



# A Night of HONOR AND INSPIRATION

Over 450 guests were in attendance at the sixth annual “Celebrate with the Stars” event on April 11 at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville. President Jonathan M. Shapiro began the night by acknowledging the support of the many dignitaries in attendance, including Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Attorney General William M. Tong, and United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut John H. Durham.

The first recognition of the evening was for members of the bar admitted in 1969, who were honored for their 50 years of practice with Half-century pins.

The awards presentations began with The Honorable Anthony V. DeMayo Pro Bono Award. The winners of this award, as selected by the Pro Bono Committee, exhibit commitment to pro bono service and serve as role models for the profession. This year’s winners were: Rebecca L. Ciota, Jennifer L. Hluska, Brittany A. Killian, Jane I. Milas, and Stephanie B. Nickse.

YLS Chair David A. McGrath presented the Young Lawyers Section Vanguard Award to Melanie P. Dykas, who gave a special “thank you” to President Shapiro, crediting him as the one that brought her into the YLS nearly seven years ago. She encouraged attendees to “go home and take a moment to reflect on all the opportunities and the privileges that we’ve all been lucky enough to have to get us here today and try to think of ways to create those opportunities for others.”



The 2018-2019 CBA officers with Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz.

A unique distinction for this year, President Shapiro presented Morton N. Katz with the President’s Special Recognition. “In this role as president, you sometimes see something that amazes you in an entirely different way and I had that happen to me this year. Perhaps it’s fitting that we just honored someone from the Young Lawyers Section that we now turn to someone who’s on the opposite end of the career spectrum: Attorney Morton Katz,” stated President Shapiro. Attorney Katz, who turns 100 in May of this year, has been practicing since 1951 and has spent much of his career giving back to others. Along with his recognition, he was presented with a citation from Governor Ned Lamont.

After dinner, the signature awards were presented by President Jonathan M. Shapiro, President-elect Ndidi N. Moses, and Vice President Amy Lin Meyerson.



The 2019 Celebrate with the Stars award winners.



Edward F. Hennessey Professionalism Award winner and Past President (2014-2015) Mark A. Dubois.



Citizen for the Law Award winners Pastor AJ Johnson and Cori Mackey with CBA leadership and Awards Committee co-chairs.



The 2018-2019 CBA officers with United States Attorney for the District of Connecticut John H. Durham.



Young Lawyers Section Vanguard Award winner Melanie P. Dykas with CBA leadership and Young Lawyers Section chair, David A. McGrath.



CBA President Jonathan M. Shapiro with President's Special Recognition honoree Morton N. Katz.



John Eldred Shields Distinguished Professional Service Award winner Hon. Anne C. Dranginis with her sister Mary Cianciolo.



The Honorable Anthony V. DeMayo Pro Bono Award winner Brittany A. Killian with her wife, Meghan Killian.



The 2019 50-year honorees.

The first signature award was presented to Justine C. Rakich-Kelly, the winner of the Charles J. Parker Legal Services Award for her dedication to the delivery of legal services to the disadvantaged in Connecticut. She shared that CBA Past President “Norm Janes [was] my first Legal Aid boss, who introduced me to the Legal Aid community, which is filled with hardworking, committed, and smart people. I am honored to be a part of it.”

The Citizen for the Law Award was presented to the night’s only two non-attorney honorees, Pastor AJ Johnson and Cori Mackey, both from the Christian Activities Council, for their significant contribution to the institution of justice and the law.

Krishna R. Patel was honored with the Citizen of the Law Award for her work as an active strategist, combating human trafficking on the global, national, and state levels for the Grace Farms Foundation.

The Henry J. Naruk Judiciary Award was presented to Hon. William I. Garfinkel of the United States District Court for the District of Connecticut for his substantial contributions to the administration of justice in Connecticut.

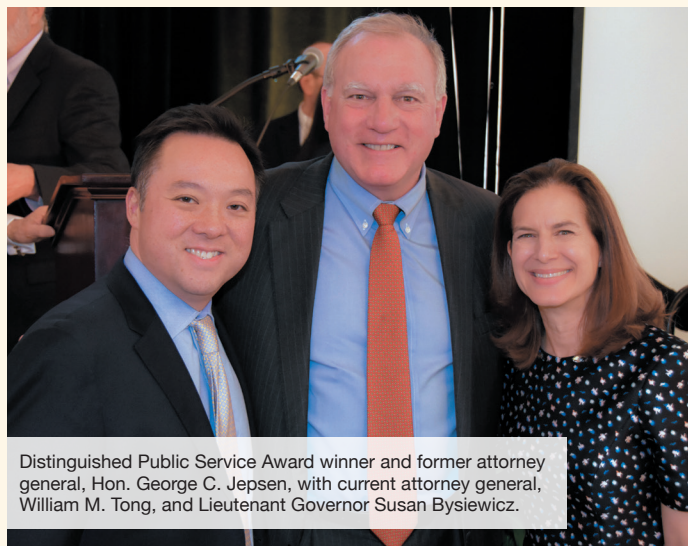
President-elect Moses and Immediate Past President DeMeola, former students of Professor Willajeanne F. McLean, presented her with the Tapping Reeve Legal Educator Award for her commitment to legal education in the state. Attorney DeMeola shared moving remarks about her former professor: “I join in the praise and celebration of Professor McLean. As I reflected on tonight, I wanted to honor and recognize what happens when law students and young attorneys see themselves reflected back in leaders. Professor McLean saw us as we were—taught, empowered, influenced and inspired us to become our best selves. Representatives of two generations of law students, black law students, are on this stage and it’s really important, because *we are*, because *you are*.”

CBA Past President Mark A. Dubois was given the Edward F. Hennessey Professionalism Award for his dedication to the highest ideals and ethical standards of the legal profession throughout his over 40 years in the profession, between his time as Connecticut’s first chief disciplinary counsel, where he established an office that investigated and prosecuted attorney misconduct and the unauthorized practice of law, to his many years as a dedicated teacher to both law students and colleagues.

The John Eldred Shields Distinguished Professional Service Award was bestowed upon Hon. Anne C. Dranginis (Ret.) for her many years of service to the legal community and the community at large. “This professionalism that we all aspire to every day—that we all act upon in a variety of ways—is an important role that we have and we have been given a great opportunity. We have all been given a lot....We are rich in ideas, we are rich in what we can give to our communities and we have to keep giving,” stated Judge Dranginis.



Tapping Reeve Legal Educator Award winner Willajeanne F. McLean of UConn School of Law with former students CBA Past President Karen DeMeola and CBA President-elect Nididi N. Moses.



Distinguished Public Service Award winner and former attorney general, Hon. George C. Jepsen, with current attorney general, William M. Tong, and Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz.

The final award of the evening was the Distinguished Public Service Award, presented to former attorney general, George C. Jepsen, for his significant contributions both as a private citizen and public official on initiatives to eradicate domestic violence and raise awareness about the issues related to domestic violence and its impact on victims and society. He shared how grateful he was to have worked with all those at the Office of the Attorney General, stating, “It has been the experience and honor of a lifetime to serve as state attorney general for the last eight years.”

In addition to their awards, the honorees were presented with citations from Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Secretary of the State Denise W. Merrill, and Senator Richard L. Blumenthal.

The evening concluded with dessert cordials, along with music, and the third annual “Dancing with the CBA Stars” dance contest. ■