Update on New PBA Online Dues Billing

The PBA is continuing its efforts to “go green.” Members who are billed individually by the PBA will receive their dues invoices in November via email. This email will allow for a quick click and payment of dues for 2015. Attorneys billed through a unit county or a law firm will not receive emailed invoices, and their invoices will continue to be processed through their respective county or law firm.

In addition to this change, all PBA members will print their membership cards and PBI discount coupons using the PBA website. These items will be easily accessible through a link in the “Thank You” email after dues have been paid for 2015 or through the member’s “My Dashboard” page via the Member Login link at the top right corner of the PBA website at www.pabar.org.

Judicial Candidates: JEC Questionnaire Now Available

The Pennsylvania Bar Association Judicial Evaluation Commission evaluates the qualifications of candidates to appellate courts in Pennsylvania.

Individuals who are considering filing as judicial candidates for an open seat in the 2015 primary election should obtain a copy of the Judicial Evaluation Questionnaire and a copy of the commission’s guidelines and bylaws. To receive these materials, contact Louann Bell at the PBA Judicial Evaluation Commission, P.O. Box 186, Harrisburg, Pa. 17108; 800-932-0311, ext. 2276, or louann.bell@pabar.org. There will now be three vacancies on the Supreme Court, one on the Superior Court and one on the Commonwealth Court.

In order to ensure that each candidate receives a full and fair evaluation, the completed questionnaire must be returned by Dec. 12, 2014, to the PBA Judicial Evaluation Commission at the address above.

The ratings will be announced after all the interview sessions have been completed. Under the commission’s guidelines, any candidate who does not participate in the evaluation process will receive a “Not Recommended” rating.

Making a Difference

The Pennsylvania Bar News column that highlights Pennsylvania attorneys who make a difference in their communities by providing extraordinary pro bono service and/or other community services in the public interest.

Tiffany L. Cummings, Tioga County

Tiffany L. Cummings is the principal at Cummings Law Firm PC, Mansfield. She is president of the Tioga County Bar Association and one of the proud coaches of the Mansfield High School mock trial team.

Cummings is a volunteer with the Friends of Tioga-Hammond and Cowansque Lakes, where she also serves on the board, and she is involved with the Tioga County Homeless Initiative.

Describe your pro bono work.

In addition to the private cases I take pro bono, I also take court-appointed cases for Tioga, Bradford, and Potter counties, usually as a public defender, guardian ad litem (GAL) or representing parents in dependency cases. My preferred role is as the GAL: I feel that it allows me to help the person for whom the timing of the help is probably the most critical — the child.

I just became the Tioga County “Wills for Heroes” coordinator. When I approached the county bar association about our participating in the “Wills for Heroes” program, lawyers both young and experienced did not hesitate to volunteer.

I had heard that some lawyers think that the program takes away “paying clients” from estate-planning lawyers, but I disagree. Most people who use the services of the “Wills for Heroes” program would not otherwise go to see a lawyer — either because they can’t afford it, don’t make it a priority or can’t bring themselves to deal with it. Plenty of clients are bothered when discussing estate planning and the notion of losing a spouse or leaving a spouse behind. It must be even more difficult for these first responders who know that they put themselves in danger on a regular basis.

Why do you participate in pro bono?

Growing up, I saw my mother helping whenever help was needed, from driving the neighbors’ daughter to weekly gymnastics lessons 30 miles away because her own parents couldn’t stop traffic to help a turtle across the road. I think we should be striving to “make a difference” in whatever roles we have with whatever tools we have. A friend of mine doesn’t make much money, but he uses the resources he has to help others. He has been a major influence on my realization that we could all be doing more. As a lawyer I have that same obligation — to help people using the tools I have now.