

MBA NEWS



20 West Street, Boston, MA 02111-1204 • communications@massbar.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Feb. 15, 2008

CONTACT:

Jennifer Rosinski (617) 338-0675

Tricia M. Oliver (617) 338-0677

**MASSACHUSETTS BAR ASSOCIATION TO HONOR SPRINGFIELD
ATTORNEY WITH THE DEFENDER AWARD
JUVENILE LAWYER ONE OF SEVERAL TO BE RECOGNIZED AT ACCESS TO
JUSTICE AWARDS LUNCHEON MARCH 6**

BOSTON, Mass.—The Massachusetts Bar Association will on March 6 bestow the Defender Award to Springfield attorney Erica E. Cushna for her work in private practice as a juvenile defender, and as a supervisor for Committee for Public Counsel Services overseeing lawyers who represent poor youths in Hampden County.

“Erica E. Cushna is thorough and unyielding in defending the rights of her clients,” said Access to Justice Section Chair Ellen J. Zucker, a partner at Burns & Levinson LLP in Boston. “She is dedicated to fighting for justice for the most vulnerable of clients – young people with emotional problems and learning disabilities, who lack finances, family support and community resources.”

The MBA is dedicating the noon luncheon to the late Nancy King, former executive director of South Middlesex Legal Services in Framingham, who will also receive the Lifetime Achievement Award posthumously. In total, five attorneys and two firms will be honored for their extraordinary efforts in providing free legal services to the public.

The event is being held at the John F. Kennedy Library and Museum in Boston and will feature a keynote address from State Rep. Byron Rushing (D-Boston).

A private practitioner specializing in juvenile defense work in Hampden County, Cushna is credited with raising the level of advocacy and quality of representation available to juvenile clients. She has represented her clients in the state, district and juvenile courts and has appeared before the Massachusetts Appeals Court and the Supreme Judicial Court arguing for the expansion of the right of a juvenile to a hearing prior to detention.

Cushna is regional coordinator for juvenile delinquency and youthful offender cases in Hampden County, and in that role she supervises a panel of private attorneys who provide services to indigent youth.

Fellow juvenile attorneys consider Cushna an invaluable resource and role model for her devotion to fighting school systems who involve the courts in school disciplinary matters. Cushna has fought for

and won dismissals in all of the school cases she has been assigned.

The MBA's Access to Justice to Section nominates the candidates, who are then approved by the MBA House of Delegates. The Defender Award is given to an attorney who is employed or retained by a public or non-profit agency to provide criminal legal services to low-income clients, and who has made a particularly significant or meaningful contribution to the provision of low-income legal services above and beyond the requirements of his or her position.

“The Access to Justice Awards Luncheon highlights the true stars of the legal profession: lawyers who tackle often challenging cases for the public good without compensation. These honorees show us what it means to be a good attorney, and we should all strive to emulate them,” MBA President David W. White Jr. said.

“This year's ceremony is special because it pays tribute to legal services luminary Nancy King, who is greatly respected and admired for her role as a selfless advocate for the delivery of legal services to the poor,” White added.

The full list of honorees:

- **Legal Services Award**, Faye Rachlin, Legal Assistance Corporation of Central Massachusetts., Worcester
- **Lifetime Achievement Award**, Nancy King, former executive director of South Middlesex Legal Services, Framingham
- **Pro Bono Award for Law Firms**, Heisler, Feldman, McCormick and Garrow PC, Springfield; Nutter McClennen & Fish LLP, Boston
- **Pro Bono Publico Award**, Thomas A. Manning, Worcester
- **Defender Award**, Erica E. Cushna, CPCS, Springfield
- **Prosecutor Award**, J. Thomas Kirkman, District Attorney's Office, Barnstable

Incorporated in 1911, the Massachusetts Bar Association is a non-profit organization that serves the legal profession and the public by promoting the administration of justice, legal education, professional excellence and respect for the law. The MBA represents a diverse group of attorneys, judges and legal professionals across the commonwealth.