



**Honorees:** Patricia A. Gajda, Kerin Lyn Kaminski, Ginger F. Mlakar, Karen L. Giffen, Tracey L. Turnbull, Ellen Toth, Ann-Marie Ahern, Inajo Davis Chappell, Holly Welsh, Deborah W. Yue, Deborah D. Zielinski, Heidi B. Goldstein, Ann Weinzimmer, and Dianne DePasquale-Hagerty (Not pictured: Carolyn J. Buller, Bridget M. Brennan, Marilena DiSilvio, Janette McCarthy Louard, Bethanie R. Murray, and Barbara K. Roman)



Kathleen Ahern, Bryan Ahern, Ann-Marie Ahern, and Janet Riccardella



Heidi B. Goldstein, Co-Chair Ann M. Caresani, Tracey L. Turnbull, and April Miller Boise



Marilena DiSilvio and Co-Chair Kelly Albin



Co-Chair Elaine B. Eisner



Robyn Minter Smyers, Janette McCarthy Louard, Linda Davis, Inajo Davis Chappell, and Stephanie Trudeau

# Women in Law Making a Difference

## Honorees Initiating Positive Changes in the Community, the Workplace, and Our Profession

BY KELLY ALBIN, ANN M. CARESANI & ELAINE B. EISNER, CO-CHAIRS

In November, the Women in Law Section and the Northeast Ohio Chapter of the Association of Corporate Counsel hosted an event to honor a diverse group of successful female attorneys who have made a significant difference in the lives of others. These women not only excel in the workplace, but they also consistently find time in their busy schedules to support and encourage change in the Northeast Ohio community and legal profession. The honorees serve in a variety of roles within their respective organizations: from partners and shareholders to government attorneys, corporate counsel, and business leaders. Through the support and generosity of our 300+ guests who honored and thanked these women, we raised funds

for The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation, and the CMBA Women in the Law Section.

Here, we hope to inspire you by sharing some of the honorees' contributions to Northeast Ohio. The contributions mentioned in this article merely scratch the surface of the impact these women have in the community and workplace. We are happy to provide the complete program and more information about all of the honorees and their accomplishments, upon request.

Each of these women can serve as a role model for all attorneys. While the honorees have taken many different paths, one common thread is found in all of them — a desire to give back and help others. Some of the women

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took a more traditional route to initiate change in the community and legal profession through leadership in their firms, nonprofit organizations, and mentorship programs, while others advocate for social change on behalf of vulnerable individuals every day in the workplace.

Bridget Brennan of the U.S. Attorney's Office and Holly Welsh of the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office are leading the fight against human trafficking in Northeast Ohio at the federal and state level, respectively. Ms. Brennan and Ms. Welsh seek justice for countless women and child trafficking victims in the courtroom as well as through community groups and nonprofit organizations, such as the Collaborative to End Human Trafficking and the Cleveland Rape Crisis Center.

Dianne DePasquale-Hagerty of Medina Creative Housing, Debbie Zielinski of Chicago Title Insurance Company, and Tracey Turnbull of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur focus their civic efforts on providing support to disadvantaged and/or disabled children and adults. Ms. DePasquale-Hagerty serves as CEO of Medina Creative Housing and has worked tirelessly for over 12 years to help the organization develop nationally recognized housing and services for individuals with disabilities. Ms. Zielinski serves on the Board of New Directions, a nonprofit that provides treatment for chemically dependent children, and she is collaborating with Our Lady of the Wayside and Constellations Schools to open a charter school for students on the autism spectrum. Ms. Turnbull is a past member of the Learning Disabilities Association's board and currently serves on the board of Towards Employment — an organization providing support to individuals who are transitioning off welfare, out of prison, or off the streets and have complex barriers to employment.

Ginger Mlakar of The Cleveland Foundation, Barbara Roman of Meyers, Roman, Friedberg & Lewis, and Ann Weinzimmer of Eaton Corporation strive to provide children and families with tools to overcome obstacles in the classroom and in life. Ms. Mlakar connects donors to their charitable passions in her role with the Cleveland Foundation, and she serves on The boards of the Girls Scouts of Lake Erie Council and the Bay Village Education Foundation, which support programs that provide an opportunity to enhance enthusiasm for learning or civic involvement. Ms. Roman is a passionate advocate for her clients in the courtroom and advisor to individuals in the CMBA and The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland domestic relations clinics and



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Congratulations to Patricia Gajda  
and the 2014 honorees.

We thank you for your  
contributions to the Cleveland  
community and legal profession.

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initiatives. She is also a founding member of the Cleveland Academy of Collaborative Professionals — an organization that strives to transform family dispute resolution into a healing process through collaborative practice. Ms. Weinzimmer is on the board of The Centers for Families and Children, the Greater Cleveland Food Bank, Rainey Institute, and ICAN Schools; all of which focus on connecting families and children with the right opportunities and resources to help them succeed in school, the workplace, and the community.

Ann-Marie Ahern of McCarthy, Lebit, Crystal & Liffman, Carolyn Buller of Squire Patton Boggs, Heidi Goldstein of Thompson Hine, and Bethanie Murray of Reminger Co. initiated and/or currently serve as leaders of their firms' respective women's initiatives. Such initiatives seek to advance female attorneys' careers through leadership and career guidance, mentorship, and innovative programs focused on professional growth, diversity, and inclusion. As Rebecca Bennett, chair of the Women in Law Section, emphasized in her April 2014 CMBA Bar Journal article, significant gender disparities still exist nationwide and here in Cleveland. There are fewer women than you might expect serving as partners and in leadership roles within law firms, female attorneys continue to earn less than their male counterparts, and minority women continue to be substantially underrepresented at the equity and executive level. The initiatives spearheaded by our honorees seek to alleviate such disparities by finding ways to retain talented female attorneys in the legal profession and encourage their leadership in the workplace and community organizations.

Karen Giffen and Kerin Lyn Kaminski co-founded the women-owned law firm Giffen & Kaminski. As a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Minority and Women Owned Law Firms, Ms. Giffen very recently helped launch an inclusion initiative through which a group of twenty large companies committed to spending \$150 million to support minority and women-owned law firms in 2014. Through her role as former president of the Cleveland Bar Association (now known as the CMBA), Ms. Kaminski empowered the Diversity Action Committee to issue a call for action asking local companies to make diversity a priority. Both honorees currently serve on the Board of Directors of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Marilene DiSilvio of Elk & Elk, Patricia Gajda of Brouse McDowell, and Janette

## Women • Attorneys • Leaders

*Congratulations to Tracey Turnbull,  
"Women in Law Making a Difference" honoree.*



Ann M.  
Caresani



Stephanie  
T.G. Duffy



Rebecca K.  
Fischer



Tracy S.  
Francis



Rebecca J.  
Grunick



Margaret M.  
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*The women pictured above practice in Porter Wright's Cleveland office.*

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Littler would like to  
congratulate our shareholder  
**Janette McCarthy Louard**  
And all of the Women in Law Making  
a Difference in Northeast Ohio.  
Thank you for all that you do.



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McCarthy Louard of Littler Mendelson prove that one of the best ways to promote female leadership is to lead by example and serve as a mentor to children of all ages and women at all stages of their career. Ms. DiSilvio is immediate past president of the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation, a graduate of the Ohio Women's Bar Association Leadership Institute, and a current co-chair of the Leadership Institute Selection Committee. Ms. Gajda is also a graduate of the Leadership Institute and currently serves as president of the Ohio Women's Bar Foundation and a member of the Corporate Leadership Committee for the American Heart Association's "Go Red for Women" campaign. Ms. DiSilvio and Ms. Gajda are also active participants in the Ohio Supreme Court's mentoring program. Ms. McCarthy Louard serves on the boards of the YWCA of Greater Cleveland and the Urban League of Greater Cleveland. For nearly a decade, Ms. Louard has been a mentor with the Norman S. Minor Bar Association mentoring program, and with the YWCA, she mentors young women in Ohio's foster care system.

Inajo Davis Chappell of Ulmer & Berne, Ellen Toth of Ogletree Deakins, and Deborah Yue of Gallagher Sharp all lead diversity and



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