

# Creative Giving: Law Students Supporting Wellness in the Legal Profession

By Diana Miers

*Imagine my curiosity when I arrived at my appointed time to meet with Thomas M. Cooley Law School Professor Victoria Vuletic and a student she wanted me to meet about a “special project” and I was introduced to the charming and engaging then-president of the Grand Rapids Cooley Student Bar Association, 3L, Diana Miers.*

*Imagine my surprise when Ms. Miers told me how moved she was by my Practicing Wellness column about the Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund in the January 2010 Bar Journal. I didn’t know law students had time to read the Bar Journal!*

*Imagine my delight when she informed me that the reason she had requested a meeting was that the Grand Rapids Thomas M. Cooley Student Bar Association wanted to designate its annual Barrister’s Ball as a fundraiser for the Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund.*

*Now imagine the pleasure, gratitude, and honor I feel to have the opportunity to work with the fine men and women who are Michigan law students, lawyers, and judges showing such generosity of spirit.*

*Lastly, imagine the impact we can have by virtue of the Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund on the lives of lawyers who are suffering.*

*The following is an article about the inspiration for this collaborative project written by Ms. Miers, who really showed her stuff by getting this ball rolling (pun intended) in the midst of finishing law school and preparing for the bar exam. Imagine that!*

—Martha D. Burkett,

Program Administrator, LJAP

Treatment Fund as the beneficiary of the SBA’s Barrister’s Ball for a number of reasons. The SBA was seeking a worthy cause that could bring together students of the law, members of the legal profession, and members of the community with something we could all benefit from and appreciate. In my research, I came across the Practicing Wellness column in the January 2010 *Michigan Bar Journal*, entitled “Replenishment and Renewal in 2010: The Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund,” which explained the services provided by the State Bar of Michigan Lawyers and Judges Assistance Program (LJAP).

The article described the establishment of the Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund and the need for such a fund. I learned that the fund helps to pay for substance abuse and mental health treatment for attorneys who would otherwise be unable to pay for the care they need. I believe that as attorneys—and even law students and bar applicants—we are constantly reminded of the duty to our clients and the profession. This duty comes with the responsibility of being an advocate for truth and justice as well as ensuring that the public goes unharmed. This charge comes with a great burden; each of us must live up to expectations very few people can meet. It is sometimes forgotten that attorneys are people; members of the legal profession are not mythical beings who can live up to the expectations presented to them simply because they graduated from law school.

The LJAP not only recognizes the weight of attorneys’ burdens, but offers support and guidance for coping with the stresses of the law. The LJAP accepts those who may have been unable to cope with their burdens and encourages members of our profession to seek the help they might need through its services.

The need for healthy coping mechanisms and balance is something each of us can relate to, and support of the LJAP and the Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund gives us the ability to help those in our profession find ways to balance the burden of the legal profession with everyday life challenges. Further, it enables individuals to continue or return to the practice of law and advocate for truth and justice. There seemed no other cause that could possibly impact the students, legal community, and general community in any better way. The Richard Steinberg Memorial Treatment Fund is exactly the type of resource that student advocates hope to see continue and thrive. ■

*Diana Miers works as a law clerk at the Kent County Prosecutor’s Office Family Division. As a recent graduate of Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Diana received the Leadership Achievement Award for her participation in such activities as the National Mock Trial Team, the Cooley Volunteer Corps, president of the Student Bar Association, and the Society of Graduation Marshals. In college, Diana studied criminal justice at the University of Florida.*

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In my former role as chair of the Thomas M. Cooley Law School Grand Rapids Student Bar Association (SBA), I chose to identify the Richard Steinberg Memorial