

Illinois Judges Commend Pro-Bono Efforts in Metro East

October 30 2019 11:48 AM



Edwardsville - The Third Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee hosted the 8th Annual Pro Bono Luncheon recently to commemorate National Pro Bono Week and recognize the efforts to expand and enhance access to legal assistance in Madison and Bond counties.

Several members of the Illinois Judges Association (IJA) were in attendance, including 2nd Vice President Hon. Barb Crowder and Madison County Circuit Judges Maureen Schuette and Sarah D. Smith, who is also on IJA's Board of Directors. Judge Crowder is

the immediate past chair of the Third Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee, while Judge Schuette and Judge Smith are currently co-chairs of the committee.

“At a time when so many people are unable to afford quality legal services, the annual luncheon celebrates the important work of judges and attorneys who offer pro-bono help in Metro East,” said Judge Crowder. “By thanking the attorneys who are giving back, we are encouraging them to keep up their good work and urging others to offer their skills and talents to join in.”

Keynote speakers at the event included Honorable Lloyd A. Karmeier, former Chief Justice of the Illinois Supreme Court and Leslie Corbett, Executive Director of Illinois Equal Justice Foundation.

Other notable attendees included Third Judicial Circuit Chief Judge Bill Mudge, Appellate Judge Tom Welch, Judge Steve Stobbs, Judge Dennis Ruth, Judge Barry Julian, Madison County Bar President Patrick King, Illinois State Bar Association Vice President Dennis Orsey and Pro Bono Awardees Attorneys David Fahrenkamp and Rebecca Haussmann.

Public Interest Law Initiative (PILI) was one of the co-sponsors of the event. The statewide non-profit works with law students and lawyers to provide free legal assistance to those who need it or cannot afford it.

PILI Executive Director Michael Bergmann was the master of ceremonies and noted that judicial involvement in the pro bono effort is critical.

“Judges like Karmeier, Crowder, Smith and Schuette are leaders of the profession and they see first-hand what happens when someone doesn’t have a lawyer to represent them,” said Bergmann. “There is a great need for pro bono work and their leadership and ability to champion and encourage lawyers to do pro bono work is incredibly valuable.”