



Bulletin

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WHAT'S INSIDE

MDCALA Ceremony Recognizes Essay Contest Winners

MDCALA hosted its fifth annual essay contest awards ceremony and reception on April 4, 2005, at the Anne Arundel County Circuit Court House in downtown Annapolis. Three high school seniors and thirteen fourth grade winners were presented cash prizes and certificates before an audience of their families, MDCALA supporters, and Maryland legislators.

This year's essays addressed the importance of personal responsibility. For the first time, fourth graders participated in the contest. "Every day the American legal system is cheated and misused by people who lack personal responsibility," wrote first place high school essayist, Amanda Kwiatkowski. "The public must understand there are risks in every action; there is not always someone to blame."

Executive Director's Message 2

Jury Duty: Protecting Our Freedoms 3

MDCALA Welcomes Two New Board Members 3

MDCALA 2005 WINNERS

High School Senior

- 1st Place ~ Amanda Kwiatkowski
Century High, Carroll County
- 2nd Place ~ Mark McMichael
Westminster High, Carroll County
- 3rd Place ~ Paul Warner
Calvert High, Calvert County

Fourth Graders

Natalie Favret	Annapolis Elementary	Anne Arundel County
Cecil Cummins	Annapolis Elementary	Anne Arundel County
Diana Custis	Chesapeake City	Cecil County
Ashlee Harden	Mary H. Matula	Charles County
Bobby Keim	Mary H. Matula	Charles County
Braxton Crosby	Mary H. Matula	Charles County
Keith Long	Princess Anne	Somerset County
Brooke Cline	Princess Anne	Somerset County
Janae Marshall	Princess Anne	Somerset County
Cody Hartman	Heritage Academy	Washington County
Kristin Hoffman	Heritage Academy	Washington County
Daniel Clark	Heritage Academy	Washington County
Kayla Comegys	Rock Hall Academy	Kent County



Amanda Kwiatkowski, 1st Place HS winner with Del. Susan Krebs and presenter, Jonathan P. Kagan, J.D.

The reception highlighted keynote speaker, Dr. George H.A. Bone, President-elect, of The Maryland State Medical Society. Essay winners were presented their awards by Jonathan P. Kagan, J.D. of the law firm of Brassel & Baldwin, Annapolis, Maryland. Carroll County Delegates Tanya Shewell and Susan Krebs presented proclamations to their county winners. Also participating in recognizing the awardees were Anne Arundel County Delegate Terry Gilleland, Baltimore Delegate William Frank, and Charles County Delegate Sally Jameson. ■

Read a sample of the 2005 winning essays on the MDCALA web site, www.mdcala.org

MDCALA


MDCALA is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, grassroots, public education organization dedicated to watching over the legal system and those who would seek to abuse it for undeserved gain. MDCALA strives to educate the public about the costs and consequences of lawsuit abuse through a variety of education and outreach activities.

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SPEAKERS BUREAU

MDCALA provides volunteer speakers as a public service to civic, community, religious, and/or professional organizations interested in hearing about the effects of lawsuit abuse. If you are interested in having a speaker address your organization, contact Carrie Capuco at 410-280-3800 or 800-210-8222.

Executive Director's Message



In April, I had the pleasure of honoring MDCALA's annual essay finalists. It was truly rewarding to hear the views of these young people on personal responsibility, and from the high school seniors on how personal responsibility affects our Maryland courts. I hope as they continue their schooling and enter the workplace, that each of them will be able to promote his or her belief in the importance of personal responsibility.

This year's General Assembly session considered several pieces of legislation of major significance to restoring fairness to our civil justice system. MDCALA distributed opinion-editorials, letters-to-the-editor, and press releases in support of comprehensive medical malpractice reform, the passage of the "Common Sense Food Consumption Act," and jury service reform.

Over the next few months, MDCALA will continue to focus on the impact of lawsuit abuse on small businesses and consumers. MDCALA will travel across the state to bring attention to the importance of stopping frivolous lawsuits and ensuring that our courts are fair and balanced. MDCALA will also shine a spotlight on the importance of jury service. We must all do our part and serve on a jury when called in order to ensure our courts are used for justice, not greed.

Please do not hesitate to contact MDCALA if you have any questions or would like to learn how you can get involved in the fight against lawsuit abuse.

I hope you have a pleasant summer.

Carrie Capuco
 President/Executive Director
 MDCALA

Jury Duty: Protecting Our Freedoms

By Carrie Capuco

Veterans and those in military service make many sacrifices and all too often put their lives at risk to protect our freedoms. To honor their service and show our love of democracy, we too must do our part to protect our freedoms, including the right to trial by jury.

Yet, a recent American Bar Association survey revealed that more than 87 percent of respondents who were called for jury duty found it “important but inconvenient.” In fact, according to the Maryland Bar Association, nearly 25 percent of Marylanders summoned for jury duty never show up to court. Baltimore particularly suffers from a limited pool of jurors because hundreds of people a week ignore their summons.

To ensure that our courts are used for justice, we need to encourage jury service to guarantee that those who are injured receive fair compensation and frivolous lawsuits are thrown out. Without qualified jurors dedicated to promoting fairness and balance, our legal system will continue to be abused. Serving on a jury is the best way to fight lawsuit abuse.

MDCALA supported a House Bill generally prohibiting employers from requiring an employee summoned for specified jury service to use accumulated leave for that service. This bill, signed into law on May 26, 2005, also raises the State juror per diem from \$15 to \$50 for each day after the fifth day of jury service. MDCALA will continue to promote measures that encourage jury service.

In addition, MDCALA applauds Baltimore’s sponsorship of Jury Appreciation Week. It is an important step in the right direction. All Maryland counties should follow in Baltimore’s footsteps. It’s important to recognize those who serve and to thank them for answering this very important call. ■

MDCALA Welcomes Two New Board Members

This spring Patricia A. “Trish” Miller and Ron Vitkum joined the MDCALA Board of Directors.

Trish Miller is president of The National Institute for Conflict Resolution. She earned her law degree from George Mason School of Law and her undergraduate degree from Radford College. Trish’s significant accomplishment was to institutionalize alternative dispute resolution (ADR) by developing multidisciplinary dispute resolution training and systems design workshops for the judiciary of Maryland, lawyers, federal agencies, trade associations, private industry and the community. Trish believes in mentoring outside of her work. She also created CASA, an organization designed to protect abused and neglected children in the court system.

Ron Vitkum is owner of Yogi Bear’s Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts. He graduated from East Stroudsburg University, Pennsylvania in 1978 with a B.A. Degree in Health Education. Ron has had a long career in the corporate world including management positions at Colgate Palmolive and Polaroid Corporation and more recently as Vice President USA Sales for Carrera Eyewear, Germany, and Regional Manager Eastern USA for Sanford Berol. Ron is active in the Hagerstown/Washington County Chamber of Commerce and the County Convention and Visitors Bureau. ■

FACT We All Pay for Lawsuit Abuse

We all pay for lawsuit abuse. According to a report by Tillinghast-Towers Perrin, the U.S. tort system cost \$246 billion in 2003, which translates to a staggering figure of **\$845 per person**.

- *U.S. Tort Costs: 2004 Update*, Tillinghast-Towers Perrin

We at MDCALA want to extend a hearty *THANK YOU* to all of our donors, but...

Please accept my contribution of \$ _____ to Maryland Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse.

- I am a current supporter of MDCALA and wish to update my information.
 Please send me civil justice reform news updates.

Name (please print) _____

Signature _____

Date _____

Address _____

City, State and Zip Code _____

Telephone Number _____

Fax Number _____

Email _____

Organization & Title (optional) _____

MDCALA is a recognized nonprofit organization under Section 501(c)(6) of the Internal Revenue Code. Contributors should consult with their tax advisor about the deductibility of contributions or gifts. Less than 12% of your gift will be used for lobbying purposes.

WE STILL NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

MDCALA educates the public on the costs and consequences of lawsuit abuse through outreach activities and public education campaigns.

Please make a donation today. The amount of your contribution doesn't matter—but your commitment to fighting lawsuit abuse does.

Please take the time to fill out the form at the right. Mail to the MDCALA office at: 214 Duke of Gloucester Street, Annapolis, MD 21401.

Please help us update our database

If your contact information is older than a year, please take a minute to complete the above form and fax it to us at 410-280-3802 or email us your information at mdcala2@erols.com. We do not have email addresses for most of our supporters. If you would like to provide that information to us, please email it to us.

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Maryland
Citizens Against
Lawsuit Abuse



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