



400 Koppers Building
436 Seventh Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA
Phone: 412-402-6640
Fax: 412-261-3622
www.acbf.org

News Release
For Immediate Release
October 11, 2022

Media Contact:
Brian Knavish
Director of Marketing & Media Relations
bknavish@acba.org – 412-402-6620

Allegheny County Bar Foundation to Recognize Individuals and Law Firm with 2022 Pro Bono Achievement Awards

Awards to be Presented at Oct. 19 Fall Foundation Reception at LeMont Restaurant

PITTSBURGH – The Allegheny County Bar Foundation is dedicated to providing free legal services to individuals facing critical legal issues who are not able to afford attorneys to represent them. Each year, through its Pro Bono Achievement Awards, the ACBF recognizes individuals and organizations that have made outstanding contributions to this worthy cause.

The ACBF's 2022 Pro Bono Achievement Awards will be presented at the Fall Foundation Reception on Wednesday, Oct. 19, at 5:30 p.m. at LeMont Restaurant on Mount Washington in Pittsburgh.

The following four individuals and firm will be recognized:

Kathryn M. Kenyon Leadership Award: Edward Stokan

Edward "Ed" Stokan, Assistant Counsel of the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) Southwest Regional Office, has led and staffed the Wills Clinic at the Stephen Foster Community Center in Lawrenceville for more than a decade. The Wills Clinic provides free legal help with wills, living wills, powers of attorney, and advanced health directives for senior citizens and other clients with low incomes. Stokan has been dedicated in his efforts to provide legal services for those who need them in managing volunteer attorneys and facilitating their meetings with clients. Despite the challenges of the pandemic, Stokan was determined for the Wills Clinic to continue its work remotely, and it flourished in the most difficult of times. In addition to his devoted work at the Wills Clinic, Stokan generously volunteers for Continuing Legal Education Trainings for Wills Project volunteers and for other groups who themselves wish to establish wills clinics.

Lorraine M. Bittner Public Interest Attorney Award: Jeffrey Braun

Jeffrey Braun has been a staff attorney at Neighborhood Legal Services (NLS) since 2006. Prior to coming to NLS and working in public interest full-time, Braun was an associate in a small firm known for its pro bono assistance. As a helpline attorney, he assisted NLS clients by advising them on legal issues ranging from family law to housing to consumer matters. In this role, Braun provided clients with thorough information in an approachable, nonintimidating manner. Additionally, Braun became the NLS representative to various utility groups, where he advised clients and mentored pro bono attorneys with his knowledge of utility law. In 2019, he became director of NLS's centralized intake unit, forging nine individual intake staff members into a robust team in only three years. Braun's reforms of the intake system have allowed the needs of NLS's clients to be addressed in the most efficient means possible.

-more-

Pro Bono Law Firm Award: Reed Smith LLP

Reed Smith is a long-standing leader in donating the services of its attorneys to a wide range of pro bono programs throughout its offices nationwide. In the firm's Pittsburgh office, attorneys have represented victims of domestic violence seeking protective orders, transgendered individuals changing their names to reflect their lived identities, tenants facing eviction, children in need of representation in adoption and parental rights termination proceedings, and many others. Most recently, a team of Reed Smith attorneys represented a federal inmate in his quest to redress an assault he suffered while incarcerated. The court lauded the dedication and professionalism of the legal work in the case. Reed Smith attorneys have also been active members of the Pittsburgh Pro Bono Partnership administrative board and regularly offer their facilities for meetings, receptions, and continuing legal education programs supporting pro bono programs. Reed Smith is a leader and example for other law firms to follow.

Jane F. Hepting Individual Attorney Award: Robert Crisanti

Robert Crisanti, a solo practitioner who handles legal issues ranging from criminal defense to custody, has been a committed volunteer to Neighborhood Legal Services in representing victims of domestic violence in Protection from Abuse (PFA) actions since 2011. Unfortunately, the need for attorneys to provide safety to those experiencing domestic violence is constant, and that need was only heightened by a pandemic that required everyone to shelter in place and mandated courts to change their procedures. Crisanti not only continued his representation and commitment to assisting victims but increased his involvement at a crucial time. He has represented 182 victims, averaging a commitment of two dates per month that often evolve into more frequent court appearances due to continuances common in PFAs. Crisanti represented domestic violence survivors with remarkable compassion and devotion.

Jane F. Hepting Individual Attorney Award: Betty A. Dillon

Betty A. Dillon, a solo practitioner who specializes in a myriad of legal issues from elder law to landlord/tenant matters, has been a volunteer with the Divorce Law Project for many years. The Divorce Law Project is a program of the Pro Bono Center that assists low-income individuals with simple, uncontested, no-fault divorces. Dillon has offered her time to take many cases for the Divorce Law Project over the last several years and has seen them through all stages of the divorce process. She consistently takes the initiative to reach out to volunteer her services, demonstrating her zeal in helping others.

The award winners will also be recognized during National Pro Bono Week, Oct. 24-30. Pro Bono Week is a national celebration of the life-changing work that volunteer attorneys perform on behalf of clients with low incomes across the country. The ACBF Pro Bono Center will celebrate the week with a variety of events as the ACBF thank volunteers, recruit and train additional volunteers, and bring attention to the needs of individuals facing critical legal issues.

Additional Award Information:

The Kathryn M. Kenyon Leadership Award is given to an attorney who demonstrates exceptional leadership and commitment to pro bono effort benefitting the most vulnerable in our communities.

The Lorraine M. Bittner Public Interest Attorney Award is given to an outstanding and dedicated attorney who is employed by an entity or program whose primary function is the delivery of civil legal services to individuals with low incomes or organizations that serve the poor or disadvantaged. The award is named in honor of the first attorney to receive it when it was established in 2005, in honor of her exceptional and career-long commitment to the needs of the poor and disadvantaged through her work at Neighborhood Legal Services and the Women's Center and Shelter of Greater Pittsburgh.

The Jane F. Hepting Individual Attorney Award is given to an attorney who has shown exemplary commitment to or made substantial achievements in pro bono legal services. The ACBF Board of Trustees adopted a resolution in 2002 to name this award in recognition of Jane Hepting's dedication to the delivery of pro bono legal services through her 26 years as an Neighborhood Legal Services attorney, the many and varied pro bono programs that she helped create and implement, her recruitment initiatives and exceptional training programs to attract and prepare volunteer attorneys, her exceptional expenditures of time and energy on behalf of pro bono legal services, and her outstanding commitment and dedication to public service, the legal profession and the community.

About the ACBF

The ACBF provides educational programming, promotes public awareness of the legal and judicial systems, renders legal services to clients with low incomes and provides financial assistance and grants to legal-related organizations. The foundation's Pro Bono Center helps attorneys fulfill their professional responsibility to provide public interest legal services by creating, managing, and supporting programs that match volunteer attorneys with individuals with low incomes facing legal issues that threaten their basic human needs. For more information, visit www.PittsburghProBono.org.

###