

## **Allegheny County Attorney Honored with Ernico Award**

Michael Paul Malakoff was honored by the Pennsylvania Bar Association with its Jeffrey A. Ernico Award for Malakoff's lifetime of support of the neediest among us. Malakoff received his Ernico Award on Sept. 25 at the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Allegheny County Bar Foundation Fellows Reception and Dinner.

An occasional award of the PBA's Legal Services to the Public Committee, the Jeffrey A. Ernico Award is given to individuals providing unique service that has resulted in significant improvement in the provision of legal services to the neediest among us. The Ernico Award celebrates the pro bono accomplishments of Harrisburg attorney Jeffrey A. Ernico of Mette, Evans & Woodside in Harrisburg. Ernico was a chair of the PBA's Task Force on the Delivery of Legal Services to the Needy II and is a past chair of the Legal Services to the Public Committee. Ernico and his wife, Barbara, attended the Fellows Dinner and Ernico joined PBA Pro Bono Coordinator David Trevaskis in presenting the award.

Malakoff's experience in pro bono work began when he was a young man. He was raised with activist parents as role models. In college, he spent entire summers working on voter registration drives in an African American community in Mississippi. During one of those hot summers, he was arrested, spent a few weeks in jail, and thus began his first real contact with the legal profession.

While a student at the University of Pittsburgh Law School, he continued his pro bono activities. At law school, he had many opportunities to work with local civil rights lawyers Marjorie Matson, Dan Berger, Allen Cohen and many others. Malakoff graduated from law school in 1970 and was awarded the prestigious Reginald Heber Smith Fellowship by the federal government. "Reggies" were recruited by the federal government from the most talented and brightest young lawyers nationwide to work in poverty law.

After a training period at Howard University in Washington, D.C., Malakoff began his law career at Neighborhood Legal Services Association (NLSA) in Pittsburgh. He was privileged to work under NLSA long-term director (now judge) Tony Wettick. He served on the NLSA Board of Directors and has worked often with legal services lawyers in cases and at workshops. He has also been a significant financial supporter to NLSA. His law firm, Malakoff Doyle & Finberg P.C., and his partners, Ellen Doyle and Richard Finberg, were the highest law firm contributors in their law firm category for ten straight years.

In 1992, the National Consumer Law Center (NCLC), which provided support to NLSA's nationally, requested that Malakoff and a few private practice consumer advocates form the National Association of Consumer Advocates (NACA). The Washington, D.C.-based organization trains young legal services lawyers, both inside and outside of NLSA, in consumer law for representation of low-income clients. NACA now has more than 1,000 members and runs several seminars a year for young lawyers. In addition to being a

founder, Malakoff served on the board of directors of NACA and was chair of its Legal Committee until 2002.

Malakoff is a prolific speaker and writer. In 1980, he co-authored a key chapter on consumer credit law, *Public Interest Practices*. He has contributed many articles to NCLC, including its 1,000 page treatise, *Consumer Class Actions*, published in 2006.

Over the last 30 years, he has participated in more than 150 class actions on behalf of low-income consumers. Malakoff says he lost about half, but states, "If you show me an attorney that never lost a case, I'll show you an attorney that never had a case." He proudly notes that he has argued more than 60 appeals in every court of appeals in the country but one and has had three cases before the United States Supreme Court. The most recent case was the first opinion authored by Chief Justice Roberts.

Earlier this year, the NLSA was both pleased and proud to name the law library in its central office in downtown Pittsburgh the Michael Paul Malakoff Library.