

DENIS J. MURPHY

*Great Friend, Leader,
Visionary, Mentor, and Hero*



(1938 - 2005)

Denis Murphy, a founder of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and its first board president in 1994, died suddenly on May 17 at his home in Maryland. Institutionally, we owe much to Denis' vision and commitment to the concept of equal access to justice in Ohio.

Murphy Touched Many Lives



*Denis Murphy with his successor as
OLAF President, Tom Chema.*

Denis J. Murphy, a retired partner of Carlile Patchen & Murphy and past president of the Columbus Bar Association and the Foundation, passed away suddenly on May 17th at his Maryland home.

Denis grew up in Connecticut, did his undergraduate work at Lehigh and received his law degree at Georgetown. While in Washington D.C. he met and married Maureen Hughes of Columbus. Shortly thereafter, Denis and Maureen moved to Columbus, eventually settling in Grandview Heights.

Denis was a founding partner of Carlile Patchen & Murphy. While conducting a busy business litigation practice he found time to help eliminate housing discrimination in Columbus, tackle the challenges created by cuts in federal funding of legal services to the poor and serve the profession. He was instrumental in founding and the first president of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation which partners with bar associations, public officials and legal aid providers to distribute legal aid funds and promote the delivery of legal services to all persons.

Denis served the Ohio State Bar Association in several capacities and represented the CBA as member of the ABA House of Delegates. He also served on several ABA committees, including Chairing the Standing Committee on the Delivery of Legal Services.

In 1998, after thirty-one years, Denis retired from Carlile Patchen & Murphy and moved to Annapolis, Maryland. However, he only retired from his business litigation practice, not from his commitment to legal service to the under-served. He joined the University of Maryland Law School faculty as an adjunct and headed up the legal services project, Civil Justice, Inc.

The Columbus Bar Association and the Ohio State Bar Association conferred their highest service awards on Denis Murphy. The Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation created an annual award in his honor to recognize his leadership and advocacy on behalf of indigent clients in Ohio. In 2002, Denis received a commendation from the American Bar Association for his work on behalf of the Civil Justice. And most recently, the Maryland State Bar Association recognized Denis and Civil Justice, Inc. with a Pro Bono Award.

Denis is survived by Maureen Hughes Murphy and children Margaret Murphy and Kurt Klapkowski of Camp Hill, Penn., Denis Murphy, Jr. and Cameron Voss of Philadelphia, Joseph and Sigrid Murphy of Madison, Wis., and Jonathan and Megan Murphy of Columbus; brother John Murphy and sisters Maureen Pugsley and Eileen Mooney; and five grandchildren.

Murphy Left Great Legacy For Legal Services in Ohio

In 1996, OLAF established an award to recognize an outstanding legal aid advocate in the state, to be selected by the board president. The award, which has been highly prized by the recipients over the years, is the Denis J. Murphy award. The most recent award was presented by OLAF president David Weiner to Joe Tafelski, director of the Toledo-based Advocates for Basic Legal Equality and a legal services advocate for over 30 years. Upon learning of Denis's death, Joe sent this by email to his board, staff, and friends of ABLE:

It is with great sorrow that I inform you that our great friend, leader, visionary, and mentor –Denis Murphy– suddenly passed away this morning in Annapolis. Denis was 66. Because of Denis, legal services in Ohio is as strong as it is and is a national leader in so many areas especially IOLTA and Filing Fee funding.

I became acquainted with Denis in the 1970's when we both were litigating fair housing and civil rights cases. Denis was a mentor as he was to so many other young attorneys across the state. He was an excellent lawyer– bright, hard working, and passionate about the cause. He was always willing to lend a hand.

In the 1980's Denis joined with legal aid directors across the state in an effort to advocate for increased funding for legal services to the poor. He spearheaded the Spangenberg legal needs study in the early 90's that we still use today. Using the results of that study, he used his political capital to continuously go to the Ohio State Bar Association and the State Legislature to advocate for more funding.


Denis had great vision. I recall as we regularly met to discuss implementation of the Spangenberg study, Denis laid out this vision. He talked about the creation of an organization–which today is the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation– and how this organization would have a high powered board of directors that would position it to raise legal services to the poor in Ohio to a higher level. He also talked about how we would have the Chief Justice as one of our strongest supporters and how the OSBA would be a stronger supporter. He also discussed how we would be able to greatly strengthen pro bono work in Ohio because of this change in attitude and leadership.

Denis didn't just have ideas; he used his position as an insider in bar leadership and expended a great deal of political capital to get all of this accomplished.

Last December, I was honored to receive the Denis Murphy Award from the OLAF Board. After I received the award and after a few moments of shock, I couldn't help but reflect on Denis. Here we were meeting at the Supreme Court with the Chief Justice in attendance voicing his support for legal aid. I look around the room at this very distinguished group of public officials and bar leaders; leaders who were actively engaged in developing a strategy and advocating for an increase in filing fees for legal services. This would have been unheard of in 1990. This was all part of Denis' vision; a vision he shared with so many.

We will greatly miss Denis. He has left us a great legacy for our future.

Joe

Obviously, Joe was able to capture Denis's role in the advancement of access to justice within hours of learning of Denis's passing, and his feelings were coming straight from the heart. 

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In 1991, Denis chaired a working group appointed by Chief Justice Thomas Moyer to develop and implement policy recommendations contained in a study of the civil legal needs of impoverished Ohioans. Over the next seven years, Denis worked tirelessly and with great passion to implement the recommendations of the 1991 legal needs study (the *Spangenberg Report*). At the time, there were 1.7 million Ohioans, or more than 700,000, families living in poverty. The legal aid staff lawyers attempting to serve that population numbered approximately 250. That contrasted with more than 30,000 lawyers across the state serving the needs of those Ohioans with some ability to afford counsel.

Denis understood how significantly under-funded the legal aid delivery system was. Using his considerable private bar presence, he led the way to increases in the principal legal aid revenue sources, IOLTA and filing fee surcharges. Revenue from these dedicated sources increased from a little more than \$3 million annually, to more than \$12 million before Denis left Ohio. But even more importantly, Denis' vision set in place a plan that would move our revenue base to more than \$24 million in 2006. Denis also led the way toward the adoption of the ABA's Model Rule 6.1 in Ohio, which sets a goal for pro bono service by attorneys. Denis' efforts regarding Rule 6.1 actually preceded the ABA's adoption in 1993 and the Ohio State Bar Association's endorsement in May 2005.

During Denis' term as OLAF's president, the Foundation created a Presidential Award for excellence in the provision of pro bono services. Given annually, the Columbus law firm Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease was the first recipient of the award. Denis was its 1998 recipient. Information about our 2005 recipients can be found on pages 18 and 19.

In 1996, OLAF also established an award to recognize an outstanding legal aid advocate in the state, which is selected by the OLAF board president. The award, which has been highly prized by the recipients over the years, is the Denis J. Murphy Award. Information about our 2005 recipient can be found on page 15 .

Finally, in honor of all that Denis has done on behalf of the Foundation, we are in the process of creating an endowed Denis J. Murphy Fellowship, which will be awarded to an outstanding law school graduate(s) interested in working to further access to justice in Ohio.

Visit the Foundation's website to learn more about Denis Murphy and his legacy.



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