

Raymond Bretzmann Receiving Citizen Lawyer Award

The Citizen Lawyer Committee of the NCBA Young Lawyers Division, in conjunction with the NCBA Local Bar Outreach Committee, provides expanded coverage of the 2017 Citizen Lawyer Award recipients in recognition of their volunteer service and leadership in their communities and beyond. The following article is submitted for your consideration by the North Carolina Bar Association. The 2017 Citizen Lawyer Awards will be presented on Friday, June 23, at the NCBA Annual Meeting in Asheville, but the recipients have been notified of their selection and there is no embargo on this information. A photo of the recipient is attached.

By Michelle Liguori

HIGH POINT – “The need is constant. The gratification is instant.”

Raymond (“Ray”) Bretzmann has found this part of the American Red Cross’s motto to be true throughout his 43-year career in High Point.

Bretzmann, a native of Livingston, New Jersey, came to North Carolina in 1967 to attend Wake Forest University for college and law school. As an undergraduate, he interned with the local Head Start program and got to know the needs and struggles of low-income children and their families. The experience showed Bretzmann that “there is a certain element in our society that doesn’t have the same advantages as everyone else and whose rights aren’t protected.” Since then, his activities have “been largely driven by a passion for the fair administration of justice and the plight of the disadvantaged in our society.”

After graduating from law school in 1974, Bretzmann joined a small law firm in High Point and later opened his own practice, handling cases in the areas of personal injury, traffic violations, social security disability, workers’ compensation, wrongful death, and drug and alcohol charges. Bretzmann tries as often as he can to represent clients who come to his door, whether they can pay or not. As a member of the legal profession, he says, he has a duty to ensure the criminal and civil justice systems work effectively for all.

Bretzmann has simultaneously pursued a second career serving low-income children and adults in High Point as a board member of multiple community organizations. Among others, Bretzmann has been involved with High Point’s Volunteers to the Court, a program that works with young criminal defendants; Youth Unlimited, which offers foster care and other services to children in need of a second chance; and the Greater High Point YMCA, including the Big Brothers Big Sisters program.

In recent years, Bretzmann has been most active as a board member and board chair of Open Door Ministries, which provides a leg up to those facing hunger, homelessness and joblessness in the High Point community. Open Door Ministries has been able to help reduce the homeless population in Guilford County over the past nine years, from a recorded 987 people in 2008 to 721 in 2016.

Bretzmann is also active in the First Presbyterian Church of High Point, where he serves as a deacon and elder.

A. Doyle Early Jr., a High Point family lawyer who met Bretzmann in 1974 at the courthouse while the two were representing their respective clients, nominated Bretzmann for the Citizen Lawyer Award. Early says Bretzmann has done well in his private practice, while also doing a world of good in High Point. “He’s one of those good guys who is a credit to the profession and to the community, and who, as the title says, is a true Citizen Lawyer.”

END

Michelle Liguori is a litigation attorney in Raleigh.