By Shelly Anderson

Michael Feeney, a medical malpractice lawyer whose trials can sometimes last two weeks or more, shared his concerns at this scenario: Several days into a trial, a judge or lawyer or court officials test positive for COVID-19. That would mean an immediate mistrial.

“And it wouldn’t even be just a positive test,” added Civil Division Administrative Judge Christine Ward. “It would be (if someone) would come in and report symptoms.”

The logistics of keeping everyone safe during a trial while following CDC guidelines, and the evolving nature of the pandemic were primary reasons that all Court of Common Pleas Civil Division jury and non-jury trials scheduled for September in Allegheny County have been suspended. There is no clear timetable for them to be rescheduled.

After half the March trial lists and the entire May trial lists were wiped out in the early months of the pandemic in this country, Ward began to look toward September and wonder what was feasible.

Anecdotally, she heard from lawyers that it could not reasonably be done because clients would not want to come in, experts might not be able or willing to travel to Pittsburgh, and the pool of jurors might not be as representative as normal because of the fear of showing up.

Ward, who was assisted by Dianne Wainwright, Deputy Court Administrator for the Civil Division, didn’t stop there. She wanted to make sure the ACBA, had a more formal voice.

Wainwright and Wainwright joined a task force that was formed and also had a more formal voice.

She wanted to make sure the ACBA’s Civil Litigation Section. Feeney, a shareholder at Matis Baum O’Connor, was one of the task force members. He explained that each of the six attorneys surveyed five to fifteen fellow attorneys who had cases listed in September to get feedback on the aforementioned concerns, plus difficulty in managing the large size of jury pools with social distancing; coordinating the arrival and departure of jurors; whether jurors would be able to get time off of work in such difficult economic times; and whether attorneys can be effective arguing a case while wearing a mask.

Ward got the message: “The recommendation was they didn’t want to go forward.”

Ward said she is open to the possibility of doing a pilot case or two, maybe in late September, if things change drastically in the meantime, cases scheduled for September will undergo conciliation by video conference. Using that format, a third of the May cases were settled.

“We’re going to not only use our judges to conciliate cases on the September list, but we’re going to use volunteer lawyers, experienced lawyers, to help us conciliate those cases,” Ward said. “I think now with no promise of a trial before 2021, I think we’re going to settle over a third of the cases on the September list. I’d bet we settle most of them.”

Around mid-to late August, the task force – with the addition of a physician advisory member – are expected to start evaluating the possibility of holding November trials.

No promises.

“At the end of the day, if it’s not safe, it’s not safe,” Ward said.

The ACBA is unveiling a new member benefit, one that can directly help members with clerical tasks and odd projects during these difficult times.

Through ACBA Clerical Services, trained ACBA employees are available to help with basic clerical tasks such as filing, copying, mailing, scanning, collating and data entry. The ACBA can pick up your project and deliver it back to your office. Additionally, the ACBA offers professional graphic design services. All work will be handled confidentially.

Clerical services start at just $15 per hour. Prices for graphic design services will be determined on a per-project basis. For more information, visit ACBA.org/clerical.
Pa. Supreme Ct. rules county’s policy banning use of medical marijuana violates state law

By Andy Hoover

The Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruled unanimously that Lebanon County’s policy banning the use of medical marijuana by people who are on probation and who are registered medical marijuana patients violates state law. The policy was challenged by three county residents who were on probation and who used medical marijuana for debilitating medical conditions, including epilepsy, nausea, and chronic pain.

In a lawsuit brought by the American Civil Liberties Union of Pennsylvania, the court ruled that Lebanon County’s policy “is contrary to the immunity accorded by Pennsylvania’s Medical Marijuana Act.”

“This is a major victory for people who rely on medical marijuana to treat their medical conditions,” said Reggie Shuford, Executive Director of the ACLU of Pennsylvania. “We are grateful that the justices understood the legislature’s clear intent that people who lawfully use this treatment should not be punished for it.”

Melissa Gass, Ashley Bennett, and Andrew Koch filed the lawsuit after they were forced to stop using medical marijuana because they were serving probation terms. Gass uses the treatment for severe epilepsy, which, without medical marijuana, causes her to suffer multiple seizures each day. Bennett registered as a patient with the ACLU’s lawsuit. This ruling permanently issued a temporary halt to its enforcement on hold since the state Supreme Court on hold since the state Supreme Court ruled that Lebanon County’s policy is “contrary to the immunity accorded by Pennsylvania’s Medical Marijuana Act.”

“We fought so hard for this win,” Gass said. “Medical marijuana allows me to lead the kind of life I want,” Bennett said. “When probation banned medical marijuana, I was sick, couldn’t get out of bed, and lost 30 pounds. This ruling is exactly what we all hoped for.”

Lebanon County’s policy has been on hold since the state Supreme Court issued a temporary halt to its enforcement in October, in response to the ACLU’s lawsuit. This ruling permanently overturns the policy and applies to every county in the state.

Although most county courts have allowed registered patients to use medical marijuana while on probation, there are still some that ban medical marijuana for people on community supervision, said Sara Rose, senior staff attorney for the ACLU of Pennsylvania. “Any attempt to enforce those policies will be challenged.”

More information about this case, including a copy of the ruling, is available at aclu-pa.org/Gass. Hoover is the ACLU-PA Director of Communications.
YLD’s Bar Leadership Initiative helps 18-year-olds “Step Out” into adulthood

By Ron Cichowicz

Recognizing the unique significance of a person’s 18th birthday, the ACBA Young Lawyers Division (YLD) last year resurrected its Stepping Out Program, designed to better prepare young people for many of the changes that life soon will throw at them. The program is offered under the umbrella of the YLD’s Bar Leadership Initiative (BLI).

The BLI includes about 12 to 15 young lawyers. Each cohort participates in specific programs and completes a class project. Stepping Out was reintroduced last year as a BLI project at the suggestion of YLD Chair Amanda Thomas.

As stated in the program materials, eighteen is the age when an individual is recognized as a legal adult but is not fully independent. People can vote and marry without parental consent. They also can make and sign contracts and be treated as an adult in court.

An 18-year-old is faced with many changes in life – yet many do not receive vital information on their legal rights. Stepping Out is designed to help these young adults navigate many of these changes as easily as possible.

“Stepping Out originated with the Young Lawyers Division a few years back, but stopped due to a lack of lawyers available to do the presentation,” said Thomas. “But schools have always wanted the program and more lawyers have signed up, so this year we decided to bring it back, revamped specifically for ‘Gen-Z’ members. We think it is a great idea to have young lawyers talk to those turning 18 about their legal rights and responsibilities.”

YLD members are perhaps best suited to conduct the program, since the Division is comprised of lawyers who have been admitted to the practice of law for 10 years or less. In other words, these are the lawyers most likely to best remember their own experiences facing the new challenges of becoming a legal adult.

The Stepping Out Program consists of a presentation of approximately 60 to 90 minutes and covers legal matters and other life skills. Usually one attorney provides the program for a class of about 20 to 30 students; two to four attorneys might be sent if presenting to an entire grade level.

According to Thomas, Stepping Out covers a variety of topics, including:

- General rights and responsibilities (i.e., voting, taxes, employment and employment law);
- Criminal law (arrests, DUIs, searches and seizures);
- Civil law (contracts, filing lawsuits);
- Real estate (apartment life and landlord-tenant relations, security deposits, evictions, buying a home/mortgages and home inspections);
- Finance (credit and loans, student loans, banking, buying and financing a car, leasing and insuring a car); and
- Family Law (marriage, divorce, prenuptial agreements, paternity, child support and protection from abuse).

“We also added new information this year regarding the proper use of social media and how it can affect future employment,” said Thomas.

She said another improvement involved the style of the presentations.

“BLI thought it was important in the updates to focus on making Stepping Out more engaging to adolescents,” she said. “It’s now more jovial, with a relaxed tone, and we’ve sprinkled humor throughout. Also, the students get to keep the materials so they can refer back to them as needed.”

“The Stepping Out Program is one of my favorite public service projects offered by the ACBA Young Lawyers Division,” said YLD Past Chair Lacee Ecker. “I have found that volunteering to educate high school students about the law has been very rewarding and, at times, even a bit entertaining. The students are always very engaged in the presentation.”

Continued on page 8
Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts announces new President and CEO, Deborah R. Gross

By ACBA Staff

Pennsylvanians for Modern Courts (PMC) is pleased to announce that Deborah R. Gross will become President/CEO, replacing Maida Mîlone who is retiring at the end of the month after four years with the organization.

Debbie joins PMC from private practice at Kaufman, Corey and Ress, P.C. and Law Offices Bernard M. Gross, P.C., where she concentrated on complex commercial litigation in federal and state courts across the country. In 2017, she served as Chancellor of the Philadelphia Bar Association highlighting the extraordinary legal nonprofit community in Philadelphia.

As one of the founders of the collaboration, Take Action Philly, coordinating the Philadelphia Bar Association, the City of Philadelphia, the legal community, the business community, Philadelphia residents, and public interest organizations, Debbie helped to protect and assist vulnerable populations in the aftermath of state and federal policy changes. TAP’s first initiative convened hundreds of attorneys to support area clinics to get lawyers trained and with Philadelphia’s Mayor and the executives of Philadelphia’s hospitals to develop legal clinics to assist immigrants. Debbie worked directly with Philadelphia’s Mayor and the Office of Immigrant Affairs to establish clinics to get lawyers trained and available to assist lawful permanent residents to become naturalized citizens. For this work, Debbie and the Philadelphia Bar Association each received a commendation proclamation from the Mayor.

During her year as Chancellor, Debbie also urged the Pennsylvania Legislature to expand Pennsylvania’s hate crimes legislation. She also organized with PMC and other organizations a number of Chancellor Forums where the candidates for the judiciary and district attorney participated. She spoke out repeatedly throughout her year as Chancellor on the importance of judicial independence as the cornerstone of democracy.

Debbie also served as President of the Philadelphia Bar Foundation from 2013-2014, Vice President from 2009-2013, and a trustee since 2004. She received the Excellence Award of the National Conference of Bar Foundations (NCBF) in 2018. She is responsible for the establishment of the Cy Press Committee of the Foundation, which requests courts to award the residual moneys from class action lawsuits to public interest organizations.

More recently, Debbie has helped lead the development of the Philadelphia Equal Justice Center, an unprecedented venture whose goal is to transform the delivery of civil legal services in Philadelphia through collaboration and innovation on multiple levels. PMC’s Board Chair, Robert C. Heim remarked on the Boards enthusiasm for having Debbie take over the CEO role and responsibilities. “Debbie will be leading our organization following in the footsteps of two remarkable leaders, Lynn Marks and Maida Mîlone. Lynn was the pioneer in advocating for an independent, appointed judiciary, free of racial and gender bias. Maida followed this lead, expanding the accessibility of the legal system to all Pennsylvanians. Debbie will be leading our organization following in the footsteps of two remarkable leaders, Lynn Marks and Maida Mîlone. Lynn was the pioneer in advocating for an independent, appointed judiciary, free of racial and gender bias. Maida followed this lead, expanding the accessibility of the legal system to all Pennsylvanians.”

Debbie is excited to apply her experience and passion to continue raising the visibility of PMC through community engagement, education, and legislation/advocacy across Pennsylvania. PMC’s mission of assuring impartiality, fairness, and accessibility of the legal system to all Pennsylvanians will be furthered by Debbie’s skill, outreach and energy.

Debbie graduated from the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania and Boston University School of Law. She has three adult children and a goldendoodle. Her husband Stuart Kurtz is a founding partner in his law firm. She teaches a class on complex litigation at Villanova Law School and is on the Board of Trustees of Drexel University’s Kline School of Law.

Deborah R. Gross

For more information, visit www.ACBF.org/Kennedy-Scholarship-Fund
Or contact Angelina Lowers of PNC Institutional Asset Management at 412-807-3309.
The no-fail formula for knowing who to hire when

By Wendy Witt

If you feel stuck, unsure whether you should make a hire, about what role to fill next, or who should do what work, you’re so not alone. It’s a common challenge among law firm owners. Today, you get answers. No more guessing.

When you know your SKUs (stock keeping units) for each service you offer, you’re poised to make smart business decisions:

1. Whom to hire as well as when to make the hire.
2. What work to pass further down so that the lowest paid competent person is completing the task because you’ll have an overview of who’s doing what.
3. How to price your services including whether your hourly or flat fees are where they need to be because you’ll know your labor costs and can add in overhead costs per case.
4. Whether your work flow is at its most efficient and properly documented.
5. Whether you should invest in that bigger office space.
6. Whether your employees have an appropriate workload.

Pictured is what a SKU looks like. There’s more than one way to track SKUs but here’s a good way to start. As an example, I’ve selected to create a trust-based estate plan SKU. This is simply a table inserted in a Word document. If you love Excel, you can program the math.

What this SKU Shows:
1. Work procedures for trust-based estate plan. Be sure to get team input for accuracy as to work-flow and average time per task.
2. Under this fact pattern, you need to be billing at $4,838 or higher for this legal service. Many attorneys charge in the $5,500 to $10,000 range depending on value conveyed in trust such as asset protection, tax planning and funding.
3. The tasks appear to be being completed by the lowest paid competent person in the firm. Note some firms are using non-attorneys for the initial meetings to ensure only clients, not PNCs, absorb attorney time.
4. The paralegals are doing the brunt of the work. Depending on how many cases you usually have at a time, it would make sense to have more than one paralegal in their respective specialties such as an estate planning paralegal, litigation paralegal, and a funding paralegal.

Continued on page 8
IS YOUR FIRM HIRING?
Post your open positions on the ACBA Job Board

By Jennifer Pulice

The ACBA Job Board remains one of the first places legal professionals visit when they are looking for careers in the Pittsburgh legal community. The ACBA Job Board, located at jobs.acba.org, is one of the association’s most visited webpages, with over 10,000 impressions per month. Over 200 employment matches were made as a result of postings on the job board in the bar association’s 2019-20 fiscal year.

The ACBA Job Board allows job seekers to:
• Search and apply to attorney and legal support jobs.
• Upload their anonymous resume into a resume bank that is viewable by prospective employers.
• Receive an alert every time a job becomes available that matches their personal profile, skills, interests, and preferred location(s).

The ACBA Job Board allows employers to:
• Post their job at an affordable rate and ensure their job posting will be seen by an audience who is looking for legal job openings in the Pittsburgh region.
• Promote their jobs directly to job seekers who have registered to receive the weekly Job Flash email.
• Search the resume database and contact qualified candidates proactively.
• Benefit from social media marketing. Once an employer posts a job on the ACBA Job Board, ACBA staff also publicizes that position on the ACBA’s social media channels.

The association is offering a special to all employers who are looking to hire. Enter the code JOB30 and receive 30 percent off any of the first three job posting packages offered on the job board: The “30 Day” package, “First Seen” package, and “Job Flash” package. This coupon code is valid until Oct. 1. Members who have additional questions about the ACBA Job Board are welcome to contact me at jpulice@acba.org or 412-402-6623.

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Enter the code JOB30 and receive 30% OFF any of the first three job posting packages offered on the job board: The “30 Day” package, “First Seen” package, and “Job Flash” package.

jobs.acba.org

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ACBA Professional Ethics Committee updates operating rules and begins publishing important anonymized case summaries

By Zandy Dudiak

An update to the ACBA Professional Ethics Committee operating rules, which the ACBA Board of Governors approved on June 16, includes a provision that will allow the committee to publish in the Lawyers Journal anonymized summaries of cases brought to the attention of the ACBA Ethics Hotline.

“The hotline is truly anonymous and provides informal advice,” said Whitney Hughes, Director of the ACBA Lawyer Referral Service and liaison to the ethics committee.

Some long-standing members had mentioned that, at one point, the Lawyers Journal had published summaries of ethical issues that attorneys might face. The idea came up regularly and had been talked about in a meeting as a potential member service and benefit, Hughes said.

“One of the ways we service the ACBA is education. We are a resource they can use.”

-Darth Newman, Chair, ACBA Professional Ethics Committee

The hotline is staffed by ACBA members who serve as duty officers. The volunteer staff, which rotates each month, is listed by name on the ACBA website and in the Lawyers Journal so members know who might respond to the call. Newman said there are always at least two attorneys available to answer hotline calls each month.

The advice the duty officer gives in response to the queries is reviewed by the Ethics Committee as a whole, which then decides whether it is “spot on or off base,” Hughes said. A report is reissued with the committee’s thoughts. The duty officers’ reports are put into a database for future use.

A group of committee members will look at the opinions rendered in past cases, “clean them up” so as not to identify the specifics of the situation nor the attorney making the inquiry, and then turn them over to the Lawyers Journal staff for publication, she said. Items for publication will be chosen because they are hot topics that come up a lot or because they are noteworthy, illustrative and/or interesting.

Hughes said the committee members hope the published items will help raise awareness of the services they provide.

“We just want them to know we’re there for them,” she said. “We’re willing to help.”

Newman said this is the first time in seven years that the committee’s operating rules have been updated.

The ethics committee is seeking new members with diverse professional and personal experiences. Members interested in joining can contact him at darth@dnewmanlaw.com.

The first of these case summaries appears below:

Ethics Issue Presented: May a lawyer, when referring a case to another lawyer, require the receiving lawyer share fees with the referrer?

Advice Given: No lawyer may impose a restriction upon a client’s right to choose counsel of their liking. Any fee sharing or referral payment arrangement has to preserve the right of the client to pick whatever lawyer they want. However, lawyers who do not practice in the same firm may create various financial arrangements with each other including contracting to provide for the future sharing of legal fees that will be earned from a client’s matter(s) so long as the restriction does not unduly burden the client’s choice of counsel. Fee sharing arrangements must be disclosed to clients and are only permitted where the client does not object. The arrangement must not result in a total fee which is excessive or otherwise illegal. Best practice would suggest obtaining informed written consent in advance though the Rules do not require disclosure of the share that each lawyer will receive. Rule 1.5 and in particular 1.5(e) and Comment 4 address the issue of fee splitting.

A discussion of the specific fees, rates, or percentages that might be acceptable in an individual case is beyond the scope of the advice offered by the Professional Ethics Committee.

Members can get consultation on their legal actions and potential actions through the ACBA Professional Ethics Hotline.

See ACBA.org/OfficerAssignments for details.

Put your plan into action. Contact Victor Laurena at 412-807-2709 or visit key.com/kpb today.
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LAW PRACTICE MANAGEMENT continued from page 5

What Else You Need to Know:

1. Have SKUs for each service you provide. If you provide five different services, you need five SKUs. When times or paths vary, use averages. If your five services commonly take various paths, create more SKUs. Inconsistency among cases is not an excuse for not knowing your SKUs.

2. Average non-labor overhead per client. You get this by taking your total overhead, subtracting out labor costs and then dividing by the number of cases.

3. How many cases you typically have open.

4. Total hours per role multiplied the number of cases you typically have open.

5. Whether there’s software or a system that can reduce task time. If there is, invest.

Your Next Steps:

1. Document your SKUs for each of your services – you don’t have to be perfect to be successful. Get ‘er done. Start with your two most popular services. SKUs creation can be delegated.

2. Analyze your SKUs to determine your next steps – do you need to update your workflow, let someone go, hire someone, push down tasks, increase fees, or something else?

3. Review your SKUs and update as appropriate 2/year. Make any changes that you need to after reviewing the SKU.

Pennsylvania probate attorney, Wendy Witt, is the founder of Million Dollar Attorney®, a private consulting firm designed to help lawyers prosper. Her mission is to tilt the legal universe toward wellness. She is a Master Law Firm Business Strategist who helps solo and small law firm owners build million-dollar law firms that give them the life they love.

Find this page helpful? Want more information and resources to help you run your practice? Check out the ACBA’s Law Practice Management Center at ACBA.org/PracticeManagement.

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• Discounts on eDiscovery services through bit-x-bit
• Discounts on legal credit card processing through LawPay
• The return of the Bench-Bar Conference next summer
• Plus discounts on everything from office supplies to rental cars and everything in between - plus much more.

Renew today at ACBA.org/renew-membership.

Or contact Barbara Brumbaugh at 412-402-6612 or bbrumbaugh@acba.org to renew.

YLD “STEPPING OUT” continued from page 3

the presentations, especially when the discussion turns to how different laws intersect with social media and online activity.”

Stepping Out can be offered at any time during the school year and any school wishing to host the program is welcome to apply.

Of course, just as the Stepping Out Program was gaining traction, the COVID pandemic hit, forcing a temporary halt to the effort.

“I felt bad for this year’s class,” said Thomas. “We had 15 presentations lined up – with one including an entire 11th grade class – but because of COVID, we couldn’t do it in person. But this program is not going away; we know it is important.”

Despite the COVID hiccup in the program, Thomas said it will return better than ever because, she noted, it is in the capable hands of BLI graduate, Stephen Matvey. In the short term, he will explore offering the program by video or via live teleconference.

Thomas added that response by attorneys interested in presenting the program has been strong but other interested attorneys are always welcome. Each is invited to a training where the presentation materials are reviewed and attorneys are encouraged to add any relevant real-life experiences.

Thomas suggested that anyone interested in Stepping Out should contact Matvey at stephen.matvey@gmail.com. Also, young attorneys interested in learning more about the Bar Leadership Initiative should email BLI Chair Asra Hashmi at Asra.hashmi21@gmail.com.
Sharing slices of the legal life during a YLD virtual pizza-and-networking event

By Shelly Anderson

Of course Elizabeth Smith was interested in attending a virtual networking event organized by the ACBA Young Lawyers Division. They had her at pizza.

Smith, a second-year law student at Duquesne University School of Law, was one of about 40 Duquesne and Pitt School of Law students and recent graduates who participated in a June 24 Professionals and Pizza event via Zoom. Also attending were 20 practicing lawyers, who were there to share their experiences and to network as well.

“A lot of times at those networking events, it’s kind of hard to talk to who you want to talk to because you don’t want to interrupt,” Smith said. “But everybody got a chance to talk at this.”

Primary event organizers were Ben Gobel, Jamie Drennan and Nicholas Kennedy, members of YLD’s Membership Outreach Committee. It was one of many virtual events that YLD and the ACBA have organized since the COVID-19 pandemic began in March, forcing the postponement of all in-person Bar Association events.

And the pizza part? Well, it didn’t hurt to entice with a slice.

The YLD teamed up with Caliente Pizza to provide each participant with a $15 voucher and 10 percent coupon that was good for any of the local restaurant’s locations.

The networking began with the full group of participants in one Zoom room, but then attendees broke into smaller groups based on areas of interest as expressed by the students and grads.

“They asked us questions about bar prep. They asked us questions about our practice areas, specifically how we got there, what classes to take, what jobs to pursue,” said Drennan, a tax analyst at Schneider Downs & Co. Inc.

“We knew the traditional forms of networking – going to events – are not available right now, so this was an important opportunity that we wanted to provide to the students – and to the attorneys, some of the attorneys hadn’t met before either,” Drennan said.

Several of the attendees shared their contact information, and at least some of the students and recent grads wasted little time in following up.

“I got an invitation (the next morning), and … another one set for (the following) week with someone who’s interested in exactly what I’m doing,” said Gobel, a medical malpractice and personal injury lawyer with Ogg, Murphy & Perkosky.

One of the invites was from Gabby Kolencik, a second-year Duquesne law student. “I connected with Ben. We’re going talk a little more,” she said. “I was excited to get to meet someone and get to know them a little better after the session.”

Kennedy, who specializes in employment law and Social Security disability at Quatrini Rafferty, also received requests – and thanks. He noticed a familiar theme during the online interactions.

“A lot of questions we’ve received at speed networking events, and received at this event – and this is something we’ve all struggled with – is about how do you identify the practice area you want to go into?” Kennedy said. “We went around and offered our insight into how we got into our practice areas.”

There was one area of interest that was unique to this event and related to the reasons for it being done virtually: COVID-19 and its effect on employment.

Students and grad students “were really talking about the market and how we can position ourselves to be ready as things start to reopen and what we know about firms and the way that they’re handling hiring?” Gobel said. “They were extremely engaged.”

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Gregory A. Castelli

Gregory A. Castelli died at age 52 unexpectedly on June 18, 2020, with his loyal and loving wife, Valerie, by his side. He was a proud father to his daughter Angelina (Edward), of Crofton, MD; and Jennifer (Mark), of Fredericksburg, VA; Mary-Elizabeth (John), of Greensburg, PA; and grandchildren: Chris (Andrea), of Frederick, MD; William F. (Andrea), of Upper St. Clair, PA; and by his brothers William F., John P., and Francis X. He is survived by his parents Francis W. and Marie P. (nee Cooney) and by his sisters: Chris (Andrea), of Frederick, MD; William F. (Andrea), of Upper St. Clair, PA; and by his neighbors in Upper St. Clair, PA. Despite the occasional argument, the four always settled their differences and then the University of Baltimore School of Law, following in his father’s footsteps to become an attorney.

Joe Wymard

Joe Wymard, born August 27, 1935, age 84, passed away on Friday, March 13, 2020, in Ft. Pierce, Florida, after a short illness. He was married to Ellie Wymard (nee Buntag), his wife of 56 years who survives him. He is also survived by his sons Josh T. of Dallas, TX and grandchildren Tom, Jake and Bean, and son Peter C. (Bonnie) of Gibsonia, PA and grandchildren Elizabeth, Jack, Gus and Mary. He was predeceased by his parents Francis W. and Marie P. (nee Cooney) and by his brothers William F., John P., and Francis X. He is survived by his brother James A. (Sara) of Squirrel Hill and many nieces and nephews.

Joe was born and raised in Point Breeze and attended St. Bede School, where he was an altar boy, and Central Catholic High School, class of 1953. He was a philosophy honors major at the University of Pittsburgh, class of 1957. He served as class president of his 1960 graduation class at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law. Upon graduation from Pitt Law, his was conscripted into the US Army and he completed basic training at Fort Rucker in Alabama. During the Berlin crisis, he was called up as a reservist and ordered to report to Fort Gordon, Georgia, where he served as a radio repairman. Knowing little about radio except to turn the dial, he was quickly promoted to JAG, where he served until his honorable discharge in 1963. He began his private practice as counsel to the credit departments of the major Pittsburgh department stores, including the Joseph Horne Company, Kaufmann’s and Gimbel’s. Within a few years, he turned to Family Law after successfully representing a wife in a high profile Pittsburgh divorce. This case marked the beginning of his becoming a specialist in complex divorce litigation, especially representing women in equitable distribution cases. He developed a multi-state Family Law practice that upheld women’s rights in divorce and created Pennsylvania Common Law that remains today. After many years as a sole practitioner, he joined the law firm of Sherrard, German & Kelly P.C. as a partner in 2008, where he remained until his “retirement” in 2018. He could still be found in his office one or two days a week until his passing.

Joe was on the board of the Whale’s Tale and a voice in the Pittsburgh arts community, serving as Chair of the Board of Trustees of the Pittsburgh Public Theater when the decision was made to leave the Hazlett Theater on the North Side for the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust. For him, the highlight of his term was interviewing acclaimed architects to design the O’Reilly Theater and advocating for the eventual winning design of Michael Graves. Joe was equally devoted to the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra. On February 14, 2024, days before his death, he hosted for the 16th consecutive year, a PSO Chamber Concert in Vero Beach, Florida.

Heartbreakingly, only days later PSO musicians Christopher Wu and Rhian Penny, members of the sextet that performed in Vero, serenaded him in the ICU before returning to Pittsburgh.

Joe and his family were long time summer residents of Chatham, Massachusetts, where he named his house the “Tipsy Seagull.” He reluctantly sold it in the last few years to spend more time in the warmer confines of Vero Beach. Joe’s enthusiasm for Pittsburgh sports teams equaled his fervor for the FPT and PSO. A Steelers ticket holder since 1972, he was in section 621, row N, seat 1 at the Immaculate Reception. He cheered the Steelers at multiple Super Bowls with his young sons. As a part time season ticket holder for the Penguins from the team’s early expansion days, he remained a diehard fan through the Stanley Cup years. ■
### The SECURE Act and Retirement Planning
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### Pittsburgh Real Estate Market Overview
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### COVID-19’s Impact on Office Space: Pittsburgh Real Estate Market Overview
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Shelly Pagac, a partner at Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick and Raspanti, has been appointed to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania’s Disciplinary Board as a hearing committee member starting July 1. Her appointment is for a three-year term. Pagac is the Practice Group Leader for the Employment and Labor Practice Group at Pietragallo where she has litigated cases in all areas of employment law including: non-compete agreements, class actions under the Fair Labor Standards Act, Title VII, the Age Discrimination in Employment Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, Sarbanes-Oxley, and various state tort claims, such as defamation, wrongful discharge and breach of contract.

The Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair has selected Tammy Singleton-English to serve as Co-Chief Financial Officer of the organization. The Community Foundation of Upper St. Clair is a non-profit organization that supports and promotes special programs and projects to benefit local residents or businesses in the areas of arts, health, and science/technology. Additional details are available on the website at www.cfusc.org. Singleton-English is the founder of Singleton-English Law Offices, located in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania, which concentrates on tax, estate planning, and probate matters for their clients.

Paul Lagnese, partner with Berger & Lagnese, has been elected the 53rd president of the Pennsylvania Association for Justice.

Jillian F. Zacks was honored with the Howard and Beverly Mermelstein Leadership Award at the JFCS (Jewish Family and Community Services) annual meeting. The Howard and Beverly Mermelstein Award was established in 1993 and is given to a JFCS board member who displays leadership, talent, commitment to the community and dedication to the mission of JFCS. Zacks is currently serving as Chair of the Board of Directors of JFCS and has served on the executive committee for the past four years. In addition, Zacks recently finished her term as Chair of the Board of Directors of the Arc of Greater Pittsburgh and will continue to serve as a Trustee of Achieva.

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