it's still highly likely he influenced your law school career.

That's because White really did write the book on commercial law. His *Handbook of the Law Under the Uniform Commercial Code*, coauthored with Cornell Law Professor Robert Summers, remains the leading treatise on the UCC, not to mention the best-selling hornbook of all time.

But that's just part of White's legend. In addition to his book-writing prowess, he is also remembered as an unparalleled influencer of legal minds and a larger-than-life teacher with a wonderful sense of humor.

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John W. Reed Michigan Lawyer Legacy Award *(Continued)*

Veteran lawyer and commercial law professor Barkley Clark who, along with his wife coauthored two commercial law treatises, called White “the standard by which all commercial law educators are measured.”

And John Sebert, executive director of the Uniform Law Commission and former student of White, called him “the most outstanding commercial law scholar of the last 50 years.”

Clark said he marvels at the way White’s former students speak about him.

“They invariably rave about his rigorous teaching style combined with his very warm and gentlemanly personality,” he said. “He has always been devoted to his students, and they to him.”

That’s certainly the case for Zbytowski Belveal, who said White is not only a consummate professional, but also has a “kind, likeable personality, reminding us that we are human beings first and lawyers second.”

Forge made similar observations, adding that White’s sense of humor humanized him.

Forge recalled wearing a “do-rag” to class and being called on by White, who prefaced his question with, “Mr. Forge, even though you look like a pirate today....”

“Great guy,” Forge noted.

White, who recently retired after more than 50 years of shaping legal minds, also recalled the incident, noting that the interaction with the students—“including the pirate and people like him”—was by far the best part of teaching.

“That’s what I’ll miss,” he said. “I won’t miss the data or preparing for class, and I certainly won’t miss grading exams. I’ll miss interacting with the students.”

In spite of White’s retirement, Thomas Buiteweg said White will continue to serve as an inspiration to his students and peers.

“They all recall him fondly as a fair taskmaster who drove them to do their best work,” Buiteweg said in his nomination of White for the award.

“Everyone seeks the praises of J. J. White.”

John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award

The purpose of this award is to foster awareness of the need for involvement of the private bar in delivering legal services to the poor by giving public recognition each year to a Michigan lawyer who has made a significant pro bono contribution to this effort. The award was established in the name of John W. Cummiskey of Grand Rapids, a leading advocate and activist in making legal services available to all without regard to economic status.

Robert G. Mossel

John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award



Not long after America’s automobile manufacturers retooled their operations to remain profitable, Robert Mossel embarked on a similar undertaking within the Ford Motor Company legal department.

Mossel, Ford’s pro bono chairman, spearheaded an effort to re-focus the program to better address community needs and determine how the corporation’s 85 in-house attorneys could use their skills to have the greatest impact on the state.

The result? Ford attorneys are now involved in a number of legal programs ranging from food-stamp clinics and criminal expungements to nonprofit assistance and veterans’ benefits projects.

For example, Mossel was instrumental in the collaboration between Ford and the Legal Aid and Defender Association on a pilot project to help individuals and families not receiving food stamps or not getting the maximum allowable benefit despite being eligible. Ford volunteers meet with clients to determine whether they’re entitled to receive food stamps and help them apply for initial benefits or request increased benefits. To date, Legal Aid estimates clients have received \$180,000 in food-stamp benefits they otherwise would not have gotten.

The program was an immediate success; in 2011, the Legal Aid and Defender Association received the Pro Bono Best Practice Award from the National Association of Pro Bono Professionals.

“It’s no surprise the program has won awards, but Rob has not yet been commended for his leadership,” wrote Heidi Naasko, Dykema’s national pro bono and diversity counsel. “One of the central reasons for this success is Rob’s leadership by example.”

In addition to the food-stamp clinic, Ford attorneys also volunteer to help low-income clients expunge their criminal records (many people cannot get jobs or housing because of prior criminal convictions) by providing advice on the court process and reviewing and finalizing pleadings. Through the first six clinics, attorneys have helped approximately 200 clients.

Thanks to Mossel’s leadership, Ford, Dykema, and Community Legal Resources combined to create the Nonprofits Survival Clinic, which helps nonprofit agencies implement legal strategies to improve their financial health. A volunteer attorney meets with nonprofit staffers to review legal issues affecting financial stability, evaluate issues that may impact the organization, and identify strategies to address them.

“Our work would be impossible,” wrote Michigan Immigrant Rights Center supervising attorney Susan Reed, “without the support and adventuresome spirit of pro bono leaders in the private bar like Mossel.”

Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award

This award is presented to a recognized local or affinity bar association, program, or leader for excellence in promoting the ideal of professionalism or equal justice for all, or in responding to a compelling legal need within the community during the past year or on an ongoing basis. The award was established in memory of Kimberly M. Cahill, president of the State Bar of Michigan in 2006–2007.

Elizabeth A. Kitchen-Troop

Kimberly M. Cahill Bar Leadership Award



Victor Kiam has nothing on John Kenneth Kline.

Kiam, you may remember, was the entrepreneur so impressed with the Remington electric shaver his wife got him that he bought the company. Kline, meanwhile, was so impressed with Elizabeth Kitchen-Troop after facing her as opposing counsel in court he asked her to join his practice, which she did in 2007.

Now, most people don't have pockets deep enough to buy a major corporation after falling in love with its product. And as Kitchen-Troop, who focuses on high-conflict divorce and custody cases, learned a few years ago, a growing number of Washtenaw County residents couldn't afford quality legal representation.

Armed with that knowledge, Kitchen-Troop asked her fellow Washtenaw County Bar Association Board members to help her figure out a way to address the issue. The board formed an ad hoc committee to look into the matter; it soon became a committee of one.

No programs to address the legal needs of low-income Washtenaw County residents existed in Michigan, so Kitchen-Troop reached out to bar associations across the country with similar initiatives, learned about their programs, and figured out the elements that would and wouldn't work in Washtenaw County. Her efforts led to creation of the Modest Means program, which provides legal representation at a reduced rate for individuals at or below 250 percent of the federal poverty guideline.

"Elizabeth's tenacity and creativity led to the launch of this program," wrote Washtenaw County Bar Association President Patrick Conlin. "She has continued to shape its direction as it takes root in our county and grows to serve more and more clients."

Even while chairing the Modest Means program, Kitchen-Troop has mentored several volunteers, focusing on young attorneys or

attorneys not experienced in family law. It's an element she insisted be included in the program.

The program serves only family law clients to date, but the Washtenaw County Bar Association hopes to expand it to other areas.

"Kitchen-Troop shares Kim Cahill's infectious enthusiasm for her projects," wrote Teresa Killeen, judicial attorney to Washtenaw County Judge Darlene O'Brien. "People couldn't say no to Kim, and they can't say no to Elizabeth."

Liberty Bell Award

This award is presented each year by local bar associations in conjunction with Law Day to honor outstanding citizens within the local community. The award recognizes outstanding service performed by a nonlawyer citizen who has given his or her time and energy to strengthen the effectiveness of the American system of freedom under law in keeping with the spirit of our Constitution.

Marge Palmerlee

Liberty Bell Award



Marge Palmerlee is a saint.

If you don't believe me, just look at the definition:

Saint (Sānt), n. 1. A person acknowledged as holy or virtuous.

Then listen to her story.

Twenty years ago, Palmerlee and her then 13-year-old son volunteered to help out at Degage Ministries in Grand Rapids, a facility that serves the homeless, unemployed, mentally ill, and physically disabled.

They were looking for a way to give back. And that's exactly what they did.

In fact, Palmerlee gave back so much and with such passion that Degage hired her to be its executive director just a few years later.

At the time, Degage had four employees and served coffee every evening to about 50 people. Although they were making a significant impact, Palmerlee knew they were called to do more.

So she listened.

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Liberty Bell Award *(Continued)*

"We started meeting with people and asking them how we could help them in their journeys," Palmerlee said. "We listened to their most pressing needs and we acted."

Based on feedback, they added a laundromat, hair salon, showers, and other programs; expanded their dining room; and started a state ID program.

They also added Open Door, an overnight center for women needing a safe haven, which Palmerlee says is more than a typical shelter.

"We provide physical and emotional safety and help bring a sense of community to the women," she noted, adding that many of them come to the center because they've lost ties with loved ones.

She also said the women who stay are treated to games and other activities including expos, popcorn parties, and even Zumba.

"We want to bring joy to their lives," Palmerlee observed.

Since its inception in 2003, the center has served more than 2,000 women.

As for Degage, the ministry now serves approximately 500 people daily—10 times more than it did when Palmerlee took over—but she says she's never satisfied.

"We're only limited by the size of the facility," she noted, explaining that they're always looking to expand but must stay within walking distance of the people who need them.

Palmerlee said her desire is to help everyone who sets foot in the facility not only find shelter, but also find a way to set and meet new goals. But she said the most important thing they need to know is that Degage is always there for them.

"We are here to say, 'How can we walk alongside you? Not just today, but tomorrow, and the next day, and the next day,'" she said, adding that "it's a privilege to walk alongside them."

Palmerlee says the most satisfying aspect of her job is the opportunity to interact every day with the people she serves, and the most gratifying aspect is the blessings she receives by working with them.

"My favorite definition of Christianity is, 'One beggar showing another beggar where to find bread,'" she said. "They often show me."

Spoken like a true saint.

Representative Assembly Awards

The Representative Assembly's Michael Franck and Unsung Hero awards will be presented on Thursday, September 19 during the Assembly's general meeting.

Michael Franck Award

The Michael Franck Award is given annually to an attorney who has made an outstanding contribution to the improvement of the profession.

Martin P. Krohner
(posthumously)
Michael Franck Award



Martin P. Krohner loved working in the legal system.

For nearly 28 years, he served as an assistant prosecuting attorney in the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. In 2004, he founded his own firm and spent the rest of his life focused primarily on family law and criminal defense.

Before his death last year, he devoted countless hours to improving the system he loved so much.

"Marty was the best kind of volunteer because he cared deeply about the criminal justice system and justice," said Valerie Newman, who served on many committees with Krohner. "As a former prosecutor and then a defense attorney, he had a wide perspective on the system and truly understood the special obligation of prosecutors to do justice. He was generous with his time and always willing to roll up his sleeves and dig into the work. He prepared well for meetings and always contributed in a meaningful way to the discussions."

Krohner's volunteer work began in his own community. He was a member of the Farmington Hills Crime Prevention Advisory Committee and founded the Oakland County chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in 1982.

He then reached beyond his own community to change the system itself. He served as legal consultant for the state chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. He testified before the state Transportation and House Judiciary committees and played an active role in the drafting of drunk-driving legislation and Michigan's Crime Victim's Rights Act.

He continued to volunteer at the state level by serving on the SBM Representative Assembly from 2007 to 2012. He was an active Assembly member, serving as co-chair of the Standing Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence and Practice and vice chair of the Criminal Issues Initiative. He also served on the SBM Standing Committee on Justice Policy and the Task Force on Attorney-Client Privilege.

Krohner was most proud of his work as a member of the Custodial Interrogation Task Force, a body formed by the Representative Assembly that advocated for the passage of legislation mandating the recording of custodial interrogations.

"His whole body of work as a lawyer and an SBM volunteer was geared to improving the legal profession and the justice system in Michigan," said Stephen Gobbo, 2011–2012 Assembly chair. "He cared enough to contribute a lot of his time toward making improvements. This is something each attorney should strive to emulate."

Unsung Hero Award

The Unsung Hero Award is given annually to an attorney who has exhibited the highest standards of practice and commitment for the benefit of others.

James E. Brenner

Unsung Hero Award



James Brenner works for Clark Hill, one of the largest law firms in the state, heading its Appellate Practice department and concentrating on insurance, commercial, and benefits law. He's good at it, too—Detroit's *DBusiness* magazine included him on its 2013 list of the metro area's top appellate lawyers and he was named Lawyer of the Year by *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* in 2007. He's also been a commercial arbitrator for the American Arbitration Association and a hearing referee for the Michigan Civil Rights Commission. Brenner is active in the community, participating in Detroit Metropolitan Bar Association clinics and chairing the board of directors of Neighborhood Legal Services of Michigan, a leading provider of legal aid in the state.

That's not what sets Brenner apart from other attorneys, however.

For more than two decades, Brenner has done pro bono work on appeals for inmates sentenced to death in states where capital

punishment is legal. In each case, the defendants were at or near the final stages of their respective appeals processes, primarily because of denial of adequate assistance of counsel. Brenner does not choose the cases he takes based on their merits; they are assigned to him.

In his first case, which took 17 years to resolve, he saved the life of a Tennessee man by introducing important information the man's court-appointed attorney failed to present. He was also successful in reversing the death sentence of a Texas man.

Brenner is currently working on his third pro bono death penalty assignment, a Tennessee case he received in 2007. He successfully reversed the inmate's death sentence in 2009, but is fighting to overturn the original conviction by pursuing the state's failure for 16 years to disclose a video helpful to the defense.

"I knew what we had in our midst, but I always enjoyed when our newer colleagues discovered this hidden jewel in the firm," wrote Elizabeth Jolliffe, who worked with Brenner for more than a decade at Clark Hill and nominated him for the Unsung Hero Award. "I consider him a hidden jewel in our profession."

Elizabeth A. Stafford

Unsung Hero Award



Former San Francisco 49ers star safety Ronnie Lott would have been proud of Assistant United States Attorney Elizabeth Stafford.

Lott is the football legend who famously cut off part of his finger after injuring it during an important game so he could finish the game instead of going to the hospital.

He got the win.

Stafford is the budding courtroom legend who shattered her shoulder in the midst of a big trial but postponed surgery, put on a sling, and finished her cross-examinations and closing argument.

She got the conviction.

But the similarities don't end there.

Stafford, like Lott, is tough, determined, and passionate about her work "both on and off the field," and she's adamant about giving back.

In addition to prosecuting hundreds of cases in her 10 years with the U.S. Attorney's Office, she has been just as active in the community.

Continued on next page

Unsung Hero Award *(Continued)*

As co-chair of the Federal Bar Association's Diversity Committee, Stafford spearheaded the FBA Diversity Mentoring Initiative, which pairs newer attorneys interested in developing a federal practice with more seasoned attorneys who can show them the ropes.

On behalf of the FBA, she also partnered with the Just the Beginnings Foundation, a judge-led effort aimed at creating a pipeline to the legal profession for high school students of color. She also co-chaired the FBA Diversity Summit, which brought together lawyers, law firms, and other organizations to talk about advancing diversity in the legal profession. The focus of the summit was development of the Metropolitan Detroit Pipeline Coordinating Council, and a steering committee was formed shortly after.

Stafford said the group will address the deficiency of foundational skills within diverse and disadvantaged communities, and

its plan is to "harness the energy, ideas, and resources of various organizations and leaders to provide students all along the kindergarten-to-law-school pipeline with the educational foundation necessary for success in the legal field."

"We intend to grow our own lawyers of color," she said.

Stafford said her passion stems from her sense of obligation to give back to the community, and often recalls the expression, "To whom much is given, much is expected."

She also credits the strong support of her colleagues, including her boss, U.S. Attorney Barbara McQuade, who nominated her for the award.

"I am truly blessed to work in an office that values community building," she said, noting that the award provides some validation for her efforts thus far and reminds her of what's expected.

"This award tells me that I'm on my way to fulfilling my obligation to give back to the community, and that makes me proud."

Respected Advocate Awards

The Respected Advocate Awards are presented annually by the Michigan Association for Justice and the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel to attorneys 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 counsel on the opposite side of the bar."

Steven B. Galbraith

*Michigan Association for Justice
Respected Advocate Award*



Steven B. Galbraith is the Michigan Association for Justice 2013 Respected Advocate Award winner. He is a senior partner at Galbraith, Delie & James, PC, concentrating in the litigation and defense of automobile negligence, no-fault, and medical malpractice claims.

Galbraith received the Excellence in Defense Award from the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel, is a member of the American Board of Trial Advocates, and a master emeritus of the American Inns of Court, Oakland County chapter.

Galbraith is involved in the legal community as chair of the SBM Negligence Law Section for 2013–2014 and also serves as editor of the section's *News Flash* publication. He has been active with the Oakland County Bar Association, serving twice

as chair of the Medical/Legal Committee, as chair of the Circuit Court Committee, and as a member of the Legislative and Nominating committees.

Jesse M. Reiter

*Michigan Defense Trial Counsel
Respected Advocate Award*



Jesse M. Reiter is the Michigan Defense Trial Counsel 2013 Respected Advocate Award winner. As the owner of Reiter & Walsh, PC, he has focused on birth trauma litigation for more than 25 years.

Reiter began his career defending hospitals and doctors, but decided early on to devote his own practice to representing children and their parents on the plaintiff side. His success in the niche field of birth trauma has earned him numerous accolades, including selection as a *Michigan Lawyers Weekly* Lawyer of the Year in 2006 and Leader in the Law in 2012.

Reiter is a lifetime Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation. He is a past president of the Michigan Association for Justice and currently chairs the American Association for Justice's Professional Negligence Committee. He is immediate past co-chair of the American Association for Justice's Birth Trauma Litigation Group. Reiter is a frequent organizer, speaker, and moderator at medical malpractice and birth trauma seminars both nationally and internationally.

Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Award

The Michigan State Bar Foundation Access to Justice Award honors individuals who have significantly advanced access to justice for the poor in Michigan. The MSBF provides leadership and grants to improve access for all to the justice system.

Hon. Chad C. Schmucker

Access to Justice Award



Judge Schmucker was named state court administrator by the Michigan Supreme Court in 2011. He oversees administration of all the state's trial courts, four regional SCAO offices, and all SCAO divisions including the Michigan Judicial Institute, Judicial Information Systems, Child Welfare Services, Friend of the Court Bureau, Office of Dispute Resolution, Statistical Research, and Trial Court Services.

Schmucker was circuit judge in Jackson County from 1991 to 2011, serving as chief judge in 1996–2001 and 2004–2009. He implemented that court's family division and the Jackson County SMILE (Start Making It Livable for Everyone) program for families undergoing divorce. He also helped found the Jackson County

Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and served as a judge of the Recover Court, a rehabilitative program for offenders with substance abuse problems. As a member of the Jackson County New Jail Project, he led a successful effort to reduce jail overcrowding.

His other efforts have included training new judges and making numerous presentations on domestic violence, family law, case and time management for judges, evidence-based sentencing, trial advocacy, alternative dispute resolution, and mental health courts. He chaired the Michigan Judges Association's Technology Committee and served on the Supreme Court's Technology Advisory Group.

The award acknowledges Schmucker's lengthy public service as a judge and now as state court administrator in helping those facing barriers to court access. The Foundation specifically cited Schmucker's leadership in increasing and improving assistance for self-represented persons unable to afford a lawyer.

"Judge Schmucker made extraordinary contributions, including using public-speaking opportunities to emphasize the need for, and value of, pro se assistance," Foundation Vice President Hon. Al Butzbaugh said.

Foundation Executive Director Linda Rexer noted, "Judge Schmucker's work with the Solutions on Self-Help Task Force and its successor program, the Michigan Legal Help Program, has benefited both our citizens and our courts by centralizing, and making more effective, assistance available for the self-represented in Michigan."

Wolverine Bar Association Hosts Externship Program

U.S. District Court Judge Victoria Roberts kicked off the Wolverine Bar Association's Judicial Externship Program by leading an all-day training for 20 law students from eight schools May 18 at Thomas M. Cooley Law School's Auburn Hills campus. The

students will work with federal judges on legal research and writing projects. Judge Roberts started the program in 2001 as a means of helping minority students get more federal clerkship opportunities. ■



Hon. Victoria Roberts (standing) addresses students during an all-day seminar sponsored by the Wolverine Bar Association.



Front row, left to right: LaToya Palmer, Adrean Taylor, Candice Coates, Krystal Player, Hon. Victoria Roberts, Sharika Robinson, Charity Dean, Alana Glass, and Mohamad Awan; second row: Jessica Holmes, Mylika Johnson, Hope Campbell, Nagah Mahram, and Sasha Griffin; third row: Deborah Johnson, Christopher Burtley, Arius Webb, Shannon King, and Jonathan Kirkland; back row: Devon Cox, Blake Edwards, Christopher Knight, Rabih Hamawi, and Mikiya Aaron.

Photos by John Meiu, courtesy of Detroit Legal News Publishing LLC

Utica High School Grad is First Recipient of L&Aunch Scholarship

Iliria Camaj, a recent Utica High School graduate, is the first student to receive the \$5,000 L&Aunch Scholarship sponsored by Lusk & Albertson in Bloomfield Hills.

Camaj bested more than 100 applicants to win the scholarship. She graduated as valedictorian from Utica High's class of 2013 with a 4.18 grade-point average. She will attend the University of Michigan and major in international studies.

Lusk & Albertson established the scholarship to recognize high academic achievement, community involvement, and personal commitment to excellence by a high school senior. The firm will award a scholarship annually and in March 2014 will accept applications for students graduating next spring. ■



Bill Albertson (left) and Bob Lusk (right) present Iliria Camaj with her \$5,000 scholarship.

Courtesy photo

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