

Washington State Bar Association

1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 600

Seattle, WA 98101-2539



Contact: Jennifer Olegario, WSBA Communications Manager
206-727-8212; jennifero@wsba.org

Excellence Celebrated at Annual APEX Awards

Exceptional WSBA members honored at first all-virtual event

SEATTLE, Dec. 7, 2020 — The Washington State Bar Association (WSBA) hosted its first completely virtual ceremony for this year's [APEX \(Acknowledging Professional Excellence\) Awards](#), honoring 14 outstanding legal professionals and organizations throughout the state.

The exceptional work of Washington's legal community was on full display, with WSBA members continuing undeterred by unprecedented challenges. In addition, 2020 marks the first year that members of the public were able to view the full festivities as well. Attendees were presented with videos highlighting each winner and their achievements, and heard from the people whose lives have been the most positively impacted by the award winners' commitment and service.

Kyle Sciuchetti, 2020-2021 president of the Board of Governors, and Rajeev Majumdar, immediate-past president, co-hosted the awards show. "It's an honor to celebrate the remarkable achievements of our award recipients, many of whom overcame innumerable challenges," said Sciuchetti. "From highlighting landmark civil rights cases to being the first woman to practice law in a community to creating safe spaces for marginalized communities, this year's honorees truly represent the breadth of the legal profession's impact."

The 2020 APEX Awards featured a few firsts, including a Q&A session between Sally P. Savage Leadership in Philanthropy Award winner Lembhard G. Howell and former U.S. Attorney John McKay. The non-traditional format also allowed for introductions to each award winner by Washington legal "celebrities" such as Attorney General Bob Ferguson, Washington Supreme Court Chief Justice Steven González, and a number of current and past Supreme Court justices, U.S. attorneys, and more.

Fourteen individuals and organizations won awards across 11 categories—including multiple lifetime achievement awards presented to three pioneering women in the legal profession—that acknowledge the legal community's impacts in areas such as access to justice, diversity, and public service.

- **Award of Merit, Daniel G. Jones:** A Navy Reserve Judge Advocate General (JAG) and civilian attorney with the Navy's Region Legal Services Office Northwest, Capt. Jones is responsible for training all new JAGs and, as one supporter noted, any Northwest JAG who has competently provided legal assistance in the last decade "has Mr. J to thank."
- **Angelo Petrus Award for Lawyers in Government Service, Nancy Koptur:** Well known in the family law community, Koptur has given 30 years of service as a staff attorney with the Washington Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Child Support. She was the "go-to" attorney for all things child-support related and has been heavily involved with the WSBA Family Law Section.
- **Justice Charles Z. Smith Excellence in Diversity Award, Catherine C. A. Romero:** Romero has been instrumental in supporting the next generation of Latinx lawyers. Her work has helped increase Latinx representation in IP and technology law by providing over 180 Hispanic and Latinx law students with an expenses-paid IP and technology law immersion program. Romero has also provided pro bono service to asylum seekers on the Mexico-Texas border.
- **Legal Innovation Award, Latinx Legal Day:** Latinx Legal Day's collaborative efforts led to a law clinic that creates a safe space specifically for the underserved Latinx community in Clark County, serving over 650 clients since 2016. Latinx Legal Day is a collaborative effort among Southwest Washington League of United Latin American Citizens, YWCA Clark County, Latino Community Resource Group, and Clark County Volunteer Lawyers Program.
- **Lifetime Service Award, Patricia J. Chvatal:** A fixture of the Tri-Cities family law legal community, Chvatal was the first woman to practice law in the area, beginning with her volunteer work at a women's shelter.

Forty three years later, she continues to donate her time and resources to many local causes in the community.

- **Lifetime Service Award, Carol Newell Pidduck:** Pidduck served as the executive director of the Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) of Kittitas County for 20 years, where she was responsible for two paid staff, over 25 volunteers, over 100 cases, outreach, and fundraising. Her nominators note that she has “made the community a better place.”
- **Lifetime Service Award, D. Jean Shaw:** After opening the first all-women law firm in Spokane, Shaw moved across the state to Vancouver where she practiced real estate law and later served as assistant general counsel to KinderCare. Shaw also served a quarter-century on the board of the Humane Society of Southwest Washington, including a term as its president.
- **Norm Maleng Leadership Award, Malou Chavez:** Chavez serves as the deputy director of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project where she supervises a legal team at one of the country’s largest nonprofit organizations exclusively focused on providing legal services to immigrants.
- **Outstanding Judge Award, Hon. Michael McCarthy:** Awarded posthumously, Judge McCarthy was a well-respected and well-liked judge with over 20 years of service in Yakima County. After service as a VISTA volunteer (the domestic Peace Corps), he began his career in Yakima in 1980 in the Prosecutor’s Office, the Yakima County Corporate Counsel’s office, Yakima County District Court, and finally Yakima County Superior Court.
- **Outstanding Young Lawyer Award, Jordan Couch:** Couch has done a tremendous amount of work to bring new and young lawyers into the WSBA, and these efforts have had a positive impact on young lawyers. Couch is a partner and cultural ambassador at Palace Law, and is also heavily involved in multiple bar associations, advocating for a better, more client-centric future to the legal profession.
- **Pro Bono and Public Service Award (Individual), Joanna Plichta Boisen:** Currently the chief pro bono and social impact officer at Davis Wright Tremaine, Boisen’s work has focused on creating pro bono positions at private law firms. She is also helping to coordinate with Washington Sen. Patty Murray’s office the access to justice response to the COVID-19 pandemic in Washington.
- **Pro Bono and Public Service Award (Organization), Thurston County Volunteer Legal Services:** In 2019, TCVLS provided 1,550 consultations with 126 volunteer attorneys and 43 pro-bono representations across the numerous counties in which it coordinates volunteer legal services. One nominator said of them, “The staff and team of volunteer attorneys at TCVLS represent the best and the highest ideals of the legal profession.”
- **Professionalism Award, Jean M. McCoy:** McCoy is a mentor to new attorneys, highly respected, and known for her fairness, honesty, and compassion. She practices in the contentious areas of landlord-tenant and creditors’ rights law, yet has been described as “kind” and “diplomatic.”
- **Sally P. Savage Leadership in Philanthropy Award, Lembhard G. Howell:** The Washington State Bar Foundation voted unanimously to recommend Howell for this award, stating that “through his decades as a champion for justice, he exemplifies Sally Savage’s spirit of generosity and leadership.”

A recording of the full broadcast is available on-demand at <https://www.wsba.org/apex>. Individual videos honoring each APEX award winner will be available on the [Washington State Bar Association YouTube page](#).

About the Washington State Bar Association

The WSBA operates under the delegated authority of the Washington Supreme Court to license the state’s more than 40,000 lawyers and other legal professionals. In furtherance of its obligation to protect and serve the public, the WSBA both regulates lawyers and other legal professionals and serves its members as a professional association — all without public funding. The WSBA’s mission is to serve the public and the members of the Bar, to ensure the integrity of the legal profession, and to champion justice. For more information, visit www.wsba.org.

###