

## OCBF president aims to extend group's legacy

*'Million-dollar dream' serves the public*

By: Agenique Smiley in News Stories February 16, 2018

Oakland County Bar Foundation (OCBF) President Patrick M. McCarthy's "million-dollar dream" for the foundation is that its legacy of community support, fostering access to justice and promoting the public's education of the law lives on far beyond his presidency. He's taking steps to ensure that dream becomes a reality through such things as inducting new fellows into the organization. "A fellow pledges to donate \$100 per year for 10 years," McCarthy explained.

### Putting it to good use



"The money pledged by the fellows goes to the OCBF and the foundation uses it to fund our many programs," McCarthy continued. One of those programs is the OCBF Funded Grant program through which it has awarded grants in excess of \$2,273,500 between 2002 and 2017. "Any organization dedicated to public service is encouraged to apply," McCarthy commented, "applications are accepted and grants are awarded throughout the year."

Ensuring to the fullest extent possible that legal services are available to all members of the public is one of the foundation's core objectives. Therefore, a large portion of the foundation's grant monies have gone to organizations that provide either free or low-cost legal services. "Our purpose is to ensure access to justice to the most vulnerable populations," McCarthy asserted.

### Improving and facilitating the administration of justice

Improving and facilitating the administration of justice is another of the foundation's objectives, therefore, the OCBF gears its programs toward not only service and education of the public but also enrichment of its members. The standing Bench/Bar Committee that presents the Bench/Bar Conference each year was developed in November 1999.

The conference generates good faith between judges and lawyers by providing a forum where the parties can meet and address any possible issues and develop solutions. Taking place outside of the courthouse, the conference often spurs not only innovative solutions but often creative methods of assisting clients and pro per litigants. Often times, other ways to assist in the delivery of justice and improve the justice system in Oakland County are also developed seemingly without effort.

Another way the OCBF is improving the administration of justice is through its funding of the Federal Pro Se Legal Clinic. The Pro Se Clinic provides free legal services to indigent and low-income pro se litigants in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan.

The purpose of the Pro Se Clinic is to ensure that pro se litigants receive fair treatment when before the federal court while facilitating the efficient administration of justice both for the litigant and the District Court itself. The Pro Se Clinic services litigants residing in Oakland, Wayne and Macomb counties.

### The honor and integrity of the profession

The OCBF is dedicated to fostering and maintaining the honor and integrity of the profession of law. One of its many programs geared toward reaching that goal is its Pro Bono Mentor Match Program. The benefits of this program, which began in 2012, are twofold. First, a new lawyer is mentored by a more experienced practitioner and, second, an indigent litigant receives representation.

The program is for attorneys who have been admitted to practice less than five years and who are either unemployed or underemployed. The foundation will match the new attorney with a mentor and a pro bono case.

The benefits of the program are threefold, the more experienced practitioner is engaged and gains mentoring experience; and the new lawyer gains the support of the experienced practitioner, experience in practice and professional development while also providing free legal assistance to someone in need. In 2017, this program expanded to the federal courts.

The OCBF also supports many of the Oakland County Bar Association's law-related programs. One in particular, the judicial candidate forum, is aimed at giving voters an opportunity to engage and ask questions of the candidates running in local judicial races.

Another program is the People's Law College, held at the Southfield Library. This one-day event educates participants on common everyday situations, such as landlord-tenant matters, and includes a panel discussion regarding common legal misconceptions, dispelling the myths and explaining the correct procedure.

McCarthy, an attorney with Howard & Howard, believes that the foundation is that place where desire to make a difference and actual ability to do so meet up. He attributes the foundation's success and its ability to reach so many that would, otherwise, go neglected to the charity and hard work of its members.

*If you would like to comment on this story, email Agenique Smiley at [asmiley@mi.lawyersweekly.com](mailto:asmiley@mi.lawyersweekly.com).*

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(800) 678-5297 fax: (248) 865-3117

