

Foundation Focus

Michigan State Bar Foundation



Funding and Leadership for Justice Since 1947

Fall 2005

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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.

MSBF Makes a Difference

Last year, MSBF awarded nearly \$8 million to civil legal aid providers in Michigan. These nonprofit programs provided a broad range of civil legal services to low-income families, including assistance to thousands affected by family violence.

MSBF makes a difference for domestic violence victims.

One in three women is assaulted by a partner during her adult life. Children in households with partner abuse are more likely to suffer abuse themselves according to U.S. Department of Justice statistics. A 2003 Carnegie Mellon study found that the availability of legal services decreases the likelihood that women will be battered. By assisting domestic violence survivors in obtaining protective orders, custody of their children, child support and other income maintenance, legal aid helps victims escape their situation by increasing financial stability and achieving physical safety.



Michigan's legal aid programs help victims like the mother with young children who suffered abuse from her husband who threatened to kill her if she told the police. She was thrown against a wall and beaten until her jaw and ear drum were broken. A legal aid program obtained a personal protection order and a divorce for the

woman, including an order allowing her to stay in the mobile home. The husband was arrested and now the mother and her children are able to live safely in their own home. (Legal Aid and Defender, Detroit)

Many legal aid agencies also provide legal education about protection from domestic violence and participate in community-based solutions. With MSBF grant assistance, Northern Michigan Legal Services sponsored a conference for legal aid attorneys and shelter staff to increase coordination of services and address domestic violence issues in the region. Lakeshore Legal Aid helped convene shelter representatives and landlords who learned how difficult it is for many victims to relocate when there are no funds for a security deposit. One landlord offered units without a security deposit to those leaving the shelter and others agreed to help place survivors into low-income units.

Other MSBF grants supporting domestic violence services have included pro bono attorney domestic violence training, translation of domestic violence education materials into multiple languages, coordination of services for battered immigrants and updating and broad distribution of comprehensive domestic violence handbooks.

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To see more stories about people for whom legal aid providers are making a difference, see the MSBF JUSTICE FOR ALL report at www.msbf.org.

Bringing People and Resources Together

MSBF plants seeds that take root.

Michigan State Bar Foundation grants have helped many projects get off the ground. Often, the project's success continues beyond the MSBF funding period, sustaining the services and even attracting additional funding.

MSBF provided initial funding for Community Legal Resources (CLR) to begin a program to match law firm pro bono attorneys with community organizations serving low-income persons. The skills of corporate and business lawyers are used to help nonprofit organizations with transactional, municipal and other legal issues, including community economic development efforts. CLR was started as a joint project of Michigan Legal Services and the Pro Bono Committee of the Business Law Section of the American Bar Association. CLR works in conjunction with the Michigan Litigation Assistance Partnership Program (MI-LAPP) to match pro bono lawyers with the unmet legal needs of community-based organizations.

Since 1998, the program has placed nearly

400 legal matters on behalf of 300 nonprofit organizations with more than 350 volunteer attorneys, with a value of nearly \$4 million in free legal services. The pro bono attorneys have made a significant contribution to communities in efforts such as establishing housing, after school programs for youth, and beds for shelters.

CLR works with attorneys from a number of large law firms who donate many volunteer hours for CLR clients and projects. One project has involved pro bono legal services from the Butzel Long law firm to the nonprofit organization Youthbuild/Young Detroit Builders. This organization trains high school dropouts in the construction trades while helping them get their GED and receive a small income while they work and learn. When Youthbuild/Young Detroit Builders faced displacement, pro bono lawyers negotiated a lease that allowed the organization to maintain continuity for its program. This vital legal help prevented the interruption of services to students and allowed the program to maintain affordable space. More information about CLR's work can be seen at www.clronline.org.

**Young Detroit Builders
Executive Director
Beverly Manick (Right)**



**thanks CLR Board member
Robin Luce and her pro bono
team at Butzel Long, P.C.**

MSBF Awards Administration of Justice Grants

Recent AOJ grants educate about the law and build capacity.

The Foundation's Administration of Justice (AOJ) Grants Program supports innovative projects that educate about legal rights and responsibilities and the justice system, resolve problems through conflict resolution, and enhance civil legal aid for the poor. See www.msb.org for AOJ Grant Application forms and deadlines and for information about past AOJ grants. Awarded three times each year, recent recipients included:

Michigan Supreme Learning Center to create an interactive computer game to introduce

elementary school children to the judicial branch of government with a teacher's guide to assist educators using it in classrooms.

Michigan Guardianship Association to update a video for use in probate courts and communities to inform fiduciaries about legal duties, court procedures, and the rights of wards.

State Bar of Michigan Justice Initiatives to assist with the Access to Justice Campaign year-end fundraising appeals and major gift solicitation to support the delivery of civil legal services to low-income people in Michigan.

**Students learn about the
Justice system at the**



**Michigan Supreme Court
Learning Center.**

Since 1990, more than \$18 million in IOLTA funds have helped



civil legal aid and other law-related charitable projects in Michigan.

Of Special Interest

IOLTA interest / dividend requirements are updated.

The Michigan Supreme Court updated the interest/dividend rate parity provisions in Michigan Rules of Professional Conduct 1.15. Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA accounts) can now earn the same interest or dividend rate generally available to similarly-situated non-IOLTA customers at the same financial institution.

IOLTA accounts were previously pegged to low-rate "NOW" accounts, even when balances exceeded minimum requirements for higher rate products. "Only a limited number of higher balance IOLTA accounts will be affected; most IOLTA accounts will remain unchanged," said Linda Rexer, Executive Director of the Michigan State Bar Foundation, which has administered the IOLTA program since its inception in 1990.

The Michigan Supreme Court also approved attorney IOLTA guidelines published by the Foundation which, with other information helpful to banks and lawyers, are posted at www.msbf.org. The Foundation is working with banks to implement the changes and will contact attorneys whose accounts are affected. The Foundation thanks the Michigan Bankers Association, the Michigan Association of Community Bankers, and the State of Michigan Office of Insurance and Financial Services for helping to quickly distribute information about the new requirements.

Nationally and in Michigan, IOLTA has provided important resources to support civil legal aid for the poor and other law-related charitable projects. Michigan's financial institutions have helped by waiving IOLTA account fees on more than 90% of IOLTA accounts to make more dollars available for grants.

YOU... Are Our Foundation

Patron and Supporting Fellows help sustain in the Foundation's work.

Beyond the recognition of its members' professional standing, the importance of the Fellows program also lies in its financial assistance for the Foundation's charitable programs. More than \$1 million in contributions from Fellows has helped build a base from which the Foundation has steadily grown.

The Michigan State Bar Foundation would like to acknowledge those distinguished attorneys at the Patron and newly-created Supporting levels of Fellows membership and express appreciation for their generous support for the Foundation's program of public service. Fellows also lend leadership to the Foundation, to many local, state and other bar entities, and to many charitable efforts in their own communities. Their contributions are beyond measure, and this Fellows "spirit" infuses all the Foundation's work.

Patron Fellows Category: Lawrence J. Acker, Paul J. Blizman, William D. Booth, Beverly Hall Burns, Hon. Avern L. Cohn, Thomas W. Cranmer, David L. Haron, Bernard Mindell, Mayer Morganroth, Hon. Steven M. Pestka, Charles R. Rutherford, Jeffery A. Sadowski, Steven W. Wells, and Hon. Daniel V. Zemaitis; **Supporting Fellows Category:** Hon. Marianne O. Battani, Kimberly M. Cahill, Samuel J. Churikian, Francine Cullari, Edward C. Dawda, Nancy J. Diehl, Terence M. Donnelly, Stuart J. Dunning Jr., Hon. Harold Hood, Allyn D. Kantor, William F. Mills, Jules B. Olsman, Linda K. Rexer; **Other Supporting Fellows:** H. Rollin Allen, Lawrence L. Bullen, Conrad A. Bradshaw, William R. Brashear, Stephen A. Bromberg, Jon Feikens, George A. Googasian, Richard D. Grauer, Hon. Thomas L. Ludington, Hon. Wendell A. Miles, H. Rhett Pinsky, Clayton E. Preisel, Michael F. Schmidt, Arnold J. Shifman, Charles W. Simon Jr., Leonard W. Smith, Michael J. Sullivan, Hon. Vesta Svenson, and Brenda E. Turner.



Funding and Leadership for Justice

MSBF welcomes new Fellows.

Fellows are a distinguished group of attorneys elected under membership criteria of professional excellence and contributions to the community. Without Fellows leadership and financial support, much of the Foundation's program of public service would not be possible. New 2005 Fellows (to date) include:

Lawrence Acker, Alan Ackerman, Mark Armitage, Hon. Richard Ball, Thomas Behm, Dennis Benson, Kathleen Bogas, Robert Buchanan, Francine Cullari, Joseph Cunningham, David Davis, Scott Forbush, Hon. Deborah Ford, Michael Gatti, Hon. L. Suzanne Geddis, Jack Gilbreath Jr., Richard Glaser, Hon. Mark Goldsmith, Lisa Halushka, Troy Haney, Michael Highfield, Maurice Jenkins, Richard Kaufman, Joni Larson, David Lucas, Anne Saad McAlpine, Bernard Mindell, Martha Moore, Mayer Morganroth, Hon. Janet Neff, Susan Carino Nystrom, Jules Olsman, Diana Raimi, George Roumell Jr., William Schaefer, Hon. Bill Schuette, Philip Stoffan, Daniel Swanson, Lawrence Swistak, Ellen Tickner, Amy Timmer, Stephen Turner, Jennifer Van Horn, Mark Westrate, Brian Whitelaw, and Roger Wotila.

MSBF welcomes a new Trustee.



Hon. Wendy Potts

The Michigan State Bar Foundation welcomes Hon. Wendy Potts to the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Judge Potts is Chief Judge of the Oakland County Circuit Court and previously was an Oakland County Probate Judge. She also served on several state and national professional organizations. She was a member of the State Bar of Michigan Board of Commissioners and co-chair of the State Bar's Children's Justice Committee. She has been a representative to the American Bar Association House of Delegates and president of the Oakland County Bar Association. Judge Potts is currently a member of the Michigan Supreme Court Committee on Model Civil Jury Instructions and Trustee of the Michigan Supreme Court Historical Society. She is a Fellow of the Michigan State Bar Foundation and of the American Bar Foundation.

Michigan State Bar Foundation
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