

Foundation

Michigan State Bar Foundation

News



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Hon. Chad C. Schmucker to Receive Michigan State Bar Foundation 2013 Access to Justice Award



Judge Chad C. Schmucker

The Michigan State Bar Foundation Trustees unanimously selected Hon. Chad C. Schmucker for the Foundation's 2013 Access to Justice Award. The Award, which will be presented September 18, 2013, during the State Bar's annual meeting in Lansing, honors an individual who has significantly advanced access to justice for the poor in Michigan.

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.

The Foundation's Award acknowledges Judge Schmucker's long public service as a judge and now as State Court Administrator in helping those with barriers to access our courts. "Judge Schmucker represents the highest traditions of the legal profession through his dedication to ensuring access to justice for those in need," said Foundation President Margaret Nichols.

The Foundation particularly cited Judge Schmucker's leadership for increased and improved assistance to self-represented persons who are unable to afford a lawyer. Foundation Executive Director Linda Rexer noted "Judge Schmucker's work with the Solutions on Self-Help (SOS) Task Force and its successor program, the Michigan Legal Help (MLH) Program, has benefited both our citizens and our courts by centralizing, and making more effective, assistance available for the self-represented in Michigan."

Foundation Vice President, retired judge Al Butzbaugh, said "Judge Schmucker made extraordinary contributions, including participating personally and involving other top SCAO staff in projects, assuring SCAO collaboration with MLH, supporting training for court staff regarding self-represented litigants, and using public speaking opportunities to emphasize the need for, and value of, pro se assistance."

Judge Schmucker was Circuit Judge in Jackson County from 1991 to 2011, serving as that court's Chief Judge from 1996 to 2001 and 2004 to 2009. He implemented that court's family division and started 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, which he chaired from 1996 to 2001. Since 2007 he also served as a judge of Jackson County's "Recover Court," a rehabilitative program for offenders with substance abuse problems, and he helped pioneer that court's domestic violence, family dependency, and mental health court programs. As a member of the Jackson County New Jail Project, he led a successful effort to reduce jail overcrowding.

Judge Schmucker is a frequent lecturer for the Michigan Judicial Institute (MJI) and the Institute for Continuing Legal Education. He has helped train new judges and made 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. He has also served on the Michigan Department of Corrections Evidence-Based Sentencing Committee, the MJI Education Advisory Board, and the Criminal Justice Information Systems Advisory Board.

The Michigan State Bar Foundation provides leadership and grants to improve access to the justice system. For more information, see www.msbf.org.