



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE CONTACT PERSON: Linda K. Rexer (517-346-6400) August, 2016

Foundation Honors George Googasian and Jon Muth with the Founders Award



George A. Googasian

The Michigan State Bar Foundation has selected George Googasian and Jon Muth as 2016 recipients of its highest honor, the Founders Award. Foundation President Margaret Nichols said, "Both George Googasian and Jon Muth represent the highest traditions of our profession. No two Michigan lawyers could better exemplify the Founders Award criteria of professional excellence and outstanding community contributions." Past recipients included Dennis Archer, Wallace Riley, Charles Rutherford, Hon. Julian Cook, Patrick Bruetsch, Kim Cahill (posthumously), Hon. Avern Cohn, John Cummiskey (posthumously), Hon. Hilda Gage (posthumously) and Hon. Harold Hood (posthumously).



Jon R. Muth

Googasian and Muth are good friends who greatly admire each other. In filmed comments about this award, each described the special qualities of the other. Muth said Googasian is a true gentleman, a consummate professional, a talented lawyer of the highest ethics and a fierce competitor. Googasian said that Muth was one of the finest bar leaders in Michigan, a great trial lawyer with common sense, knowledge of the law and a sense of fairness. Those who know either know these compliments are correct and are why we look to both as examples of the best in our profession. That best goes beyond their legal excellence to bar leadership and generous commitments to access to justice. Both are past recipients of the Roberts P. Hudson Award (the State Bar's highest honor), Life Fellows of the Foundation, Past Presidents of the State Bar of Michigan and have given leadership to local bars and prestigious professional associations.

Googasian is a fellow in the International Academy of Trial Lawyers, the American College of Trial Lawyers, and the American Board of Trial Advocates. He has received major awards for service from the State Bar of Michigan, the Oakland County Bar Association and the American Judicature Society, among other groups. He is past Vice-President of the Oakland County chapter of the American Inns of Court. Googasian worked as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Eastern District of Michigan for the U.S. Department of Justice in Detroit before becoming a private practitioner specializing in trial work and serves as a mediator and arbitrator. He has been President of the Oakland County Bar Association, giving countless hours there and in state level efforts to assist the profession and its obligations to the public. Many of these important works were done quietly and would not appear on a resume; one example is his quick agreement to host a benefit to honor a long-time legal aid lawyer which raised funds that will support law interns at legal aid into the future.

Similarly Muth has made a difference for those who cannot afford to hire a lawyer, a key example being his leadership in establishing the Kent County Legal Assistance Center which now helps more than 18,000 self-represented persons annually navigate the legal system in civil matters. He also served on the Foundation's Board and on its Legal Services Grants Committee during years in which the Foundation, the State Bar and the providers collaborated to build the Access to Justice Fund and other delivery innovations. His creative ideas are still tapped by those working on access to justice; he served last year on the Access Committee of the State Bar's 21st Century Practice Task Force. He has received awards and recognitions for his bar leadership, which has included many local and state bar committees. He has been a Master with the American Inns of Court, a member of the Federal Bar Association, a member of the American Bar Association including serving on its House of Delegates. He has served as chair of the Grand Rapids Bar Association's Pro Bono Committee and organizational chair of the Kent County Legal Assistance Center where he remains a Trustee.

Foundation Executive Director, Linda Rexer, said "George and Jon have been models to me of able and generous professionals. They have both long inspired me and many others more than they know in our work to make access to justice a reality for all."

The Founder's award will be presented on behalf of the Foundation at the September 21, 2016 State Bar Awards Banquet during the State Bar's Annual Meeting in Grand Rapids, Michigan. The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and grants to improve access for all to the justice system, including support for civil legal aid to the poor, law-related education, and conflict resolution. For more information, visit www.msbf.org.