



400 Koppers Building
436 Seventh Ave.
Pittsburgh, PA
Phone: 412-402-6641
Fax: 412-261-3622
www.acbf.org

News Release
For Immediate Release
Sept. 30, 2021

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

Allegheny County Bar Foundation to Recognize Individuals, Law Firm, and Corporation with 2021 Pro Bono Achievement Awards

Awards to be Presented at Oct. 6 Fall Foundation Reception at Hotel Monaco

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 2021 Pro Bono Achievement Awards will be presented at the ACBF's Fall Foundation Reception on Wednesday, Oct. 6, from 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Hotel Monaco in downtown Pittsburgh.

The following five individuals and two organizations will be recognized:

Judicial Services Award: Hon. Christine Ward and Dianne Wainwright, Housing Court

The Allegheny County Court of Common Pleas recognized a need for pro bono lawyers to provide advice and representation at landlord tenant mediations. In 2019, under the leadership of Judge Christine Ward, the Court of Common Pleas Housing Court was formed and the Landlord Tenant Mediation Project was created. Since that time, Judge Ward and Ms. Wainwright have worked tirelessly to help recruit, train and organize the project's volunteers. Since its inception, volunteer lawyers have represented approximately 80 clients at landlord tenant mediations and/or arbitrations. Many other clients have received invaluable legal advice from project volunteers. These services are particularly important during these challenging times, when the eviction process is more confusing than ever.

Pro Bono Organization Award: Pittsburgh Reporting Service

Pittsburgh Reporting Service (PRS) has been providing court reporters and deposition transcripts for the Pittsburgh Pro Bono Partnership's Guardianship Project since its inception in 2017. PRS volunteered to provide these services without any hesitation. Since then, PRS and its reporters have attended dozens of depositions at no cost to the volunteer lawyers or their pro bono clients. PRS has also provided free copies of transcripts, which are required by the Court. PRS has reporters available for these depositions, many of which require travel to doctors' offices or hospitals outside of the city. The court reporters have been a key support in the success of this project, which is managed by the law firm of Pietragallo Gordon Alfano Bosick & Raspanti, LLP. They have demonstrated how vital non-lawyers can be in the delivery of free legal services to individuals with low incomes.

Pro Bono Special Service Award: Cristian Minor

In recent years, many Latin American immigrants have lived in fear of deportation and what could happen to their children if they were to be deported. Cristian Minor has provided pro bono assistance to hundreds of families in the region by helping to plan for such an event. An attorney in the UPMC Corporate Legal Department, he also serves on the board of Casa San Jose and has used that role to provide pro bono services to Latin American families with low incomes in Allegheny County and beyond. He has met with many families in the community for the purpose of having difficult but important conversations about what the future might hold and to guide them through the necessary steps to be prepared.

Lorraine M. Bittner Public Interest Attorney Award: Susan Abramowich

Susan Abramowich is the managing attorney for family law at Neighborhood Legal Services. In that capacity she supervises and trains staff attorneys, interns and mentors and helps train the many pro bono attorneys who assist NLS with its protection from abuse and custody advice programs. Her leadership has been extremely important for all these groups in this past year with the court's implementation of virtual court hearings due to the pandemic and the changes that has brought about in family court practice. She is currently working with the court in developing and testing a remote PFA filing system.

Ms. Abramowich's long-term commitment to serving and protecting families through the family court system is illustrated not only by her work at NLS, but also by her participation in the Allegheny County Bar Association Family Law Section and as co-chair of its juvenile law sub-committee. Additionally, she's been appointed by the Hon. Kim Eaton to the Court of Common Pleas' Family Participation Workgroup. In the community she continues her commitment to protecting families through her position on the Board of Trustees for MHY Services. She is currently writing a column on socioeconomic and educational bias in family law, which is scheduled to be published next summer in the *ABA Family Law Journal*.

Pro Bono Law Firm Award: Dingess, Foster, Luciana, Davidson & Chleboski LLP

The DFL Legal team of Carl Spindler, Andrew Giel and Victor (Abe) Delnore was appointed by The Hon. Maureen Kelly to represent an inmate serving a life sentence in federal prison. The team of attorneys successfully negotiated a settlement that was favorable to their client in a complicated case, helping to improve his connection to his family and aid his integration into the general population after years of solitary confinement. The case was taken as part of the Federal Inmates Civil Rights Pro Bono Project, which appoints volunteer attorneys to represent inmates who have viable civil rights claims. Without representation, these clients have very little chance of navigating a complicated legal system as they attempt to remedy their claims of civil rights violations.

Jane F. Hepting Individual Attorney Award: James Petraglia

James Petraglia began volunteering with Allies for Health + Wellbeing (formerly known as the Pittsburgh AIDS Task Force) in 2007, to assist its clients with drafting and executing wills, powers of attorney and living wills. Estate planning documents are one of the leading legal services Allies provides to its clients, but getting these documents can be one of the more daunting issues faced by clients. To meet this need, Mr. Petraglia consistently volunteers his own time while also making an effort to recruit many other attorneys over the years who have all helped to improve the services Allies provides to the community in Allegheny County and surrounding 10 counties they serve. Over the past 14 years, he has assisted 107 clients.

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 we thank volunteers, recruit and train additional volunteers, and bring attention to the needs of individuals facing critical legal issues.

Additional Award Information:

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.

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.

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.

###