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## 'The only ceremony of its kind'

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**Update: Courtney M. Ofosu's name was originally misspelled in the second to last paragraph.**

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At the 18th annual Awards for Excellence in Pro Bono and Public Interest Service at the Dirksen Federal Courthouse on Wednesday, judges reminisced on how uniquely eager Chicago's private practice lawyers are to help litigants in need at the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

"To my knowledge, this is the only ceremony of its kind in the United States," said Michael J. Newman, national president of the Federal Bar Association and a U.S. Magistrate Judge in the Southern District of Ohio.

Newman said federal judges in other districts have a much harder time getting lawyers to accept pro bono cases. He said the Federal Bar Association is planning to urge other federal courts to replicate Chicago's annual awards ceremony to build more esteem for volunteering in their own districts.

During the ceremony, several judges shared their memories of some of the litigants the attorneys represented.

Many of the litigants referenced had brought multiple cases. As was the case with Sidley Austin LLP partner Melanie E. Walker, associates Kendra L. Stead, Daniel C. Craig and Laura A. Sexton and staff attorney Daniel M. Greenfield, a volunteer group who agrees to handle one case for an inmate often then volunteers to take on all six of his cases.

"It's kind of in for a dime, in for a dollar with our prisoner litigants," said Judge John J. Tharp Jr.

Magistrate Judge Mary M. Rowland said Freeborn & Peters LLP associate Kirk A. Watkins took on a case with only 87 days left in the statute of limitations to track down the names of a correctional officer and prison nurse.

Judge Matthew F. Kennelly commended Barack Ferrazzano Kirschbaum & Nagelberg LLP partners Wendi E. Sloane and Andrew E. Nieland for taking on a case pro bono that he described as "combat duty" level on the complication scale, involving five plaintiffs and about 40 defendants.

Many of the litigants volunteers represented were difficult in lighter ways, including a man — represented by Neal, Gerber & Eisenberg LLP partners Jill B. Berkeley and Gerald A. Golden and associate Collette A. Brown and Jackson Lewis P.C. associate Natalie S. Federle — who referred to himself exclusively in the third person.

Tracy L. Bradford Farley, a partner at Quarles & Brady LLP represented a litigant Judge Edmond E. Chang described as “quite a character.”

“This was the first settlement conference at which — and I hope it is the last one — a party insisted on removing an article of clothing to show me a body part that was afflicted with nerve damage,” said Chang, describing Farley’s client. “It was somewhat relevant.”

While some honorees consisted of teams from bigger firms with more resources, Susan E. Cox commended Mark A. Scarlato and Mark J. Galler Jr. from the small firm Fornaro Law in LaGrange for taking on a case that lasted more than two years. Galler is now an associate at Anderson, Rasor & Partners LLP.

Honorees varied in experience, ranging from Cristina M. Salvato, an associate at Mandell Menkes LLC who worked a pro bono case along with partner Stephen J. Rosenfeld as her first trial, to Linda T. Coberly, the managing partner at Winston & Strawn LLP who was recognized for a pro bono class-action lawsuit that led to changes in U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement practices nationwide.

In addition to direct representation cases, lawyers were also recognized for innovative volunteer work, including an amicus brief on prison conditions put together by Sidley Austin LLP attorney Daniel M. Greenfield and associates Benjamin R. Brunner, Jeffrey R. Carroll and Karim Basaria that were relevant to 646 cases.

Other awardees for excellence in pro bono service were Heather L. Kramer, Melanie J. Chico and Courtney M. Ofosu; Troy D. Hoyt and Lisa M. Kpor; Patrick M. Collins, Adam L. Marchuk, Caroline A. Teichner, Kristen S. Smith and Mitchell A. Meneau; Alan S. Mills, Sheila A. Bedi, Vanessa Del Valle and Alexa Van Brunt; Jacie C. Zolna; Whitney K. Siehl; J. Simone Jones; JoAnne B. Bruzugul, Ross S. Carponelli; William F. Bochte, Peter G. Baroni, Michael J. Kralovec, David E. Schwartz and Kevin J. Young; Robert M. Winter and Christine R. Frymire; Jeffrey J. Scolaro; Joan E. Ahn; George D. Sax; and David J. Stein and Frank J. DelBarto.

Awardees for excellence in public interest service were John J. Held, Jaime Dowell and the firm Morgan, Lewis & Bockius LLP.

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