

Foundation News

Michigan State Bar Foundation



Funding and Leadership for Justice Since 1947

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Foundation Awards Grants for "Katrina" Efforts and Other Law-Related Projects

The Michigan State Bar Foundation recently made grant awards to three nonprofit legal aid programs that provided civil legal services to Hurricane Katrina evacuees in Michigan.

Funding for these grants was received through the State Bar Access to Justice Campaign's "Katrina Appeal" which requested donations from attorneys, law firms, and others to the Foundation's Access to Justice Fund to provide low-income persons displaced by Hurricane Katrina with needed civil legal assistance in Michigan.

Organizations receiving ATJ Fund Katrina grants are: **Legal Aid and Defender Association, Legal Services of South Central Michigan, and Neighborhood Legal Services Michigan.** They assisted hurricane evacuees with civil legal problems related to housing, consumer, health care and other legal matters such as navigating government forms and procedures to obtain Federal Emergency Management Act (FEMA) benefits or restoring lost identification or driver's licenses. They also facilitated many referrals to human service agencies or other charitable groups that helped evacuees with immediate needs such as shelter and food. Because legal aid agencies expect to provide ongoing legal help for evacuees, additional donations through the "Katrina Appeal" are welcome. See www.atjfund.org for how to donate to the "Katrina Appeal" or to make another donation to the Access to Justice Fund.

The Foundation also awarded six other grants to:

Center for Civil Justice to help provide legal assistance and education for homeless families and work with school districts and local housing agencies regarding laws and procedures that permit children to remain in one school despite relocation due to homelessness.

Michigan State University-College of Education to help fund a summer training institute for Michigan social studies teachers to learn teaching techniques to enhance student understanding about our legal system (supported in part through the Foundation's Irwin I. Cohn Fund).

Michigan Protection and Advocacy Service, Inc. to help fund a manual and other material on special education legal issues to educate parents of children with disabilities.

Federal Bar Association, Eastern Michigan Chapter to help fund costs of attending educational sessions at the *Sixth Circuit Judicial Conference* for Michigan public service and other lawyers who otherwise could not participate.

Lakeshore Legal Aid to help update telephone equipment to allow attorneys to promptly provide civil legal advice and brief services to low-income callers.

Legal Services Computer Committee to help fund projects being implemented under the Michigan Technology Plan which identifies ways in which technology can assist civil legal aid services throughout the state.

Since its inception in 1947, the Foundation has made more than 500 grants totaling over \$75 million to advance public understanding about the law, peaceful conflict resolution, and civil legal services for the poor. More information about the Michigan State Bar Foundation's various grant programs, including criteria, applications and deadlines, can be found at www.msbf.org.