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

February 2024

Dunlap’s Download

The Foundation’s Historic Partnership in Marion County is Making a Difference for Hoosier Families

In last month’s download, I was excited to focus on some of the new initiatives that the Indiana Bar Foundation (Foundation) was introducing in our civic education programing. This month, I want to announce a significant expansion of the Foundation’s efforts to increase our work in our civil legal assistance programs.

In Marion County, like many other regions across the United States, access to justice is not always readily available for all residents, especially in civil matters. The cost of legal representation can be prohibitive, leaving many individuals navigating complex legal processes alone. These challenges can be especially critical in situations where the stakes of the outcomes are among the highest imaginable, namely, whether you can maintain a home for you and your family.

Even though housing cases do not involve criminal charges, their outcomes can be just as serious in their significant impact on Hoosier families’ lives. Without adequate legal representation, guidance, or other resources many families struggle to assert their rights effectively or navigate the complexities of the legal system. Consequently, a lack of legal representation and resources can lead to unjust outcomes, exacerbating inequalities and hindering access to justice for vulnerable populations.

According to data from [www.evictionlab.org](http://www.evictionlab.org), in 2023 Marion County eviction filings represented over 37% of the total number of eviction filings in the entire state. To truly make a difference on a large scale, the Foundation in partnership with the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCDA) has dramatically expanded our housing stability services in Marion County while continuing our work serving other areas of the state. The Foundation has made a significant investment by providing up to $2 million focused on the Marion County small claims court system which handles the lion’s share of evictions in Marion County.

This new expansion has its roots in a pilot program developed by the Lawrence Township Small Claims Court, under the leadership of Hon. Kimberly Bacon. Judge Bacon received a grant from the National Center for State Courts (NCSC) to hire additional staff to support a local eviction diversion program in Lawrence Township. The program uses court navigators to provide tenants with legal information, resources, and connection to legal aid and contract attorneys to facilitate agreements between landlords and tenants to prevent or mitigate the impact of an eviction and avoid a contested hearing. Court navigators serve as guides for individuals navigating the legal system, helping with paperwork, explaining court procedures, and providing general support throughout the process.
Based on the success of this innovative pilot program, the Foundation in partnership with IHCDA has been able to significantly expand the scope of the pilot program to now include seven of the nine township courts, with the goal of having all nine township courts participating soon. With the support of Lawrence Township Trustee Steve Talley, the Foundation has been able to contract directly with Lawrence Township to create a hub of navigators that can be deployed around the county so these housing stability services can be offered to tenants in each township. This expansion of housing stability services will enable critical resources to be available where they are needed the most.

Moving forward, continued investment in these programs is essential to sustain their impact and expand their reach. Furthermore, collaborations between the Foundation and other philanthropic groups in conjunction with legal aid organizations, courts, government agencies, and community stakeholders are crucial for maximizing the effectiveness of these initiatives. By collaborating and leveraging resources, stakeholders can work together to ensure that access to justice is not merely a privilege but a fundamental right for all residents of Marion County and throughout the state.

It is partnerships like this one that are making a real difference in Hoosier’s lives, often preserving a roof over families’ heads.

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**Civil Legal Assistance**

**Recent Updates Made to IndianaLegalHelp.org**
The Indiana Legal Help website has recently launched a redesigned Partner Resources page. Sharing information about Indiana Legal Help is an important part of making sure people have access to legal resources. The Partner Resources page was designed to provide information for kiosk hosts and others looking to promote and utilize the resources available on indianalegalhelp.org. Kiosk locations, downloadable flyers and bookmarks, and a link to the court’s Legal Information Guide are available here.

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**Civic Education**

**Indiana Civic Health Index Released**
According to the 2023 Indiana Civic Health Index (INCHI) released January 24, to increase the number of Hoosiers registering and voting, the state must invest in educating young people about the importance of voting and encourage eligible students to register. The biannual report documents Indiana’s place among states with the lowest voter registration and turnout rates.

The Indiana Bar Foundation and the Indiana Civics Coalition curated the report, looking at various factors, including voting and voter registration, social and community connectivity, and civic awareness and actions. This is the sixth edition of the report which can be found here.

(Photo L-R) D. William Moreau, Jr., Founder and President, Indiana Citizen Education Foundation, Inc.; Dr. Ellen Szarleta, Director, Center for Urban and Regional Excellence and Professor, School of Public and Environmental Affairs, Indiana University Northwest; Charles Dunlap, President & CEO of the Indiana Bar Foundation; and Greg Zoeller, former Indiana Attorney General.

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**United States Youth Senate Delegates Announced**
Kyle Davis, a senior at Bloomington High School South and Layla Kelly, a senior at Fort Wayne Homestead High School are Indiana’s delegates to the United State Senate Youth Program.
Davis and Kelly will receive a $10,000 college scholarship for undergraduate study and spend a week in Washington, D.C., March 2-9, with 104 student leaders from across the nation. During the week, the delegates will attend meetings and briefings with senators, the president, a justice of the Supreme Court, and leaders of cabinet agencies, among others.

Kyle Davis serves as the secretary to his school’s branch of the National Honor Society. He is the president of the speech and debate teams, works to establish a presence for pre-arrest deflection policy in his local area, and was selected as a student equity ambassador for the city of Bloomington. Kyle has always been enthralled with civil service, stating his desire to make a difference through advocating for effective policy and ensuring that the execution of these policies is done with a keen mind and in a diligent manner. He will use his leadership skills to pursue a career in policymaking and civil service as he desires to further the common understanding of our government institutions and implement science-driven policy solutions for our nation’s most pressing issues. Kyle plans to major in neuroscience and public policy and hopes that his work can one day put an end to America's mental health, substance abuse, and housing crises.

Layla Kelly is an officer on the Fort Wayne Mayor's Youth Engagement Council. She is a member of the Indiana Legislative Youth Advisory Council where she advocates for policies important to youth as the chairwoman of the Substance Abuse and Physical/Mental Health Committee. A passionate activist for women’s issues, Layla is the president of the only high school chapter of the National Organization for Women in Indiana. As a research intern at the Women’s Fund of Fort Wayne, she produced a paper on legislative solutions to the sexual assault kit backlog, which she uses as she collaborates with state legislators to advance a bill to remedy this problem.

As vice president of Key Club, Layla has volunteered nearly 200 hours in service to her community. She is captain of the tennis team, an officer of Student Ambassadors, a member of the Student Athletic Leadership Team, and a mentor in the middle school “We the People” program. She intends to use her service-oriented leadership experience in her career to advocate for gender equity and to help bridge the partisan divide in the United States.

Chosen as alternates to the 2024 program were Jackson G. Ray of Hobart, who attends Hobart High School, and Samaira Lynn Lee of Fishers, who attends Fishers High School.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. The overall program mission is to instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service.

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Volunteer Judges Needed as Mock Trial Competition Begins This Month

The mock trial program provides middle and high school students with an opportunity to learn about the legal system in an authentic environment. While participating in mock trial, students practice important 21st century skills developing a case and presenting it before a panel of judges.

Roles for both attorneys and non-attorneys are available for interested volunteers. Training is provided for all volunteers so you are comfortable and confident in this role. Multiple time slots are available at each location, with the greatest need for volunteers being the evening shift.

To sign up to judge please use this linked form. If you have any questions, please contact Civic Education Specialist Isaac Harper.
The competition dates and locations are:
February 17 – Indianapolis Regional
February 17 – South Bend Regional
February 24 – Hammond Regional
February 24 – Evansville Regional
March 16 & 17 – State Competition in Indianapolis

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**Giving & Recognition**

**Keystone Society 2024**

“Yes, I saw that email. Let me check again and get back to you!”

After the holiday season, we can look at our inboxes and snail mail to catch up on less festive tasks we may have set aside for a few short weeks.

Have you been waiting for the new year to renew your Keystone Society gift for 2024? February is more than fine to let us know you wish to renew — or join — the honored group of our individual supporters who give between $1,000 and $10,000 every year. No need to remit today — you can simply click the button below, and we will contact you to confirm your amount and timing.

Thank you for your continued support! Please email [Kim Berry](mailto:Kim.Berry@Example.com) for a conversation or a chat over coffee or for any reason at all!

**Can we count on you as a Keystone Society Member in 2024?** Simply click the button below to say YES. We will follow up with you at your convenience.

[Click Here to Say "Yes"]

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**News Brief**

Members of the 2023 We the People High School State Champion class at Hamilton Southeastern High School were honored last month by the Indiana General Assembly. The team will represent Indiana in the We the People Nationals later this year. [Find the resolution here](#).

The Indiana Conference for Legal Education Opportunity (ICLEO) offers programming designed to assist individuals from traditionally underrepresented groups in pursuing legal careers in Indiana. As part of the ICLEO program, students will complete the Summer Institute—an intensive six-week, in-residence program—at Indiana University McKinney School of Law. The Summer Institute prepares incoming law students for the first year of law school. [Applications for the ICLEO program](#) are now available and due by March 31, 2024.

Attention Educators! The American Lawyers Alliance is sponsoring Teacher of the Year Awards. The deadline to submit nominations is March 15. [Learn more here](#).
New staff and expanding programs reflect the Foundation's continued growth. We are proud of our team and want to introduce them to you! Please take a moment to Get to Know Director of Development Kim Berry.