

Save the Date: 75th Anniversary Gala on October 3, 2025!

April 2024

Dunlap's Download

Celebrating the Legacy of John Whiteleather: A Small Town Lawyer Who Made a Big Impact

In the heart of Columbia City, Indiana, a town rich with history and community spirit, one man's legacy shines brighter than ever. John William Whiteleather, Jr. was more than a small-town lawyer; he was a beacon of integrity, compassion, and service, leaving an indelible mark on Whitley County and beyond.

Born on July 7, 1940, to John W. Whiteleather, Sr. and Lucille Whiteleather, John's journey began amidst the quaint streets of Columbia City. His roots ran deep, and after completing his education at Indiana University, he returned to his beloved hometown, where he would carve out a remarkable career and life.



Pictured: John Whiteleather, Jr. and wife Judy receiving the Foundation's Legendary Lawyer Award in 2019.

John's legal prowess was evident from the start. Joining his father's law firm, he embarked on a journey that would span decades of service to both the legal profession and his community. In 1970, he was elected Whitley County Prosecuting Attorney, a role he held for an impressive 32 years. His tenure was marked by unwavering dedication to justice and mentorship, shaping the lives of countless young prosecutors across Indiana.

His accolades speak volumes about his commitment to excellence and John's legal acumen was second to none. But perhaps his greatest achievement was the impact he made beyond the courtroom.

In 1990, John played a pivotal role in the formation of the Whitley County Community Foundation, a testament to his belief in the power of giving back. Serving as its first president, he championed causes close to his heart, leaving a lasting legacy of philanthropy and community enrichment.

John's passion for mediation further exemplified his dedication to conflict resolution and compassion. Over the years, he mediated thousands of cases, bringing resolution and closure to individuals and families in need. His contributions did not go unnoticed, earning him the esteemed Sagamore of the Wabash award from Governor Frank O'Bannon in 1997.

Personally, witnessing the overwhelming community support at John's funeral was a deeply moving experience. The seats were filled with family, friends, admirers, and members of the community who shed tears, and shared stories that painted a poignant picture of the impact he had on so many lives. It was a testament to the profound connections he forged and the lives he touched with his kindness and wisdom.

My fondest personal memory of John was when I had the great honor of being a small part of celebrating John's achievements when he was selected as the Indiana Bar Foundation's Legendary Lawyer in 2019. Surrounded by colleagues, friends, and family, he radiated humility and grace, embodying the essence of what it means to be a legal luminary and community leader. His legacy will continue to inspire us all to strive for excellence and service in everything we do.

As we reflect on John Whiteleather's remarkable life, let us not only celebrate his professional accomplishments but also the values he embodied. He showed us that a small-town lawyer can wield immense influence, not just in the courtroom, but in the hearts and minds of those they serve. His legacy serves as a reminder that true greatness lies in service to others, leaving the world a better place than we found it. I hope that young lawyers starting out in the profession can look at John's inspiring career to see that a legal practice in "small town Indiana" is not a limitation but a tremendous opportunity to make an outsized impact for positive change.

In honoring John's memory, let us carry forward his spirit of compassion, integrity, and community, ensuring that his legacy continues to illuminate our path for generations to come.

Giving & Recognition

Keystone Society Members & Alumni Invited to June 21 Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon

For decades, our distinguished Keystone Society members have represented the core of the Foundation's philanthropic support. Keystone gifts (ranging from \$1,000 to \$10,000 annually) undergird all our programs, including long-standing flagship civic education programs like the recent Mock Trial competitions. Many of our Keystone Society members have continued to make our mission their own, year after year - often continuing into their own retirement.

What motivates our Keystone members to partner with us for so many years? Kenneth J. Allen has been a steadfast supporter of the Foundation for many years. Ken, along with Allen Law Group, is a Keystone Society member at the \$10,000 Barrister level. In addition to Ken's generous financial support, he has given many hours of board service, including membership beginning in 2011 and culminating with leadership as Board Chair from 2016-2018, during which several of his firm's partners became Foundation supporters.

Ken recently shared how he and his firm's goals fully align with our mission stating, "For more than 30 years, we've supported civic education and lauded our educators by sponsoring programs such as "Teachers of Excellence", "Teacher of the Month" and the "Reading Buddies" program, fostering early literacy. The IBF's dual goals of promoting civic education and assisting the indigent with legal representation fully align with the altruistic goals of my law firm. We're very proud to support the IBF, now and in the future."

This year, we invite ALL Keystone Society members (past and present) to attend our Annual Meeting on June 21, in Indianapolis, for a special "Thank You!" We look forward to personally connecting with you at our informal reception on Thursday, June 20, 5:00-7:00pm, followed by VIP seating and recognition at Friday's 11:30am Annual Meeting.

Please save the date - and let us know if you would like to reserve a hotel room at the Indianapolis Marriott from the block already set aside. RSVPs for Thursday, June 20 are welcomed but not required - so feel free to attend on shorter notice if needed. Otherwise, simply click below to be contacted with confirmation details.

[Contact Me](#)

Civic Education

Two Classes Headed to We the People National Finals

Hamilton Southeastern High School and Plainfield High School are heading to Washington, D.C. to represent Indiana at the We the People National Finals April 13-15. These students are continuing to demonstrate their depth of understanding on the history, underpinnings, evolution, and application of our system of government under the Constitution. Congratulations to these students, and we are excited to see their achievements at the competition!



We the People Summer Institute

The Foundation and the O'Neill School at Indiana University Bloomington will partner again for the 2024 We the People Summer Institute to be hosted June 23-27. Indiana high school, middle school, and elementary teachers can join the Foundation to learn in-depth content and strategies for teaching government, history, or social studies classes. These topics will also aid We the People teachers in presenting the curriculum and preparing for the simulated congressional hearing authentic assessments, which

will be focused on during the institute. Visit the Foundation's [professional development page](#) for more information, and [register here](#).



Educators Earn Prestigious Teachers Creativity Fellowship

Amanda Antey, We the People teacher from Castle High School in Newburgh, and Matthew Barno, Mock Trial advisor from Crown Point High School in Crown Point, received a 2024 Lilly Foundation Teacher Creativity grant. The grant gives up to \$15,000 per teacher to help Indiana public school educators renew their commitment to teaching and provide resources for them to take time for meaningful renewal. Amanda's grant will

be used to travel and experience locations inspired by the life of Alexander Hamilton, including New York City, Williamsburg, Philadelphia, Washington DC, and St Kitts & St Croix. Matthew's grant will be used to travel the historic roads of Route 66 and the Pacific Coast Highway while photographing experiences and learning about the cultural and historic significance of these roads through interactions with local people and places. Congratulations to Amanda and Matthew!

Civil Legal Assistance



Kiosk Hosts Provided Training Opportunities

In 2023, the Indiana Bar Foundation achieved the milestone of placing 150 legal help kiosks around the state with at least one kiosk in each county. Kiosks help bridge the digital divide by connecting Hoosiers to the resources available on [IndianaLegalHelp.org](https://www.IndianaLegalHelp.org). Staff members of the courts, libraries, and other community organizations hosting kiosks now have the opportunity to participate in training sessions aimed at providing a detailed understanding of the resources available at a kiosk and ensuring hosts are supported as they promote this valuable resource in their communities. Ten training sessions will be offered over the next several months covering a variety of topics, including a deep dive into the self-help court forms available

on [IndianaLegalHelp.org](https://www.IndianaLegalHelp.org), kiosk maintenance and support, and marketing your kiosk. Indiana Legal Help kiosks were made possible through a partnership between the Foundation and the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority.

Indianapolis Legal Aid Society CLE Event

The Foundation is pleased to support the Indianapolis Legal Aid Society's 11th annual *Timeless Tips from the Bench & Bar* event on June 26. This highly anticipated gathering offers valuable insights and updates on key laws and changes, along with engaging discussions and guidance on court decorum, tips, refreshers on skills, all being led by premier members of the legal community. It's a unique opportunity to learn directly from experienced judges and gain practical wisdom for legal careers. [Learn more here.](#)

U.S. District Court Teacher Summer Institute

The U.S District Court for the Southern District of Indiana is registering teachers for their 5th annual teacher institute June 12-13 at the Birch Bayh Courthouse in Indianapolis. The institute will look at the role of juries within our legal system, exploring all aspects of jury service, while meeting with judges, attorneys, and court professionals. A simulation of jury selection, presided over by Foundation board member Judge James Sweeney, will serve as a capstone experience for participating teachers.

The workshop is free, but space is limited – and early registration is recommended! To reserve a seat, [download a registration form here](#). Questions can be emailed to mary_giorgio@insd.uscourts.gov.

Application Open for American Civic Education Teacher Award

The Center for Civic Education, the Center on Representative Government at Indiana University, and the National Education Association conduct an annual program to honor American teachers of civics, government, and related fields. The American Civic Education Teacher Awards (ACETA) promote national recognition and respect for the teaching profession as a whole and teachers of civic education in particular. The awards honor elementary and secondary civic education teachers with specific expertise in teaching about the U.S. Constitution, the U.S. Congress, and public policy at the state and local levels. Application period is open through May 1. Information and application are available [here](#).

Get to Know



We are proud of our team and want to introduce them to you! Please take a moment to get to know our Housing Helpdesk and Kiosk Manager [Jason Thees](#).

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