WHEN DID YOUR FUTURE BECOME ABOUT MONEY?

Ever since the recession of 2010, we have noticed an uptick in the number of members asking for detailed summaries of ROI: “What’s the return on my investment for membership dues; for advertising in the directory; for instructing at a CLE; for taking on leadership roles?”

The ROI for membership dues is not an immediate gratification or one that can be solely defined by a dollar amount. Rather, membership dues are more akin to a 401(k) – something you invest in with expectations of future return. Membership is an investment in your career and in the future of the profession.

I hear story after story from our more seasoned members about relationships they established early in their careers. And now, through the Bar Association, so-and-so is a Judge; CEO of a million-dollar corporation; Managing Partner; in-house counsel at a fortune 500 company doling out millions in legal fees every year; Attorney General. I also hear variations on the adage, “When I graduated law school, you did three things: take the bar; pass the bar; join the bar.” Bar association membership was a given. Law firm management expected their attorneys to join the bar association – employers paid the association dues; they encouraged their lawyers to attend committee meetings and events and to take on a leadership role.

So, when exactly did that change? When did bar association membership become a line item undeserving of investment without an immediate, demonstrable return on investment?
CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

return on investment? Equally important is why did it change? Today, the stories I hear lay blame on millennials – “they’re just not joiners.” To the contrary, we have one of the strongest millennial memberships in the country. Millennials are joiners. They seek connections and professional development. Too often there is a misinterpretation that millennials get everything they need online. What are we doing, as a profession, to coach them through building more authentic relationships to enhance their careers? Relationships don’t just happen. If they are truly authentic, they are years in the making; decades even. How do you put a dollar figure on that? Sometimes, we can become so data driven that we lose relationships to enhance their careers? Relationships don’t just happen. If they are truly authentic, they are years in the making; decades even. How do you put a dollar figure on that? Sometimes, we can become so data driven that we lose sight of the big picture. Engaging with your colleagues through a professional association is priceless. I hear it every day; stories about people who would never be where they are but for the relationships they built, the leadership skills they developed and the opportunities they had to become a thought-leader – all through their involvement with the bar association. I am really proud to lead the Columbus Bar Association. I think we do some pretty terrific things on behalf of our members, the profession and the public. Our staff is genuinely committed to making our members lives a little better – professionally and personally. Yes, I know money matters. But think about association membership as an investment in your career and your future. It’s not a line item in your budget that should be questioned – it should be an automatic, just like your 401(k), bar registration fees, CLE and rent. And next time someone asks you what the return on investment is, explain that it’s priceless.

FUTURE

FIVE CBA MEMBERS NAMED TO FORTY UNDER 40 CLASS

Columbus Business First has chosen its 2018 class of up-and-coming professionals and community leaders as part of its annual Forty Under 40 awards program. Among the 40 honorees are five members of the CBA. Board of Governors members Eimear Bahnson (Massucci Law Group) and Lindsay Ford Ellis (COTA), and Columbus Bar members Michael Corey (Human Service Chamber of Franklin County), A.J. Hensel (Hahn Loeser + Parks) and Miranda Morgan (Ice Miller). We extend our enthusiastic congratulations to this year’s honorees!
2018 CBA ANNUAL MEETING SUMMARY

Each year, the Columbus Bar Association awards members with the Bar Service Medal and the Professionalism Award. This year, the Professionalism Award goes to Allen J. Reis, Weltman, Weinberg & Reis Co., LPA, and the Bar Service Medal goes to James A. Readey, Readey Mediation, LLC.

ALLEN J. REIS

The Professionalism Award is given to an attorney in recognition of exceptional dedication to the standards of the profession and for demonstrated integrity. Allen Reis has been an active attorney and member of the Bar for over 40 years. He also participates in the CBA’s Municipal Court and EAGLE Committees.

Reis is the head of his firm’s Columbus office and Commercial Collections practice. He is AV® Preeminent™ Rated by Martindale-Hubbell and has been recognized seven times by Ohio Super Lawyers (2007–08, 2010, 2012–13). Reis is also an active member of the Central Ohio community. He volunteers with the Mid-Ohio Foodbank and is heavily involved with the YMCA, volunteering at its Family Center, as a Youth Leader, and as a member of the Building Committee.

To read more about Reis and his professional accomplishments, visit his firm’s website: http://www.weltman.com/?hr=4&=45733&format=xmip=7371.

JAMES A. READEY

The Bar Service Medal is presented to an attorney who is a member of the Columbus Bar Association and who has shown a long history of distinguished service to the Columbus Bar. Readey has been an active attorney and sustaining member of the Bar for almost 40 years.

He’s an active supporter of the Columbus Bar Foundation and served as Columbus Bar President in 1985. He’s also been involved with the Bar in many other ways: he’s a member of the CBA’s ADR Committee; has served as a member of the Columbus Bar Foundation Board and was on the Board of Governors from 1979 – 1986.

To read more about Readey’s professional accomplishments, visit his directory page: directory.cblaw.org/profile/james-a-readey.

PRESIDENT’S AWARD

JAMES A. RUTLEDGE

Our President’s Award recognizes an individual for his/her exceptional leadership as a committee chairperson. James Rutledge is the head of the Investment Advisory Committee, and under his leadership the committee has flourished.

The Investment Advisory Committee guides the Columbus Bar Association in its investments. The members of the committee are responsible for knowing the market and the CBA’s capital needs.

This year alone, this Committee has challenged the investment advisor to stay current with key investment ideas, promoted and maintained a fiduciary obligation posture to the oversight of the investment portfolios and spearheaded the constant examination of the appropriateness of the Investment Policy Statements, all under Jim’s guidance.

The Investment Advisory Committee is completely volunteer-based, so its members have the Bar Association’s best intentions at heart. Rutledge has remained a quiet leader behind the scene for more than 30 years. He has given the Bar the best advice possible so that we may be financially strong. And he also serves as the leader of our Pension Advisory Committee.

To read more about Rutledge’s professional accomplishments, visit his directory page: directory.cblaw.org/profile/james-a-rutledge.

NEWS MEDIA AWARD

JOHN FUTTY

This year, President Lisa Pierce Reisz is presenting the News Media Award to Dispatch Courts Reporter John Futty.

As a Dispatch reporter, Futty has covered the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas – and various other legal sectors – for over 10 years. His articles are always meticulously researched, accurate and well-written.

While common in typical “courtroom dramas,” Futty does not sensationalize his stories or take gratuitous shots at lawyers or judges. His articles often convey the human context that underlies each case, and the essential facts.

In short, Futty is helping to educate the general public about not only the legal system, but in a remarkably unbiased way about events and behavior in society that might otherwise escape the general public’s attention and understanding. As a Bar Association, we are very grateful.

To read more about Rutledge’s professional accomplishments, visit his directory page: directory.cblaw.org/profile/james-a-rutledge.

Our two new Presidents for 2018-2019:

ASSOCIATION PRESIDENT: SAMUEL A. PEPPERS, III

As President for the 2018-19 year, Sam Peppers will uphold the responsibilities of the CBA, including community service, lawyer discipline, providing continuing legal education and public education about the law.

Peppers is a partner with Dinsmore & Shohl, LLP and has been a sustaining member for more than 25 years and on the Board of Governors for approximately five years. He participates in the Family Law, Estate Planning and Trust, and ADR Committees. He’s also a member of the John Mercer Langston Bar Association and the Ohio State Bar Association, Estate Planning, Trusts and Probate Law Council.

Earlier in his career, Peppers was employed with the Franklin County Probate Court as a general magistrate presiding over matters before the court, such as adoptions, guardianship, name changes, estates, trusts, marriage applications and civil commitments for mental illness. As a partner in the Dinsmore Columbus office, Peppers’ practice focuses on probate issues like tax, private client and family wealth planning.

To read more about Peppers and his professional accomplishments, visit his firm’s website: http://www.dinsmore.com/samuel-a-peppers-iii.

FOUNDATION PRESIDENT: BELINDA S. BARNES

The Columbus Bar Foundation is dedicated to promoting an understanding of the law, the role of the legal profession and access to justice for all. As President, Belinda Barnes will uphold these responsibilities and more throughout her 2018-19 term.

Barnes has been a CBA sustaining member for more than 30 years and is on the Board of Trustees. She is also a member of the CBA’s ADR, Common Pleas, EAGLE, Judicial Campaign Advertising and Admissions Committees.

Barnes also volunteers with Columbus Legal Aid and is a member of additional organizations, such as the Ohio State Bar Association, American Inns of Court, Women Lawyers of Franklin County and the Ohio Association of Civil Trial Attorneys.

She is a partner with Gallagher, Gams, Pryor, Tallan & Littrell, LLP, where she has earned recognition in Super Lawyers for the past 10 years.

To read more about Barnes and her professional accomplishments, visit her firm’s website: http://www.gpgll.com/belinda-a-barnes/
WE BELONG: A BROAD VIEW OF DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

As many readers will know, in 2001, local law firm leaders created the Columbus Bar Association Managing Partners Diversity Initiative (MPDI). The MPDI was ahead of its time, a collaborative effort to promote racial and ethnic diversity in our local bar. Law firms that are normally competitors, along with key competitors, along with local government and our local law schools, continue today to share the long-term goal of promoting a diverse legal profession.

At each year’s annual meeting, we share our progress with stakeholders, discuss how to adapt to a changing world, and challenge each other to do better. At last year’s annual meeting, keynote speaker Roddy Fong from the State Bar of California addressed the effective mentoring of diverse junior lawyers, one of the MPDI’s current priorities. What sticks with me most was Mr. Fong’s discussion of the importance of a sense of belonging to anybody who seeks to succeed in an organization.

No matter who and what you are, we all know the warm feeling of belonging, and the unsettling feeling of not belonging. Even the big man on campus has been to a social event where he does not know anybody, and nobody seems interested in drawing him in. Imagine working someplace where you always feel that way. If an organization does not give a person a sense of belonging, that individual will inevitably leave.

It is a simple but powerful concept that can make complex issues accessible, and in my mind connects a wide range of inclusion and organizational issues. Take the employment law (my law practice) and diversity issue of 2018: the tsunami of alleged and often verified egregiously bad behavior by powerful males, better known as #MeToo. After approximately 40 years of advising employers to have a harassment policy, train employees and respond to investigations, employment lawyers collectively are asking – did that work? Certainly many employers have taken many positive steps and probably addressed many bad workplace situations, but in late 2017 we awakened to a scope of unreported harassment that collectively we did not realize.

Now what? I am telling clients they need to rethink the customary canned training and embark on a more interactive and consistently present attentiveness to the social dynamics underlying the gap between actual and reported harassment. This, too, is a belonging issue. An employee will not feel that sense of belonging in a harassing workplace, and the victim needs to feel the sense of belonging to place the trust in the employer to handle that situation.

Belonging is not only about groups we think of as the focus of diversity efforts. Some people naturally fit in more easily than others. For example, regardless of race or gender, people less exposed to business settings and/or from different socioeconomic backgrounds may struggle to fit in in a business setting. Some people are just different; belonging comes less naturally to them. But as managers, when we can help any of these people build on their strengths and develop a sense of belonging, our organization wins, with a vibrant exchange of ideas and styles among good and loyal employees.

No matter what your title, no matter what your politics, no matter what the word “diversity” means to you, there is somebody around you who – in some way and for any reason – does not feel the sense of belonging that you do.

How can you help just one of those people belong a little more today?

NOT A HAND-OUT BUT A HAND-UP

As a first-generation law student, everything about the process of articulation was slightly intimidating. The prospect of finding employment after the completion of my inaugural year of study was no exception. While my alma mater, the Moritz College of Law at The Ohio State University, does an amazing job of connecting students with opportunities through its Career Services Office, there was still a sense of trepidation that had about the entire process – would I be viewed as good enough? Qualified enough? Worthy enough? Enter the CBA’s Minority Clerkship Program. Candidly, I cannot recall the genesis of my interaction with the Program since I participated more than 20 years ago, but I can unequivocally state that I was treated as any other Summer Associate and given the same confidence and training I needed to become the best lawyer possible.

The Minority Clerkship Program worked diligently to demystify the process of working in a legal environment and to provide the emotional and intellectual support necessary for me to have a meaningful and substantive summer work experience. But most importantly, the Program did not make me feel or believe that I was being offered a charitable chance at success because I was, in some way, inadequate because of my ethnicity or deficient because of my decision to seek employment through this mechanism. In fact, when I was placed at Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP, the fact that my assignment was through the Minority Clerkship Program was never mentioned by the lawyers at the firm, nor was it mentioned to the other students who were selected as Summer Associates through other means. I was treated as any other Summer Associate and given the same opportunities to hone my research, writing, analytical and client-management skill sets. In truth, the first time I received a feedback on a memorandum I prepared, which was replete with myriad edits and enough red ink to start a pen factory, I doubted whether my decision was the right one. But I was fortunate enough to have a Supervising Attorney who understood the necessity and value of critiquing my work honestly so that I could one day be the best lawyer possible. And the greatest gift I received from my experience? The creation of lasting relationships with outstanding lawyers that I continue to enjoy to this day.

So, my advice for students who are contemplating whether they should participate? Stop contemplating and start engaging. The CBA Minority Clerkship Program gave me the foundational confidence and training I needed to become a lawyer, and now jurist, I am today. My experience wasn’t a hand-out but a hand-up in the process of discovering and reaching my highest potential.
MINORITY CLERKSHIP PROGRAM

FINDING MY FOOTING IN LAW

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first in my family to complete post-
graduate education, first-generation lawyer, first time owning and operating a small-business solo practice. My list of firsts is somewhat extensive and includes on it is a first that is almost certainly would not have occurred without the Columbus Bar Association’s Minority Clerkship Program (MCP): first opportunity to work in a large corporate law firm. And this is the “first” that set the tone and trajectory for my legal career.

In 2008, after going through the MCP application process, I landed a Summer Associate position at Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff. Surreal is the only way inside a corporate law firm and I surely never imagined entering one as an Associate. The path I had planned for my legal career in no way included corporate law, big firms or even litigation; despite eventually becoming a litigator. However, as the adage goes, “you don’t know what you don’t know,” and that summer I learned just how much I did not know about my future profession.

Historically, minorities are underrepresented in the legal field. Many, myself included, enter law school with a basic, often TV drama-skewed, understanding of the profession as a career. The MCP pulls back the curtain for these students to reveal the practicalities of working in their chosen profession and helps them navigate this uncharted career landscape.

Though I had worked, for years, in a variety of different professional settings, I learned the uniqueness of the corporate business law environment that summer. I gained an appreciation for just how important collaboration and collegiality are in the legal profession. Theoretical law school exercises requiring critical thinking and long-game strategizing became real world challenges, with real world impacts. This opportunity also became my first introduction to the “business” of law and its myriad of iterations: from the personal investment partners make to ensure the success of the firm, to the factors that determine whether to take on a new client, to how government policies, politics and decisions influence a firm’s priorities.

My life experiences and background informed a perception of the law as a tool to shape society, right wrongs and protect the marginalized. That summer working as a “Big Law” Associate exploded my previous understanding of the law’s impact on society. I fully grasped the law as the conduit through which the daily transactions that undergird our democracy – often high stakes transactions affecting millions of people and worth millions of dollars – occur.

More than anything, the MCP gave me eye-opening exposure to the potential of what a legal career could be. I soaked up every experience and opportunity presented to me that summer and used it to craft my next two years of law school and build the foundation for the type of career in law I wanted. And for this, I am forever grateful to the CBAs MCP and to the employers that participate in the program.

The benefits of the MCP to our larger Columbus legal community exponentially surpass the potential financial gains for the law student participants or the potential for new associate hires for the firms. Sure, some MCP-pleurs ultimately result in employment offers (my firm brought me back for a second summer), and these hires in turn increase the depth of diversity – of ideas, demographics, backgrounds and experiences – in Columbus’ corporate law community. However, the MCP at its core, is a launching pad to success through on-the-job training, professional development and networking for otherwise uninitiated, underrepresented and uninformed minority law students – like me.
1. Scott and Gretchen Mote, Carol Sheehan and Marion Smithberger pose for a photo at the 2018 CBF Gala.
2. CBF President Mike Carpenter and CBA President Lisa Pierce Reisz present the Legal Aid Society of Columbus with their check at the 2018 CBF Gala.
3. Board members snap a photo together after the 2017 Annual Meeting.
4. Past Presidents Brad Wrightsel, Keith Schneider and Brigid Heid get ready to hit the green with Executive Director Jill Snitcher McQuain.
5. James Beattie Jr., Rob Cohen and Rabbi Yitzi Kaltmann after speaking at the June Constitutional Conversation: Separation of Church and State.
6. The 2017 Barrister Leadership Class volunteer at the Urban Farm Project.
7. CBA Members (front) Ken Kline, Ian Vita and Gregg Lewis (back) Pam Haggard and Greg Mitchell volunteer for Ask the Attorney on May 9.
8. The 2017-18 Board of Governors at their annual retreat.
9. The LGBT Committee enjoys a happy hour at the Walrus.
10. Young Lawyers Chairs Andrew Bonnington and Caitlyn Bevelds Johnson smile at an ice cream social.

POWERED BY THE COLUMBUS BAR ASSOCIATION

A YEAR IN REVIEW
12. Board Member Luke Fedlam and friends are ready to swing away at our Jay Yano Golf Outing.

13. The Small Firm/Solo Practitioner Committee enjoys a day of apple picking.

14. The Young Lawyers Committee before the Haunted Statehouse Tour!

15. Judge Green poses with Capital University Law Students at a Fireside Chat event.

16. Jocelyn Armstrong, Angela Frost and Lindsay Ford Ellis smile for the camera at our November New Lawyer Reception.

17. Four new lawyers pause conversation to take a picture at our November New Lawyer Reception.


19. Josh Hagg, Colleen Amott and Mary Erney pose at the Columbus Blue Jackets night for Young Lawyers.

20. The Young Lawyers Committee volunteers at Alvis House during the holidays.

21. Past and Present Board Members Jay Michael, Eimear Bahnson, Elizabeth Zuercher and Lorie McCaughan spend the evening together at our first Committees & Cocktails.

22. All of our 50 year members with their awards.

23. The Young Lawyers Committee had a blast at a wine and paint night.

24. The Women Lawyers of Franklin County had a SUPER time at Rock ’N Bowl.

25. Massucci Law Group with their winning pin at Rock ’N Bowl.

26. Members enjoy some laughs at Committees & Cocktails.

27. CJ Fults and Julia Jo-Amador sweep the stones at curling night!

28. Attorneys from Joseph & Joseph Co. LPA pose with their dates at the 2018 CBF Gala.

29. Ashley Tagliaventi, Incoming President Sam Peppers, Jocelyn Armstrong and Philip King celebrate the 31st year of the Minority Clerkship Program.

30. Judge Green clowning around with members at Committees & Cocktails.

31. CBA Staff pose with speaker Romi Delane, Women Who Dare.

32. Some of the 2018 Barrister Leader Class outside the Mid-Ohio Foodbank during a volunteer event.

33. Damon Barhorst, Anthony Johnson, Byron Turner, Shalyn Smith and Kelli Jo Amador enjoy some food and drinks at Committees & Cocktails.
A NOTE TO SELF: ENGAGE WITH THE COLUMBUS BAR FOUNDATION

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o since I’m being inducted as President of the Columbus Bar Foundation (CBF), I remember to remind your fellow lawyers why they should contribute to the CBF. Remember that you first became interested in the CBF after you learned that Attorney Jack Alton was visiting seriously ill lawyers on behalf of the CBF to thank the lawyers for their service to the profession of law and the citizens of Ohio. Those acts of kindness later resulted in the founding of the Carpenter Visitation and Memorial Fund which offers aid and comfort to attorneys who are seriously ill and provides recognition to the families of deceased members of the Columbus Bar Association.

In its 68-year existence, the CBF has had a tremendous impact upon all central Ohio residents, not just attorneys. In furtherance of its mission to promote the understanding of the law, the role of the legal profession and access to justice for all, the CBF makes grants of over $400,000 annually from a corpus of $4 million. It has made grants of over $1.6 million to the Legal Aid Society of Columbus who helps protect basic legal rights of some of the most vulnerable members of our community by assisting them in navigating legal issues that make their lives more difficult than they already are. It has contributed over $500,000 to the Center for Family Safety and Healing at Nationwide Children’s Hospital, which incorporates legal help for those affected by family violence including child abuse and neglect, teen dating abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse.

The CBF has awarded over $550,000 to Community Mediation Services who have made tremendous progress in reducing the number of homeless in our community by mediating disputes between landlords and tenants and facilitating transitions to new housing when a landlord/tenant relationship must be severed. The CBF has provided over $600,000 to operate Lawyers for Justice, the Columbus Bar Association’s pro bono program.

The CBF has been one of the significant supporters of the Law and Leadership Institute (LLI), which provides legally-based academic instruction and leadership training to hundreds of at-risk high school students, many of whom have ended up attending college and some of which are now attending law school because of the skills they learned and the confidence they developed by participating in LLI. By supporting LLI with grants of over $220,000 and through stipends awarded to OSU Moritz law students working as summer interns in public interest law, the CBF is increasing the diversity of professionals in Ohio and giving hope for the future to those who might otherwise have none.

Contributing to education and legal protection of children, the CBF Theodore Horst Fund is a sponsor of the annual National Mock Court Competition in Child Welfare & Adoption Law sponsored by the Family and Youth Law Center at Capital University Law School. Further, the CBF Open Books Open Minds Fund supports the Franklin County Juvenile Detention Facility’s Media Center with books, magazines and computers and also provides financial support for the Center’s GED program.

So, self, encourage your colleagues and friends to be part of the solution by joining or contributing to the CBF.

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF COLUMBUS: IMPROVING OUR ENTIRE COMMUNITY

With strong support from the Columbus Bar Foundation (CBF) and an active legal community, the Legal Aid Society of Columbus (LASC) has had an incredible year of progress helping people in poverty. In 2017, our staff and volunteers made a difference in the lives of more than 8,038 individuals and families in Central Ohio. Our successes ranged from securing safe housing for 18 immigrant families, to helping an eight-year-old go from an expulsion to Student of the Month, thanks to the intervention of our revitalized education team.

Money and time invested by the legal community and CBF yield concrete, positive outcomes in people’s lives. 2017 saw the inception of our Tenant Advocacy Project (TAP) clinic operating at the Franklin County Municipal Court.

With a full-time staff attorney funded by the Ohio State Bar Foundation and The Columbus Foundation and an army of 248 attorney volunteers, we were a presence every day, helping people navigate the process of eviction court, and holding landlords with unfair practices accountable. In March 2018, with support from The Ohio State University Moritz College of Law, we added another full-time attorney to expand the reach of TAP, which assisted in 792 cases in nine months.

LASC also saw an expansion of our medical/legal partnership from Nationwide Children’s Hospital to adult hospitals across Central Ohio. This work helps us partner with medical professionals to address the underlying causes of poverty and chronic illness. Earlier this year, an LASC housing lawyer helped the mother of a sick child being cared for at Nationwide Children’s Hospital obtain a reasonable accommodation from the local housing authority to ensure she could maintain housing for her four children.

This past year has seen challenges, progress and growth for our clients and for the staff. We have represented consumers in the Supreme Court of Ohio, low-income wage earners in the 10th District Court of Appeals and tenants struggling for habitable homes in Environmental Court. We’ve joined the Columbus Women’s Commission Pay Equity Challenge, executed The Women’s Fund of Central Ohio Gender By Us™ exercise to disrupt gender bias through conversation, and welcomed an impressive and diverse pool of new lawyers.

We saw a huge increase in the number of people we served annually, with an additional 1,429 in 2017. In Pro Bono, we saw a 15 percent increase in overall cases, launched Domestic Relations clinics in Delaware and Marion Counties, and added special education cases to our pro bono opportunities.

With the leadership of the Columbus Bar Foundation and continued commitment from individual lawyers and firms, LASC shows no signs of slowing down in 2018. We’re working on an innovative new way to reach out to rural clients and are looking forward to becoming more deeply involved in our community including in the Hilltop, Southside, South Linden and Near East Side through our Neighborhood Revitalization grant.

We simply can’t do this work alone, and fortunately we don’t have to. We are truly privileged to work with volunteers on a daily basis — those who handle pro bono cases, volunteer time at our offices or elevate the stories of our clients in the community at large through their board participation. Still more work remains to be done, and we continue to develop new ways by which supporters in our community can help us improve the lives of more low-income Ohioans. LASC welcomes volunteers from all fields — technology, business, fundraising, communications, social work and law. If you would like to join us, contact Pro Bono Coordinator Dianna Parker Howie at dhowie@columbuslegalaid.org or (614) 757-0184.

If you would like more information about the Foundation, please visit www.columbusbarfoundation.org or call Marion Smithberger at 614-360-7070.
THE JUDICIAL SCREENING COMMITTEE HELPS VOTERS MAKE INFORMED CHOICES

Voting for judges can be a challenge for sensible people who prefer to avoid courtrooms. Many voters skip the judicial share of their ballot or cast votes based on name recognition: “Judge Gallagher sounds good.” The Columbus Bar Association Judicial Screening Committee is designed to help.

The Judicial Screening Committee is a group of 21 attorneys who have made a career of anything but practicing criminal, civil and probate law. Each year, this committee joins together for a unique evaluation process that provides both the public and the Columbus Bar with an unbiased evaluation of the judicial candidates.

The process begins in April, when judicial candidates are sent a questionnaire designed to provide their background, experience, qualifications and reasons for running for judge. In the beginning of August each year, the questionnaire responses are circulated to the committee and each candidate is scheduled for a separate interview before the committee.

During the interviews, all attorneys on the committee ask the candidate questions. New candidates might be asked about their experience, legal expertise and the type of Judge they aspire to be. Incumbent judges might be asked about their past performance on the bench. All members on the committee are required to conduct themselves in an unbiased manner. Committee members are not permitted to give financial support or personal endorsement of any judicial candidates during their service.

After the interview, the candidate departs the room and committee members discuss the interview, share any knowledge or experience regarding the candidate and debate the candidate’s overall qualifications and demeanor. Both the interview and the committee discussion are strictly confidential.

What happens during Judicial Screening Committee, stays in Judicial Screening Committee.

Each committee member then casts a confidential vote, indicating whether they find the candidate to be “highly recommended,” “acceptable” or “not recommended.” To be “Highly Recommended,” a candidate needs to receive at least 60 percent of the votes in that category. To be found “Not Recommended,” a candidate must receive more than 70 percent of the votes in that category. In all other cases, the candidate receives an “Acceptable” rating.

The Committee findings are ultimately published on-line at JudgeTheCandidates.org. Before going to the ballot box in November, voters should check out the Judicial Screening Committee’s ratings and recommendations. ■

THE JUDICIAL CAMPAIGN ADVERTISING COMMITTEE: THE STORY BEHIND THE ADS

Judicial candidates are subject to campaign rules that differ from other politicians. The reason is deeply rooted in American history, where our founders disagreed as to whether judges should be appointed or elected. But they all agreed on this: Judicial authority depends on the public’s willingness to respect and follow its decisions. And in the 39 states that now elect their judges, each agrees that how a candidate comes to office is critical to preserving their independence, integrity and impartiality once they attain that office.

That’s where the Columbus Bar Association’s Judicial Campaign Advertising Committee comes in. Founded 25 years ago, the JCAC is a non-partisan group consisting of six attorneys — two Democrats, two Republicans, and two Independents. The Committee serves a dual purpose. It assists local judicial candidates in complying with the Code of Judicial Conduct in order to help avoid unnecessary conflict within their campaigns. It also assists in enhancing public confidence in our judiciary.

The work of the JCAC begins by convening all candidates and their campaign representatives prior to the election season to discuss the mission and purpose of the Committee, as well as the resources that are available to assist the candidates as they navigate through their individual campaigns. The initial meeting is more than merely informational. It brings all candidates together in one room to facilitate personal interaction and to continue the rich tradition of respect and collegiality among competitors for judicial office.

Candidates are then asked to sign a pledge reaffirming their commitment to the Ohio Code of Judicial Conduct, agreeing to submit campaign advertising materials to the JCAC before public release and to consider and act upon any recommendations the Committee may make. If candidates disagree with an opponent’s advertising materials, they may raise the issue with the Committee, which in turn may make recommendations ranging from minor modifications to outright retraction of the ad.

Participation with the JCAC is purely voluntary. Judicial candidates are not required to sign the pledge or cooperate with the Committee, yet the overwhelming majority do. And that is the real story behind our local judicial elections.

Franklin County judicial races are notable for the personal and professional excellence and integrity of those who seek to be our judges. In an age of increasing partisan divide, judicial candidates in Franklin County offer an alternative. They serve the common goal of judicial integrity by running campaigns that focus on facts and forego the rancor of partisan politics. And on those comparatively rare occasions where candidates disagree about an opponent’s advertising, disputes are typically resolved promptly and consensually.

And in the 39 states that now elect their judges, each agrees that how a candidate comes to office is critical to preserving their independence, integrity and impartiality once they attain that office.

The JCAC started as an experiment — the first of its kind in Ohio. Today, by partnering with those who aspire to the highest calling of the Bar, the JCAC serves to promote public confidence in the Franklin County judiciary. ■

When judges are on the ballot, be informed.

Learn about the candidates for judge before you step into the voting booth this November. The Columbus Bar Association’s Judge the Candidates website will help you make an informed decision when it is time to elect judges for Franklin County courts.

> Visit www.JudgeTheCandidates.org
CBA LAUNCHES MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS TASK FORCE

The Columbus Bar Association (CBA) is pleased to announce that it has recently launched a Mental Health and Wellness Task Force. The task force’s overall mission is to identify and address factors that affect the mental health and wellness of lawyers and law students and their families and employees. The task force is comprised of representatives from the bench and bar as well as CBA staff.

For a very long time the practice of law has ranked at or close to the top of jobs that create or exacerbate the incidence of mental illness and substance use disorders. For example, a study published in 1990 analyzed the prevalence of major depressive disorder in 104 different professions. The results of the study indicated that lawyers had the highest prevalence of the illness, with an odds ratio of 3.6 when compared to employed persons generally. More recent studies have not shown a change in that statistic. However, the issue has been shoved under the rug within the confines of formal lawyer assistance programs. The important work done by such programs is often geared toward the identification and treatment of lawyers whose mental illness and/or addiction have already risen to formal ethical complaints.

In recent years, the CBA Legal Connections magazine has ranked at or near the top of jobs from the bench and bar as well as CBA employees. The task force is comprised of representatives and employees. The task force has been shoved under the rug by providing a safe space to learn, grow, and flourish while building a client base in an office environment. They provide an office, office equipment, access to on-site and external attorney mentors, training on a variety of law practice management issues, and specially designed networking opportunities. But it’s much more than an office and a desk, it’s a life-line for new and moderately experienced lawyers.

Hanging your own shingle can be a daunting experience for any lawyer. However, for a lawyer new to the bar, the experience is overwhelming. The Columbus Bar Association (CBA) is pleased to announce that it has recently launched a Mental Health and Wellness Task Force. The task force’s overall mission is to identify and address factors that affect the mental health and wellness of lawyers and law students and their families and employees. The task force is comprised of representatives from the bench and bar as well as CBA staff.

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Those who are working with the task force hope that some of their colleagues might be helped before the problem gets to that stage. Most attorneys know or have known colleagues whose mental health and addiction issues caused them to change careers, run afoul of ethical rules and even commit suicide. The task force is committed to bringing the issue into the open. Living in isolation with mental illness and addiction only serves to make matters worse. It is encouraging, however, that there is a lot of activity at the national, state and local levels aimed at educating lawyers and legal professionals about the emotional pitfalls of practicing law. The efforts of the committee will be targeted to helping others prevent and manage the significant stress inherent in the practice.

At the same time, members of the committee acknowledge that the stigma attached to these problems causes sufferers to go underground. Even though there has been a noticeable desigmatization of addiction problems in recent years, the stigma attached to mental illness is still very entrenched in our culture. Sadly, that stigma can be one of the biggest obstacles to getting help. The CBA’s Mental Health and Wellness Task Force will strive to chip away at this stigma through education, mental health and wellness programming, and networking opportunities for those who wish to meet others in the profession who share an interest in the issue.

If you have an interest in helping with this project, please contact Donna Sweet at the CBA or email me at BobbieJ@okeeffamilylaw.com.

COLUMBUS BAR INC: A NEW ATTORNEY’S LIFELINE

I recently had the opportunity to work with new lawyers at the Franklin County Common Pleas Courthouse who were participating in the Supreme Court Mentorship Program. I emphasized to them the wonderful community of lawyers we have in Franklin County. These young and new attorneys were wise enough to understand the importance of having a mentor to guide them through the early years of their career. It is important for them to know where the courthouse is located, how to draft a complaint, and the rules of criminal and civil procedure. However, it is just as important for them to know who we are as a community of attorneys.

I have had the opportunity to practice in this legal community for over 34 years. I have the perspective from in front of the bench prosecuting and defending individuals in criminal cases and likewise representing individuals and companies in civil litigation both as plaintiff and defense counsel. Now I have the perspective from the bench. What I have had an opportunity to experience and observe is that Franklin County has an outstanding practicing bar.

This does not occur by accident. This does not necessarily adhere to the culture. However, we are not like other communities that take pride in the “scorched earth” approach to the practice of law. I have talked with attorneys who have practiced in other communities that have moved their practice to Franklin County and they tell me how welcoming the legal community is.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY AS LEGAL PROFESSIONALS IS...

In an article by Michelle Silverthorn directed to millennial attorneys, she described professionalism as “being a competent, effective, respectful advocate for your client and the justice system.” I like that definition because of her emphasis on responsibility to the justice system. In this competitive legal environment in which we work, many times the responsibility to the justice system gets lost in one’s advocacy for their client. We must never forget our obligation to the profession.

Recently I had the opportunity to welcome new lawyers at the Franklin County Common Pleas Courthouse who were participating in the Supreme Court Mentorship Program. I emphasized to them the wonderful community of lawyers we have in Franklin County. These young and new attorneys were wise enough to understand the importance of having a mentor to guide them through the early years of their career. It is important for them to know where the courthouse is located, how to draft a complaint, and the rules of criminal and civil procedure. However, it is just as important for them to know who we are as a community of attorneys.

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This does not occur by accident. This occurs from embracing new attorneys into the legal culture of our community. Of course, we are not perfect and every attorney practicing in this community does not necessarily adhere to the culture. However, we are not like other communities that take pride in the “scorched earth” approach to the practice of law. I have talked with attorneys who have practiced in other communities that have moved their practice to Franklin County and they tell me how welcoming the legal community is.

In describing leadership, Jim Rohn is quoted as saying: “The challenge of leadership is to be strong, but not rude; be kind, but not weak; be bold, but not bully; be thoughtful, but not lazy; be humble, but not timid; be proud, but not arrogant; have humor, but without folly.” The same can be said of professionalism. You do not have to be rude or a bully to persuasively or vigorously represent the interest of your client. If you are kind and humble it does not equate to being weak or timid.

It is important for new attorneys to our legal community and especially to those coming through the Lawyer to Lawyer Mentoring Program to appreciate the responsibility they have to their clients, to the profession and also, to this legal community.
PRACTICE MANAGEMENT CENTER: HELPING MEMBERS BE THEIR BEST

In a world of constantly increasing overhead, membership dues and association fees, lawyers across the country should always evaluate the value they get from these costs. In my travels and speaking across the country, I can say objectively that the Columbus Bar is one of the more innovative bar associations. The Columbus Bar is always thinking about it’s members and how to deliver value.

One such new tool/resource is the Columbus Bar Association's Practice Management Center. It can be found directly on the Columbus Bar’s Home Page or Resources. It is the very first option so it is directly on the Columbus Bar's Home Page.

To kick off this great new resource, the Columbus Bar offered free 30-Minute Legal Technology Consultations on May 9, which was a wild success. Participants signed up, filled out a questionnaire, attended the private one-on-one sessions with legal technology experts and walked away with immediate answers to their questions, which ranged from issues about whether they should move to the cloud to how we should encrypt documents and email.

CBA member Nancy Sponseller stopped in to tell us what she thought of the Practice Management Center: “I think this is a fantastic service and I’m incredibly grateful that the bar association is reaching out to members in so many different and valuable ways.”

Also included in this resource is access to over 100 courses representing over 30 software programs that are highly relevant to legal professionals. These videos are authored, produced and constantly updated by Affinity Consulting Group. They are practical videos that will raise an attorney’s level of competency in Word, Excel, PowerPoint, Outlook, PDFing, etc. We strongly recommend that firms use these videos as part of their onboarding/training process for new lawyers, paralegals and legal assistants.

The Practice Management Center also houses articles, ethics opinions and other tools to help inform your decisions about practice-related issues like building your practice, hanging out a shingle, managing your practice, billing practices, fee collection, hiring and firing, work-life balance, time management, distraction management, winding down your practice and succession planning. There are a number of checklists available as well.

The software comparison charts are also extremely useful resources if you are looking for new software. Many firms are now considering migrating to cloud-based applications for time, billing and accounting, practice management or document management. These software comparison charts can help you navigate those choices, so you can compare features.

Finally, the Practice Management Center also features upcoming CLE events related to critical law practice management issues. Don’t miss the Practice Management Lean as Easy as 1, 2, 3 a CLE being offered June 21.
SUSTAINING MEMBERS OF THE COLUMBUS BAR PROVIDE AN ADDITIONAL MEASURE OF SUPPORT FOR PROFESSIONALISM AND PROGRAMS THAT ENHANCE THE ENTIRE CENTRAL OHIO LEGAL COMMUNITY.

“Coming together is a beginning, staying together is progress, and working together is success.” – Henry Ford