

ARTICLES

Multnomah Bar Foundation Fundraising Campaign: Interview with a Fundraiser

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Franco: Tyler...it's spring again and that means it is time for the Multnomah Bar Foundation's Annual Fundraising Campaign. Is there anything the MBA's membership should know about the MBF's fundraising efforts last year, and what the MBF hopes to fund in the coming year as we continue to return to normalcy after COVID-19?

Volm: Yes, in 2022, through the outstanding generosity of Oregon law firms, active and retired attorneys, judges, legal staff, and outside organizations, including the District of Oregon Attorney Admissions Fund, the MBF raised nearly \$125,000 to benefit CourtConnect, CourtSupport and Multnomah CourtCare. The foundation got 2023 off to a great start when, in February, the MBA raised over \$14,000 for the MBF through its annual WinterSmash event. This was the first time the event had been held since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Every last lane was full, and thank you all for your support. As for this year's general fundraising campaign, the MBF intends to again hold a single, combined fundraising campaign that will raise funds to sustain the MBF's three successful programs: CourtCare, CourtSupport and CourtConnect.

Franco: For the handful of lawyers out there who are not familiar with the MBF's wildly successful CourtCare Program, what should they know (aside from where to send their generous donations)?

Volm: CourtCare is a long-standing program which the MBA's membership has made possible through years of tireless support. It improves access to justice by making free, drop-in childcare available for families who have business at the court. The program is located in the downtown Central Courthouse, and has historically served 80 to 100 children and their families each month. CourtCare closed during the pandemic, and the MBF is working hard with its community partners to staff CourtCare and get it back up and running as soon as possible. The MBF formed a special task force this year to focus on getting CourtCare open for business amidst a tight labor market that was exacerbated within the childcare industry. As a result of the work of that task force, just last month the MBF Board approved funds for a new approach to staffing CourtCare, which should facilitate the hiring and retention of CourtCare staff. We expect CourtCare will be serving our community again in the very near future.

Franco: Tell us a little about the MBF's CourtSupport program. It has not been around as long, but it's making a positive impact on access to justice at the new Central Courthouse, isn't it?

Volm: The MBF launched the CourtSupport program in the Fall of 2020 to provide the new Central Courthouse with a bilingual Navigator who staffs the information desk in the courthouse lobby. The CourtSupport Navigator 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. Budgetary constraints restricted the court's ability to staff the information desk, but through the generosity of the MBF's donors, just a few months ago we were able to expand the Navigator position from a 30 hour per week position, to a full-time 40 hour per week position.

Trial Court Administrator Barbara Marcille had the following to say about the CourtSupport program: "The court and the court's customers very much appreciate the MBF's CourtSupport program. The CourtSupport funds raised by the Multnomah Bar Foundation are used to provide services which improve the experience of people who are in our courthouses. The court does not have legislatively allocated funding for a navigator at the information desk in the lobby or for childcare services for people who must appear in court, but these functions are incredibly valuable to people who need help and can relieve some of the stress of coming to court."

Franco: And what about CourtConnect, which is the third program that you said the MBF supports?

Volm: CourtConnect is a program that pairs lawyers and judges together 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. The program helps promote procedural justice by ensuring that community members better understand how the legal system works, by making the courts more approachable, and by facilitating dialogue among members of the public, the bench, and the bar. Essentially, CourtConnect serves as a bridge between the bench, bar and community, and is a part of the MBF's Public Outreach Committee.

Over the last 18 months, the MBF's Public Outreach Committee has initiated dialogue, held informational meetings, or attended events with Africa House; Asian Family Center; the Consulate of Guatemala; the Consulate of Mexico; Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization (IRCO); the Japan-America Society of Oregon (JASO); Latino Network; Muslim Educational Trust; and the Oregon Office of Immigrant and Refugee Advancement. We look forward to continuing to develop and foster these relationships.

Franco: It sounds to me like the MBF has continued to be productive and proactive with their programs, during some really challenging times. What is the fundraising plan for 2023?

Volm: The MBF believes that a single, combined fundraising campaign will best support these highly successful programs. A combined campaign which contributes to the MBF general fund allows the MBF the flexibility to direct funds to any of the three programs as needed to fully fund CourtCare, CourtSupport, and CourtConnect. A combined campaign also means that the MBA membership will not be approached at different times throughout the year with separate campaigns for each of its programs. If a donor wants to earmark a donation for a particular program, that may be done as well.

Franco: Tyler, thank you so much for this information, which we hope will inspire the MBA's membership to donate to the MBF's wonderful programs. For those reading this article and clamoring to donate to the MBF, what do they do next?

Volm: They can join us in launching the third annual Multnomah Bar Foundation Fundraising Campaign. The campaign will run May 1-31, and this year's goal is to raise \$120,000. We need your help to meet and exceed that goal. You can donate online at www.mbabar.org/mbf, use the donation form in this issue, or call the MBA at 503.222.3275. Donations are payable to the Multnomah Bar Foundation and are tax-deductible. Please help us reach our programming goals and donate to the MBF today. Donations made by May 31 will receive special recognition.

Franco: On behalf of the MBF Board, thank you for your consideration. We appreciate your support of the MBF this year, last year, and into the



future! There are many wonderful charities you can work with, but supporting the MBF helps local people with local issues, so we encourage your endorsement and financial support of our mission: “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.

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