



## Thank You for Supporting the Multnomah Bar Foundation

*by Joseph L. Franco*  
*President, Multnomah Bar Foundation*



As 2023 comes to a close, I write to thank the members of our community whose generous contributions of time and money have made the MBF's charitable programs possible. In the first full year following the end of COVID-19 emergency declarations, I am happy to announce that all three of the MBF's programs are once again in full stride.

The MBF's mission is to "increase the public's understanding of the legal system, to promote civic education, public participation and respect for the law, to improve the quality and administration of the legal system, and to support programs and projects related to the MBF's purpose." With that mission in mind, I would like to take stock of the progress we have made with the MBF's CourtSupport, CourtConnect and Multnomah CourtCare programs this year, and give special thanks to just some of those who were instrumental in making that progress happen.

**CourtSupport** provides the Central Courthouse with a bilingual Navigator who staffs the information desk and provides a critical service to the public by answering questions about the court, connecting individuals with needed services or accommodations at the courthouse, and making their experience more welcoming and less intimidating. The Navigator's service to those visiting the courthouse is only possible through your generous support, because there is no funding for the position in the judicial department budget. Along with several members of the judiciary, past MBF Presidents Matt Donohue, Nick Kampars and Jen Wagner were instrumental in developing this program. Their efforts culminated in an initial fundraising campaign led by Jen Wagner in 2020 that - in the midst of uncertainty during the first year of the pandemic - was nevertheless able to raise over \$170,000. Past MBF President Mackenzie Hogan also deserves thanks for helping to hire the initial Navigator and launching the program during his term.

This year, the MBF unveiled a plaque at the courthouse memorializing those who generously contributed to the 2020 CourtSupport campaign. Additionally, 2023 was the first full year in which the MBF expanded the Navigator position to full time.

**CourtConnect** pairs lawyers and judges to visit community groups and present information about the court system and the rule of law in an effort to forge a better connection between the community and legal profession. In conjunction with CourtConnect, on August 11, Judge Rima Ghandour and Judge Morgan Wren Long held a noontime

presentation for the staff of the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO). Many IRCO staff attended the presentation live and the presentation was recorded so that IRCO could share it with those whose schedules prevented them from participating in real time. Also, on August 29, CourtConnect - along with Judge Chanpone Sinlapasai, Judge Angela Franco Lucero, and MBF Director Judge Amy Holmes Hehn - brought together members of the bench and bar, consuls and other high-ranking representatives from the Consular Office of Japan in Portland and Consulate of Mexico in Portland, the Japanese American Society of Oregon, Japanese Women's Association, Business Oregon, Partners in Diversity, and Senator Kayse Jama's office for a guided tour of the Central Courthouse followed by a lunch gathering. These are just two examples of CourtConnect's activities in the community, and they would not have been possible without the support of our judiciary and the MBF Public Outreach Committee.

**Multnomah CourtCare** is the MBF's best known program and holds a special place in the hearts of many of our donors. CourtCare improves access to justice by making free, drop-in childcare available for families who have business at the Multnomah County Central Courthouse. This long-standing program was particularly hard hit by the COVID-19 emergency, which caused many childcare workers to leave the workforce. The MBF and its partner, Volunteers of America, initially struggled to fill the CourtCare positions following the opening of the new Central Courthouse. But by July, the MBF was able to re-open CourtCare with a total of three childcare staff, rather than the two staff CourtCare employed prior to the COVID-19 emergency. This additional investment will allow for greater staffing flexibility and continuity, and enable us to continue to provide this essential service to children and their families. I want to give special thanks to Immediate Past President Victoria Blachly who headed a newly-formed CourtCare task force this year, which was instrumental in getting CourtCare back to serving children and their families.

Most of all I would like to thank you, the members of our legal community and other donors, because the MBF's work is only possible because of you. As I close out my term as MBF President, thank you for your generous support of the MBF in 2023!

*Founded in 2005, the Multnomah Bar Foundation (MBF) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.*