A Foundation of Support

The Pennsylvania Bar Foundation, a 501 (c)(3) and the charitable affiliate of the PBA, was incorporated in 1984 in response to the association’s goal of greater public service. Frank B. Boyle, who had just completed his term as the 1983–84 PBA president, served as the foundation’s first president from 1984 to 1986.

Since its beginnings, financial support of foundation’s activities has been generated almost exclusively from voluntary contributions. Donations have funded civil legal aid programs, continuing legal education, scholarships, as well as activities that inform the public and advance the legal profession and PBA programs. In addition, the foundation has provided grant support to pro bono conferences, youth justice education programs, law-related education and access to justice initiatives.

In 1989, the foundation established the Louis J. Goffman Award Fund to recognize and reward outstanding pro bono service. Goffman was the 1978-79 PBA president. The foundation presents a Goffman Award each year to an individual or organization whose commitments to pro bono have enhanced the delivery of legal services to the poor and disadvantaged.

Also in 1989, the foundation was designated as a recipient of PA IOLTA (Interest on Lawyer Trust Accounts) funds. IOLTA uses interest earned on lawyer trust accounts for charitable purposes, primarily to provide civil legal services to indigent persons. In 1991, the foundation began its IOLTA Local Options Program. Between 1991 and 1996, the foundation received and distributed more than $2 million to county bar associations lacking qualified bar foundations.

In 1994, the foundation became the custodian of funds accumulated by the Pennsylvania Lawyers’ Auxiliary. The auxiliary was initiated in 1960 as the Pennsylvania Association of Lawyers Wives and disbanded nearly 35 years later because of waning interest of its members. A major focus of the auxiliary was providing scholarships to law students. In June 2002, the foundation reported that the PLA funds were finally exhausted. To continue offering scholarships, the foundation created the James W. Stoudt Memorial Fund, named in honor of the director emeritus of the foundation. The Stoudt Fund currently provides three, $3,000 scholarships (two of which are specifically designated to support minority law students) to candidates attending any of the nine accredited law schools in Pennsylvania.

In 1995, the foundation worked with the PBA Centennial Committee to raise funds for the “$100 for the 100th” campaign. Collected donations were used to help the PBA purchase the Barco Building from PBI (Pennsylvania Bar Institute), which would move to a new facility in Mechanicsburg in 1997. (The Barco Building was named to honor George J. Barco, a Meadville lawyer and cable television pioneer who was the catalyst and first president of PBI. The Barco Building is located adjacent to another PBA building on Harrisburg’s State Street and across an alley from the PBA’s historic headquarters, the Maclay Mansion. In 1997, the building was renamed the Belden Building in memory of 1971 PBA President H. Reginald Belden and to honor Irene Belden, his wife, who was the 1965-66 president of the Pennsylvania Lawyers Auxiliary. Their son, H. Reginald Belden Jr., chaired the 1995 PBA Centennial Committee and would become the 2001-02 PBA president. The PBA and the foundation used the building as a revenue source, renting the space to a variety of tenants before selling it in 2015.)

In 1998, the foundation began hosting an annual silent auction to help fund programs and projects. To preserve the law school scholarship program, beginning in 2003, the silent auction proceeds have been dedicated to subsidizing the James W. Stoudt Memorial Fund.

In 2002, the PBA began providing Frank B. Boyle, 1983-84 PBA president and first president of the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation full-time staffing for the foundation.

In 2008, the foundation expanded its grant support to the PBA Diversity Summit, a statewide forum devoted to fostering diversity and inclusiveness in the profession.

In 2010, the foundation became the administrator of the PA IOLTA Loan Repayment Assistance Program (LRAP), a collaboration of the foundation, the PBA and the PA IOLTA Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Its purpose is to help attorneys employed at civil legal services organizations funded by PA IOLTA better manage their undergraduate and law school debt. Since its launch, the program has awarded 919 loans valued at more than $3.3 million to more than 300 lawyers employed by 36 different IOLTA-funded civil legal services organizations located across Pennsylvania.

In recent years, individuals and families have set up additional scholarship funds to help law students pay for their educational expenses. These include the Patti Rose Scheimer Bednarik Memorial Scholarship, the Joseph T. McDonald Memorial Scholarship, the Louise Hoffmeyer-Overmiller Memorial Scholarship as well as the Environmental and Energy Law Section Minority Scholarship Fund, which is a set up through a donor-advised fund.

In addition to its ongoing fundraising initiatives, PBA members are encouraged to become donors to and leaders within the foundation’s Keystone Society, Commonwealth Club and Life Fellows programs, as well as a Law Firm Fellows program.

The foundation is managed by a board of directors consisting of 22 voting members: 12 directors; two directors appointed by the PBA president-elect to serve during the president-elect’s term as president (these directors need not be lawyers); the PBA president; the immediate past chair of the PBA Young Lawyers Division; the foundation’s president, vice president, treasurer and secretary; the immediate past president of the foundation; and one director appointed by the foundation president (who need not be a lawyer).

The Board meets a few times each year and relies on its Executive Committee to address management issues between meetings. There are currently 10 committees that help the foundation carry out its mission.

More information about the foundation is available at https://www.pabar.org/site/Foundation.