

**CM** | **LAW**

**Cleveland-Marshall**  
Law Alumni Association

**ANNUAL** Recognition Luncheon

**HONORING  
ALUMNI OF  
THE YEAR**



**The Honorable  
Nancy R. McDonnell '85**

AND



**Patrick J. Perotti '82**

Thursday, May 21, 2015  
Renaissance Cleveland Hotel  
Cleveland, Ohio

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**JUDGE NANCY McDONNELL**

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**and**

**PATRICK PEROTTI**

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## CMLAA Alumna of the Year: The Honorable Nancy McDonnell '85



Determination, perseverance, a strong work ethic — without those qualities the Honorable Nancy R. McDonnell '85 would not have reached the position of Cuyahoga County Common Pleas Judge, where she has served for the past 18 years. More importantly, without those defining characteristics, McDonnell might not be with us today.

In 2009, McDonnell received an emergency double lung transplant and suffered enormous complications. It took her nearly a month to regain consciousness and over six months to leave the hospital, but McDonnell never stopped fighting and was ultimately able to return to the bench.

McDonnell pursued a career in law after working for her father, Daniel McDonnell, as a receptionist and runner for his general practice. Her older brother, Jim, was an assistant county prosecutor, as is her husband of 27 years, John Kosko.

McDonnell began her career as an assistant Cuyahoga County prosecutor and it was during that time she and Kosko began working with the Trial Advocacy Program at Cleveland-Marshall as evaluators, a role they continue to serve today. “I love seeing the enthusiasm and talents of soon-to-be lawyers,” McDonnell said. “The most important thing for students is to get up and ‘Just Do It!’”

McDonnell feels working with the Trial Advocacy Program also helps her brush up on evidence skills, part of her overall dedication to ensuring she runs the best possible courtroom.

“No matter how routine I may find any case, it is the only case that is important to the litigants appearing before the court on a particular day,” McDonnell stressed. “Everyone needs to feel their case was heard.”

### How did Cleveland-Marshall prepare you for career success?

*“I truly feel the professors were excellent. Judge Solomon Oliver of the Federal District Court was both my Civil Procedure and Trial Advocacy professor. He ranks amongst the best. He had been a practicing attorney, as were a number of other professors, including Ed Marek and Patrick Browne. The value of a real-world viewpoint was incalculable. Furthermore, being a downtown law school with both day and night classes, I could easily work. I was able to benefit from both a practical and theoretical education.”*

## CMLAA Alumnus of the Year: Patrick J. Perotti '82



Patrick J. Perotti '82 was interested in pursuing his career in law from a young age. He fondly recalls reading a small booklet of the U.S. Constitution given to him as a fifth grader and informing a fellow classmate who had instructed him to “shut up,” that he would not because of his First Amendment rights. As innocent an injustice as that may have been, Perotti continued to be disturbed by injustices, and looked for a way to fight for underdogs.

Flash forward over 40 years and Perotti is still a voice for underdogs as an attorney specializing in commercial litigation, civil rights, employment discrimination litigation and consumer class actions. His first case in employment discrimination came at random, representing an executive vice president being sexually harassed by her ex-lover and then boss. From his experience with that case, Perotti saw a drastic need for lawyers with skill to help combat race, sex, age, handicap and a myriad of other discriminations and harassments occurring daily in the workplace.

Perotti also represents working people in several class action lawsuits, including a case settlement securing \$420 million in overcharged premiums for more than 300,000 small businesses from the Ohio Bureau of Workers' Compensation in 2014. While the majority of funds secured in his cases go to class members, through use of a legal doctrine known as cy pres, Perotti has directed over \$24 Million in unclaimed class settlement dollars to some 90 Ohio-based charities and non-profits.

“When I discovered the concept of cy pres, I realized there was a simple way to make sure that class actions would do good not only for the class members, but for society,” Perotti said. “The added benefit of also doing good for the clients of the charities receiving the monies made it all the more satisfying. Imagine doing something as a lawyer which actually helps save people’s lives. That is the best reward any of us could ever hope to receive from our work.”

### How did Cleveland-Marshall prepare you for career success?

*“Law school at Cleveland-Marshall was truly in line with the current school motto: Learn Law. Live Justice. The professors spent most of the class discussing real-world application of the law we were learning, not merely esoterics or theory. Professors like Patrick Browne, Steve Werber, Jane Picker and so many others focused on material needed for the bar exam, and that translates into practical material needed to start practicing law in the real world as an attorney.”*



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The 2015 Law Firm Giving Challenge runs through June 30. All firms that achieve  
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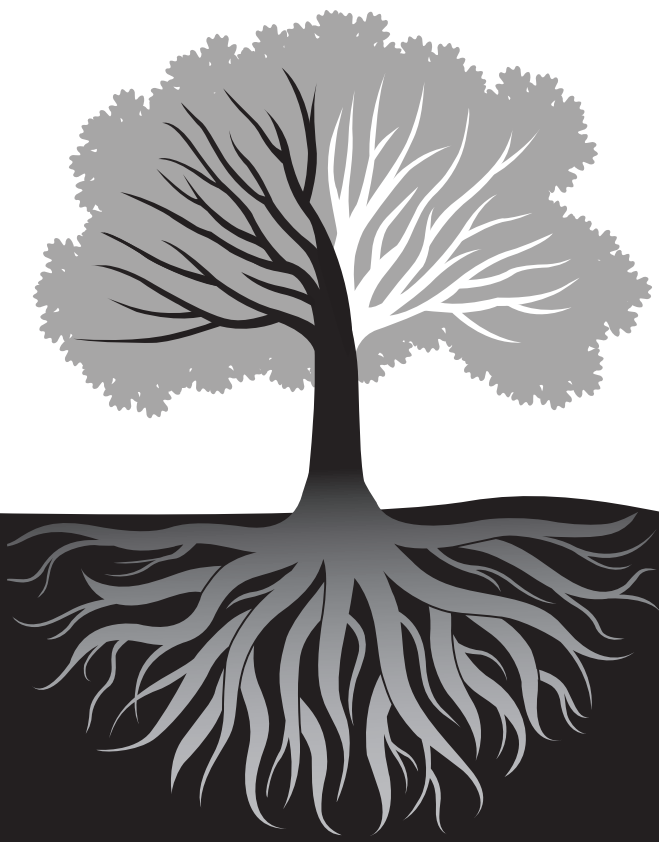
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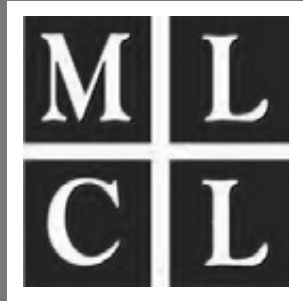
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