I recently traveled to Little Rock, Arkansas, to judge the 2023 National High School Mock Trial Championships. Indiana’s State Champion, South Bend Trinity School at Greenlawn, competed over four rounds and finished in the top half of teams from across the United States, South Korea, and the Northern Marianas.

It was great to see this mock trial competition serve as an engaging and effective platform for civic education, providing students with an immersive experience in legal processes and fostering critical thinking, teamwork, and an understanding of their roles as responsible citizens. Mock trial competitions simulate actual courtroom proceedings, allowing students to assume the roles of attorneys, witnesses, and giving them insight into how our legal system works.

I was fortunate to judge several rounds of the competition, including the championship round featuring New Mexico and Iowa, with Iowa winning in an extremely close trial. Seeing these high school students analyzing complex legal issues, constructing persuasive arguments, and anticipating counterarguments was genuinely inspiring. The final round fully displayed the many hours of preparation, analysis, and research.

I encourage you to take the time to volunteer for Indiana’s High School Mock Trial program so you can see first-hand these students utilizing these invaluable skills to empower them to approach real-world situations with a thoughtful and analytical mindset. I promise that the experience will inspire you while providing the crucial expertise the student participants and the program need to flourish -- hopefully making 2024 the year Indiana captures our third National High School Mock Trial Championship. Competitions will take place in Evansville, Hammond, Indianapolis, and South Bend in February and March. Look for volunteer information in early 2024, follow us on social media, and read our monthly newsletter for updates. Also, please contact Civic Education Specialist Isaac Harper with any questions.

-Chuck

The first Indiana Civics Coalition meeting will be held via Zoom on Thursday, June 8, from 12:30-1:30 p.m. (ET). The meeting registration link is available here. "The Foundation created the Indiana Civics Coalition to be a conduit for civic organizations, colleagues, friends, and fellow citizens who want to be a part of improving our communities through civics and to advance the cause of civics in our state," said Indiana Bar Foundation President & CEO Charles Dunlap.
Representatives of education, business, the legal community, government, and local communities will work cohesively to expand the impact civics has on all Hoosiers. Coalition membership is open to groups and individuals with a commitment to civics, collaboration, and a desire to expand Indiana’s civic awareness. If you are interested in joining the Indiana Civics Coalition, please contact Director of Civic Education Tim Kalgreen. Groups or individuals wanting to sponsor the Indiana Civics Coalition are encouraged to contact Foundation Director of Development Kim Berry.

Civil Legal Assistance

Foundation Participates in National IOLTA Meeting

Foundation staff members Marilyn Smith, Chuck Dunlap, Mike Commons, and Abbie Bush attended the 2023 Equal Justice Conference hosted by the American Bar Association and National Legal Aid and Defender Association in Dallas, Texas. The conference brought together more than 1,000 civil justice advocates from around the United States and Canada to learn and network about ways to approach program design and evaluation, court reform, pro bono engagement, funding, data collection, and expanding legal help in underserved communities. In addition, the Foundation’s Civil Legal Assistance team helped organize a pre-conference meeting for the National Association of IOLTA Programs (NAIP) and attended a variety of sessions with funders from around the nation with the goal of bringing important resources and support back to Indiana.

(Pictured L-R) Foundation Senior Counsel Marilyn Smith, Foundation President & CEO Charles Dunlap, Foundation Indiana Legal Help Manager Mike Commons, and Foundation Director of Civil Legal Assistance Programs Abbie Bush.

Indiana Legal Help Desk Launched

The Indiana Bar Foundation recently launched the Indiana Legal Help Desk, which is a free service for Hoosiers with housing legal questions. Through the help desk, users can get information about the eviction process and resources available to support them. The help desk is available online in the Housing Section of IndianaLegalHelp.org. Users can reach out to the help desk through text (317-548-0359) or email or request assistance directly from IndianaLegalHelp.org or any of our kiosks. In the coming weeks, the help desk will also be open for live chat and phone calls.

Conferences Allow Foundation to Promote Kiosks

Jason Thees and Mike Commons (pictured) attended the 2023 Indiana Balance of State Continuum of Care Spring Development Day Conference, Friday, May 12, at the Muncie Ivy Tech Campus. Mike provided a hands-on opportunity for conference attendees and presenters to see and touch a portable version of an Indiana Legal Help Kiosk. Staff members from State and local partner agencies used the kiosk to research legal information, resources, court forms, and search for organizations and events around the state providing civil legal assistance for housing
issues. An Ivy Tech student facing a housing issue with her landlord had questions and gained valuable information from the kiosk.

Civic Education

We the People Elementary Showcase

Congratulations to the 60 students taking part in the May 12 We the People Elementary Showcase. Participating schools included Hal E. Clark MS (St. John) and teacher Tammy Hart, Grimmer School (Schererville) and teacher Donna Spivak, and Kahler MS (Dyer) with teacher Meagan Bruni. Medals were awarded in a Statehouse ceremony with Judge Elizabeth Tavitas, Indiana Court of Appeals, presiding. The Elementary Showcase is part of the Foundation's Civic Education program.

We the People Professional Development Opportunities Available

This summer, the Foundation is hosting two We the People (WTP) professional developments this summer. First, our traditional WTP summer institute will be held at the O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at IU Bloomington June 18-22. Attendees will learn content, teaching strategies, and how to implement WTP into the classroom. Spaces are still available but very limited. Visit the WTP Professional Development webpage or contact Joseph O’Connor. Also, July 8-12, teachers at high needs schools from Indiana, Ohio, and West Virginia will meet in Philadelphia for place-based WTP content, education pedagogy, and WTP implementation to be a part of the 2023-24 Civics Empowers All Students WTP fellowship.

Development

Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon Set for June 23

We are excited to celebrate our outstanding award winners, Scott Barnhart, the Hon. Melissa May, and the Hon. Randall T. Shephard, along with marking the Foundation’s milestones on Friday, June 23, at the Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon. Thank you to event sponsors to date, including Barnes & Thornburg LLP, Church Church Hittle + Antrim, Fletcher Van Gilder LLP, Hall Render Killian Heath & Lyman, IceMiller, Indiana State Bar Association, Indianapolis Legal Aid Society, Pro Bono Indiana, Inc., and Quarles for their support. If you want to sponsor the event, please contact Director of Development Kim Berry. If you did not receive a formal invitation and would like to attend the Annual Meeting and Awards Luncheon, please get in touch with Development Specialist Megan Clarke-Richter.

Thank You Sponsors!
Indiana Bar Foundation 1950-2025

2025 marks the Foundation's 75th Anniversary! Help us celebrate the state legal community we have served for 75 years. We are looking forward to 2025—a grand event on October 3rd of 2025. Additional information is coming soon. In the meantime, please save that date on your calendar!

News Briefs

Maggie Davis and Colden Johnson (pictured) have joined the Foundation as summer interns. The duo will work with civic education, civil legal assistance, development, marketing & communications, and executive leadership on multiple projects. Maggie is a rising senior at Indiana University Bloomington majoring in International Studies with a Law and Public Policy minor. After graduating next spring, she will pursue a law degree in International Human Rights Law. Maggie is excited to work at the Foundation this summer to learn about civic engagement and law and to help with the Foundation's mission. Coledon is an Indiana native and graduated magna cum laude from Wabash College with a degree in Philosophy, Politics, and Economics. Coledon will attend the IU McKinney School of Law in Indianapolis in the fall. He is interested in intellectual property law, family law, and drug law. Coledon has joined the Foundation as an intern to familiarize himself with the Indianapolis legal climate and positively promote civic health.

The Foundation congratulates Adam Williamson, Social Studies Department Chair and We the People teacher at Mississinewa High School for being named Indiana's James Madison Fellow. The goal of the James Madison Fellowship is to help secondary-level history, government, and civics teachers to become outstanding educators of the U.S. Constitution.

The Foundation also congratulates Gina Iacobucci, New Palestine High School social studies and We the People teacher, on being named both New Palestine High School Teach of the Year and Southern Hancock's District Teacher of the Year! "Gina is known for her kindness, dedication, exceptional social studies instruction, and being able to reach all students," said the Community School Corporation of Southern Hancock County in announcing the award.

The Lilly Endowment is pleased to announce the 37th round of its Teacher Creativity Fellowship Program (TCFP). This program supports educators throughout Indiana by providing resources for them to take time for meaningful renewal. The Endowment believes that through new experiences, exploration, and reflection educators can generate renewed energy in their careers, innovative approaches to teaching and educational leadership, and thoughtful ways to encourage students’ creative thinking. The Endowment expects to award approximately 100 grants, each totaling up to $15,000, in 2024. The application deadline is 5 p.m. (ET) on Monday, September 11. Information sessions will be held on:
To learn more or register for one of these sessions, visit the Lilly Endowment website. Contact Lilly Endowment staff at teachercreativity@lei.org with any questions.

Pro Bono Indiana is sponsoring a free two day virtual CLE June 29-30. Topics include Guardian ad Litem (GAL) Roles and Expectations, Writing a GAL report, and ethics. Learn more and register here.

Get to Know: Isaac Harper

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 Foundation Civic Education Specialist Isaac Harper.

Also, congratulations to Isaac and his new bride Chloe, who were married May 20 in Columbus, IN.