



News Release

FROM: Chambers of the Chief Judge
19th Judicial Circuit
Lake County
Waukegan, Illinois 60085-4359

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Waukegan, Illinois

LIBERTY BELL AWARDS

Chief Judge James Booras is pleased to announce the names of the recipients of the 2010 Liberty Bell Awards. Since 1996, the Circuit Court of Lake County has presented the Liberty Bell Award to both, an individual and an organization for their outstanding commitment and service to the community. This year the Circuit Court has recognized two individuals as co-recipients; namely, attorneys **David P. Leibowitz** and **Douglas W. Stiles**. The organization being recognized is the **Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc.** Mr. Leibowitz has offices in Waukegan and Kenosha. Mr. Stiles' law firm is located in Waukegan. The office of Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc. is headquartered in Champaign and has satellite offices in locations including Chicago and Libertyville.

Douglas Stiles, partner in the firm of Fuqua, Winter & Stiles, Ltd., and David Leibowitz, managing attorney of Lakelaw, both have devoted substantial time and effort to assisting thousands of homeowners facing mortgage foreclosures in Lake County. Last spring, as the recession led to an exponential increase in foreclosure filings, Doug and David began working to educate members of the legal community about mortgage foreclosures. Together Doug and David joined forces with members of the Lake County Bar Association's (LCBA) Civil Trial and Appeals Committee to create the Mortgage Foreclosure Help Desk. Help Desk volunteers provide basic information about the mortgage foreclosure process outside courtrooms where foreclosure cases are heard. The information they provide is critically important because while the Mortgage Foreclosure Law includes a redemption period to afford homeowners time to try to avoid loss of their property and equity, many self-represented homeowners come to court expecting to lose their property on the day of their first court appearance. To date, more than 60 attorneys and 30 paralegal volunteers have been trained who staff the Help Desk. Doug and David work at the Help Desk as well.

Mr. Stiles, a Waukegan resident, has authored an article titled Mortgage Foreclosures: Process and Options. Mr. Leibowitz, who resides in the Deerfield community, has written an article, along with his associate, Sharanya Gururajan, titled Fundamentals of Illinois Mortgage Foreclosure Defense. Both articles have been published in the Lake County Bar Association's publication, The Docket.

Chief Judge Booras noted, "Our mortgage foreclosure courtrooms are filled with members of our community who are struggling with the most painful effects of the recession. The educational efforts of David Leibowitz and Douglas Stiles and their work at the LCBA's Mortgage Foreclosure Help Desk have helped to alleviate homeowners' initial concerns about mortgage foreclosure litigation. That is the reason they have been chosen by the Circuit Judges of Lake County for this recognition."

The organizational award was presented to the **Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc.** (ATGF). Attorneys' Title Guaranty Fund, Inc. is a title insurance company used primarily by lawyers. In the wake of the mortgage foreclosure crisis, ATGF has been a leader in bringing services to at-risk homeowners. In 2009 and 2010, they have been integrally involved and have used the force of their membership for the power of good, offering volunteer lawyers to help homeowners in danger of losing their homes refinance their mortgages. Recently in Lake County, directly as a result of their pro-active search for a way to help troubled homeowners, ATGF and other community institutions and organizations sponsored the "Keep Your Home" event on March 6, 2010 at the University Center in Grayslake. Over 700 people attended and more than 300 families were served by banks and volunteer attorneys who assisted them with mortgage counseling and with applications for refinance. Chief Judge Booras said, "As a result of the leadership of Attorneys' Title and the organizations they galvanized and the resources they marshaled, many people in Lake County were assisted. We are proud of their dedicated volunteer work."

The Liberty Bell Award originated in the 1960's in Michigan to honor extraordinary service to the justice system and dedication to the furtherance of the administration of justice. Such service may include taking time to educate the public about our freedoms under the law or encouraging an appreciation of the rule of law and greater respect for the courts. In 2005, the Circuit Court of Lake County began its tradition of presenting the awards in Memory of Judge Thomas R. Smoker, a respected Lake County judge who passed away in 2004. The awards are decided upon by a vote of Lake County's circuit judges.

The honorees will receive their Liberty Bell Awards during the monthly meeting of the Lake County Bar Association held on April 28, 2010.

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<http://19thcircuitcourt.state.il.us>