

Miller Canfield Recognizes Thomas Linn, Winner of Richard J. Seryak Award for Pro Bono Service

January 27, 2017

Miller Canfield, a global law firm headquartered in Detroit, is pleased to announce that **Thomas Linn** is the winner of the second annual **Richard J. Seryak Award** in recognition of his commitment to pro bono service. The announcement was made by **CEO Michael McGee**.

Linn joined Miller Canfield in 1976, and served as one of the firm's managing directors for more than 20 years, and as CEO for nearly eight years.

"Throughout his career, Thom has shown a profound commitment to providing representation to those without financial means," McGee said. "His work has been instrumental in growing the pro bono program at Miller Canfield."

After Linn stepped down as the firm's CEO, a colleague invited him to co-chair Miller Canfield's pro bono committee. He expanded the firm's program to include active committee members in each U.S. office, created a program for summer associates to provide pro bono work, established relationships with various community resource organizations to engage in partnerships for providing legal services, instituted consistent internal messaging to encourage pro bono service, and chaired the firm's bimonthly committee meetings.

He recently helped Corporation Counsel for the City of Detroit Melvin Butch Hollowell and Lakeshore Legal Aid launch "Project Clean Slate," a program that helps low-income residents with minor criminal records obtain expungements, which can mean the difference between having the ability to secure a job and struggling with long-term unemployment.

Linn also developed the firm's relationship with the Michigan Immigrant Rights Center, whereby the firm has assisted many adolescent refugees in obtaining their green cards. In addition to his pro bono work, he serves as president of the Old Tiger Stadium Conservancy, the organization behind the project to build a new athletic complex for Detroit youth in partnership with the Detroit Police Athletic League. He also is the treasurer of the Detroit Waldorf School and the treasurer and secretary for the Community Chorus of Detroit.

Also nominated were:

- **Leo Goddeyne**, a real estate and corporate attorney in the firm's Kalamazoo office. Notable work includes more than 2,000 hours of pro bono service to benefit underprivileged populations in west Michigan. He was the recipient of the State Bar of Michigan's John W. Cummiskey Pro Bono Award in 2016, in recognition to his decades of service.
- **Irene Bruce Hathaway**, resident director and litigation and trial attorney in Miller Canfield's Detroit office. Notable work includes representation of a woman whose home became uninhabitable after a basement flood and contamination by a contractor's use of toxic chemicals during cleanup.
- **James Liggins**, a civil litigation attorney in the firm's Kalamazoo office. Notable work includes founding the Judge Charles A. Pratt Bar Association, and service on the boards for Greg Jennings Foundation, Bronson Healthcare Group, Harold and Grace Upjohn Foundation, and United Way for the Battle Creek and Kalamazoo Region.

Continued

- **David O'Brien**, a criminal defense attorney in the firm's Ann Arbor office. Notable work includes representation of prisoners sentenced to mandatory life sentences as juveniles, a penalty which has been ruled by the U.S. Supreme Court to be unconstitutional.
- **Emily Palacios**, a commercial litigation and real estate attorney in Miller Canfield's Ann Arbor office. Notable work includes the "Juggalos" case, in which she, alongside the ACLU, represents fans of the musical group Insane Clown Posse defending their constitutional rights to due process and freedom of expression and association.

The Richard J. Seryak Award recognizes attorneys who best exemplify the high standard of pro bono and community service consistently exhibited by longtime Miller Canfield partner Dick Seryak, an employment and labor attorney, who died in 2013. His family established the award to honor his legacy, and provides a stipend for the honoree to designate to the legal service organizations of his or her choosing. The first Seryak Award winner was **Reshma Sambare**, a real estate and construction attorney in the firm's Lansing office, whose extensive work with low-income immigrants and domestic violence survivors earned her a nomination two years in a row.