

# BAR BRIEFS

Official Publication of the Macomb Bar Association

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# Bar Briefs

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# Lowering the Temperature and Building Community

*By Sherrie L. Detzler, 98th President  
of the Macomb County Bar Association*

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Whether you practice as a solo, in a firm, or a large public agency, carrying the weight of your clients' futures while navigating an increasingly adversarial landscape takes a profound toll. When advocacy devolves into personal animosity and our legal community fractures, it is our collective mental health, professional stamina, and families who pay the ultimate price. Civility is not a soft, abstract ideal; it is a vital survival tool, a shield against burnout, and a prerequisite for a sustainable career.

I am deeply honored and profoundly grateful to the membership of the Macomb County Bar Association for selecting me to lead our community for the 2026–2027 bar year. Stepping into this role, my primary focus is to lower the professional temperature, break down institutional silos, and rebuild our legal community from the ground up. To bridge our deepest divides, the MCBA is launching an exclusive, once-in-a-generation lineup of presidential initiatives. Together, we will honor our shared heritage at the MCBA Birthday Celebration this October, elevate your professional presence at our Headshots and Vendor Fair in November, and culminate our year of renewal on the nation's highest stage with a historic, collective U.S. Supreme Court Swearing-In Ceremony in Washington, D.C. on March 3, 2027.

## **The High Cost of Professional Friction**

To achieve a true culture of wellness, we must address the undercurrents of friction that have quietly eroded our daily practice. Zealous advocacy is the bedrock of our legal system, but somewhere along the way, fierce legal representation has become confused with personal warfare. When every email reads like a battlefield, every phone call ends with insults, and every motion is laced with vitriol, our entire local justice system slows down. More importantly, the human beings operating that system break down.

This friction spikes daily cortisol levels, extends billable or billable-equivalent hours, and stalls case resolutions. It drains the emotional energy of practitioners who already feel isolated in their daily work. Nobody wins when the relationship between opposing attorneys becomes radioactive—least of all the people we serve. We must collectively embrace a fundamental truth: treating opposing counsel with professional dignity is not a sign of weakness. It is a tactical strategy to preserve your own sanity. You can fiercely challenge a legal position and aggressively pursue your client's goals without treating your colleague across the aisle as a mortal enemy.

To break this cycle, the MCBA is establishing neutral ground this year. We will be hosting joint, low-stakes roundtables and specialized wellness continuing legal education programs designed to bring lawyers from every practice area together. My challenge to every member of our bar is a simple "circuit breaker": commit to taking a breath and then picking up the phone to resolve a dispute before filing a fiery motion or firing off a hostile email. Let us remember that we are neighbors

navigating a difficult profession—not just P-numbers and titles. By lowering the temperature in our daily practice, we protect our wellness outside of it.

## **A Call to the Bench: Our Partners in Civility**

This cultural reset cannot happen in a vacuum; it requires the active partnership of our local judiciary. Our esteemed judges are the gatekeepers of our courtrooms and the ultimate arbiters of professional decorum. We respectfully invite you to play a central role in this civility initiative. When the bench tolerates cutting remarks, excessive scheduling rigidity, or hostile behavior, it inadvertently signals that these practices are acceptable. Conversely, when a judge actively praises professional courtesy, sets boundaries for mutual respect, and enforces a standard of calm professionalism, the temperature drops immediately.

Consequently, we ask our judges to join us at our upcoming roundtables, to model this culture of wellness, and to help us hold practitioners accountable to the highest standards of the profession. By working together, the bench and the bar can transform our local courts into environments where fierce advocacy and profound mutual respect coexist seamlessly.

## **Securing Your Spot on the Highest Stage**

Because space for our historic U.S. Supreme Court Swearing-In Ceremony on March 3, 2027, is limited to just twelve practitioners, early action is vital. Do not miss this career-defining opportunity to stand before the full bench of the highest court in the land alongside your colleagues. To claim one of these exclusive spots, download the mandatory application materials, and review the strict vetting criteria immediately by visiting [members.macombbar.org](https://members.macombbar.org). Remember, all completed paperwork and registration fees must be submitted through the portal before the closing deadline of December 1st. Unfortunately, no time extensions can be granted.

## **A Year of Collective Renewal**

The future of our local legal community is not determined by the cases we win or lose, but by how we treat one another in the process. We can no longer afford the toxicity that drains our wellness, burns out our colleagues, and erodes public trust in our system. This year is your invitation to step out of isolation, log off the hostile email threads, and reconnect to this noble profession with joy and camaraderie. Whether you join us to celebrate our history this October, elevate your practice in November, or stand with us in Washington, D.C. this March, your presence matters. Let us choose civility not as an afterthought, but as our primary strategy for a healthier, more sustainable career. The MCBA is your community, your shield, and your professional home—let's build it together!



# Special Unit Spotlight: Drug Unit

*By Nancy Zieah, Assistant Prosecuting Attorney  
Macomb County Prosecutor's Office*



The Macomb County Prosecutor's Office Drug Unit vertically prosecutes major drug crimes from warrant authorization through trial and sentencing. The unit focuses on cases involving the manufacture, delivery, trafficking, and distribution of controlled substances, holding accountable those who fuel addiction, violence, and organized criminal activity in Macomb County.

The Drug Unit works closely with the County of Macomb Enforcement Team (COMET) and the Macomb County Sheriff's Enforcement Team (SET). COMET is a multi-jurisdictional narcotics task force comprised of investigators from the Macomb County Sheriff's Office, Michigan State Police, and numerous local and federal agencies. SET specializes in narcotics investigations, search warrants, fugitive apprehension, and major criminal investigations. Through these partnerships, prosecutors provide legal guidance during investigations while ensuring cases are built on sound constitutional principles and prepared for successful prosecution.

Drug trafficking organizations are frequently linked to violent crime, illegal firearms, money laundering, human trafficking, and other organized criminal enterprises. As a result, Drug Unit prosecutors possess specialized knowledge in controlled substance laws, search and seizure issues, digital evidence, and conspiracy prosecutions. Their work disrupts criminal organizations while improving the safety of neighborhoods throughout Macomb County.

## Meet the Team



**Dale Vande Vrede**  
**Chief, Drug Unit**

Dale Vande Vrede combines extensive litigation experience with proven leadership and a commitment to professionalism. After earning a bachelor's degree in Business Administration from Michigan State University and a Juris Doctor from the University of Detroit Mercy School of Law, he spent more than eight

years in private practice before joining the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office in 2018.

Dale began in the district courts before serving as a second-chair prosecutor for Judges Kathryn A. Viviano and Michael E. Servitto. During the COVID-19 pandemic, he managed the Sterling Heights District Court docket, demonstrating adaptability during an unprecedented period for the justice system.

Assigned to the Drug Unit in 2021, Dale later served as Deputy Chief of District Court before returning to circuit court as Judge Kathryn Viviano's first-chair prosecutor. In October 2025, he became Chief of the Drug Unit, where he leads complex narcotics prosecutions and works closely with law enforcement agencies throughout Macomb County.

Recognized for his professionalism and integrity, Dale received the Kimberly M. Cahill Civility Award. He is respected for his courtroom advocacy, collaborative leadership, and commitment to mentoring the next generation of prosecutors.



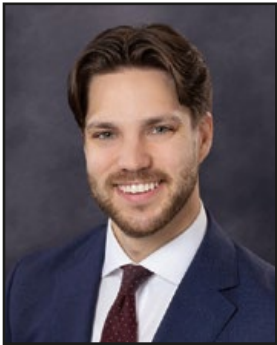
**Vincent Collura**  
**Deputy Chief, Drug Unit**

Deputy Chief Vince Collura brings decades of law enforcement and prosecutorial experience to the Drug Unit. A retired police officer with 25 years of service, Vince joined the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office in 2014 after earning his law degree from Thomas

M. Cooley Law School and a bachelor's degree in political science from Central Michigan University.

Beginning in the district courts, Vince advanced to first-chair assignments before Judges Richard L. Caretti and Julie Gatti before joining the Drug Unit in 2018. His unique background allows him to effectively bridge the gap between investigators and prosecutors, providing valuable insight into complex narcotics investigations from their earliest stages through trial.

As Deputy Chief, Vince mentors prosecutors, assists investigators, and helps develop effective prosecution strategies that strengthen the Drug Unit's partnership with local, state, and federal law enforcement.



**Derek Boedecker**  
Assistant Prosecuting Attorney,  
Drug Unit

Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Derek Boedecker brings a diverse legal background to the Drug Unit. In addition to prosecuting major narcotics cases, he serves in the Macomb County Mental Health Court, working with judges, treatment providers, defense counsel, and community partners to address the intersection of mental illness and the criminal justice system.

Before joining the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office, Derek prosecuted felony firearm offenses in Wayne County and previously practiced auto insurance law. He earned his bachelor's degree from Oakland University and his Juris Doctor from Cooley Law School.

His varied experience enables him to effectively prosecute complex criminal cases while balancing accountability with opportunities for rehabilitation when appropriate.

### Cases Assigned to the Drug Unit

Drug Unit prosecutors review investigations, authorize criminal charges, advise law enforcement on complex legal issues, and prosecute cases through trial and sentencing. The unit handles a wide range of controlled substance offenses, including:

- Drug Trafficking
- Possession with Intent to Deliver
- Delivery of Controlled Substances
- Drug Manufacturing
- Drug Conspiracy and Organized Crime
- Drug-Related Deaths

### Conclusion

The Drug Unit plays a vital role in protecting the citizens of Macomb County by targeting those responsible for distributing dangerous narcotics and supporting organized criminal activity. Through close collaboration with law enforcement and aggressive prosecution of high-level offenders, the unit remains committed to reducing drug-related crime while pursuing justice with integrity, professionalism, and respect for the rule of law.

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|                                       |                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>03</b>   12 PM<br><b>AUGUST</b>    | <b>The Price of Justice:</b><br>Indigency and Ability to Pay<br>Presented by Elisha Oakes                                                                          |
| <b>14</b>   12 PM<br><b>SEPTEMBER</b> | <b>Bearing Witness:</b> Understanding and Managing Secondary Trauma, Compassion Fatigue, and Resilience in Criminal Defense Work<br>Presented by Theresa Cipponeri |
| <b>05</b>   12 PM<br><b>OCTOBER</b>   | <b>Take the Fifth:</b><br>Advising Your Client as a Witness<br>Presented by Stephen Rabaut                                                                         |
| <b>23</b>   12 PM<br><b>OCTOBER</b>   | <b>BONUS!</b><br>PPO Violations and Show Cause Hearings<br>Presented by Hon. Tracey A. Yokich                                                                      |
| <b>02</b>   12 PM<br><b>NOVEMBER</b>  | <b>Objection, Jurisdiction!</b><br>Your Client, the Sovereign Citizen<br>Presented by Catherine O'meara Bolden                                                     |
| <b>07</b>   12 PM<br><b>DECEMBER</b>  | <b>Take It Up:</b> Interlocutory Appeals<br>Presented by Kathy Swedlow                                                                                             |

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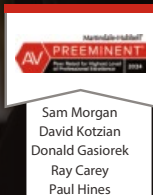
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# When Inheritance Meets Divorce: What Really Happens to “Mom and Dad’s Money”?

*By Pat Simasko, Partner, Simasko Law*



One of the most common questions that comes up when I am talking with families about estate planning is this: “What happens if one of my children gets divorced?” You can almost sense the parents’ feeling of relief once the planning is complete.

*“We’ve done it right. The kids are taken care of.”*

Wills are signed. Trusts are in place. Beneficiary designations are aligned. On paper, everything works right up until the parents pass away and the children actually inherit the estate. That is when real life intervenes. Now the question that nobody asked during the planning process suddenly becomes front and center:

## **Does the ex-spouse get a piece of the inheritance?**

The frustrating, but important, answer is: it depends. Most parents structure their estate plans with one simple goal: **keep the assets in the family.**

Typically, if a child predeceases the parent, that child’s share passes to the grandchildren. If the child survives the parent, the inheritance is distributed outright.

Everyone focuses on the first piece. But it is the second piece where the problems begin.

Because once the child receives the inheritance outright, it is no longer “mom and dad’s money.” It legally becomes the child’s asset. And once that happens, it becomes exposed to creditors, lawsuits, bankruptcy, new beneficiaries, and yes, divorce.

Most parents assume the inheritance stays protected simply because it came from them. Unfortunately, that assumption is wrong.

## **The General Rule in Divorce**

In Michigan, inherited assets are generally considered separate property and are usually not divisible in divorce. So, at first glance, inheritance looks safe. And in a clean, textbook scenario, it is. If your child receives an inheritance, keeps it in his or her own name, avoids mixing it with marital assets, and does not use it for marital purposes, the inheritance will usually remain separate property. But that is not how real life works.

## **The Problem of Co-Mingling**

This is where most people lose their protection quietly, unintentionally, and permanently.

### **Co-mingling means losing the “separate” label.**

Once inherited money becomes mixed with marital assets, courts may begin treating it as part of the marriage.

Common examples include:

- Depositing inherited funds into a joint account.
- Using inherited money to pay down the marital home mortgage.
- Renovating jointly owned property.
- Funding joint investments.
- Retitling inherited real estate into both spouses’ names.

At that point, the argument becomes simple:

*“This is no longer separate. It is part of the marriage.”*

And courts are often willing to agree because it becomes too hard to unscramble the omelet.

Courts also look beyond simple ownership. The longer the marriage, the greater the blending of finances and the more likely the inheritance supported the household. If both spouses contributed, directly or indirectly, to preserving or increasing the value of the inheritance, courts may be more willing to award a portion to the non-inheriting spouse.

And courts do listen to this, especially in long-term marriages involving stay-at-home spouses, unequal earning power, or significant marital contributions. The legal theory is simple: marriage is a partnership.

## **Inherited Real Estate: A Common Trap**

Real estate is where people make some of the biggest mistakes. A child inherits a lake house. The spouse helps renovate it. The family uses it for vacations. Eventually, it stops becoming “my property” and starts becoming “our property,” even if the title technically remains separate.

Now the property may be partially, or fully, marital. Even worse, if marital funds were used to improve the property, the non-inheriting spouse may claim an interest in the increased value.

## **Trust Planning: The Better Way to Protect It**

Here is the uncomfortable truth: if parents leave assets outright, they may be exposing their children to divorce risk. One of the best ways to protect inherited assets is through trust planning.

Instead of distributing assets directly to the child, assets can remain in a properly structured trust for the child’s benefit. The child can still receive distributions, use the assets, and maintain a

comfortable lifestyle, but the inheritance may remain far better protected from divorce claims.

Done correctly, this creates a firewall between the child's inheritance and the child's marital estate.

### **What If the Planning Was Already Done Wrong?**

Let's be honest. Most plans are already in place, and many do not include protective trusts. At that point, the focus becomes damage control.

Keep inherited assets in separate accounts, titled only in the inheriting spouse's name, clearly documented, and away from joint marital use whenever possible. Once inherited assets become mixed into the marriage, separating them later becomes far more difficult.

Timing also matters. If someone waits until divorce is imminent before trying to move or retitle assets, the effort may backfire. Once a divorce case is filed, courts commonly enter orders preventing either party from transferring or retitling property.

### **The Hard Truth Parents Need to Hear**

Parents often resist trust planning because they want things to stay "simple."

They say:

- "I trust my kids."
- "They have a good marriage."
- "We do not want to control things from the grave."
- Or my personal favorite: "It will never happen to me."

That thinking is understandable, but incomplete.

You are not protecting your child from themselves, especially when they may be wearing those rose-colored glasses. You are protecting them from divorce, bad timing, and life changing in ways nobody expects.

Because here is the reality:

**One of the fastest ways to lose a family inheritance is through divorce.**

And every child, especially their attorney, wishes the inheritance had been protected once the divorce begins.

### **Final Takeaway**

If your child inherits assets outright and later divorces, the outcome often depends on whether the inheritance stayed separate, whether it became co-mingled, the length of the marriage, how the asset was used, and the contributions of the other spouse. There is no one-size-fits-all answer.

But there is one consistent pattern: the more integrated the inheritance becomes with the marriage, the more likely it is to be divided. If you are advising clients, or making decisions for your own family, this issue needs to be addressed before the inheritance is distributed.

Because once it is in the child's name, most of the control is gone. And by the time divorce is on the table, you are no longer planning. You are reacting. But remember, Family Court is a Court of equity, and the Judge always has the authority to invade separate assets for the support of a spouse if deemed necessary.



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# Six Reasons Why Lawyers Should Get Help For Their Mental Health

By Stan Popovich

Many lawyers underestimate the impact that mental illness can have on an individual or family. It can be difficult to admit that you have a mental health problem in your life. Secondly, it can be just as difficult in getting the people you know to understand your situation without making any kinds of judgments.

As a result, here are six reasons why you should make your mental health an important priority in your life.

**1. Your situation will improve if you get help:** Your anxieties and fears can be challenging to manage and more than likely you will need some help. Just as you talk to your doctor about your regular health, you should not be hesitant in

seeking help for your mental health. If left untreated, your anxieties and fears may not go away.

**2. Drugs and alcohol are not the answer:** Drugs and alcohol can make your problems more complicated. Many people have said that drugs and alcohol will only add more problems to your situation. Be smart and learn how to cope with your mental health issues by talking to a qualified professional. There are many health professionals in your area that can give you some ideas on where you can go for assistance.

**3. You will save time and money:** Eventually, you will have to confront your fears and mental health issues. Save yourself the time and heartache and confront your problems now rather than later. You will save months of struggling by getting help right away. The sooner you get assistance the faster you will start getting some relief.

**4. You are not alone:** Everyone deals with fear, stress, and anxiety in life, whether or not they care to admit it. In addition, do not be embarrassed that you are getting help. We all learn new things from others on a daily basis and learning how to manage your anxieties is no different. In addition, your goal is to get your life back on track and not to get everyone's approval. If people start asking you questions, just say you're dealing with stress. Most people can relate to dealing with stress and anxiety!

**5. Avoid the mistake of doing nothing:** There are many people who struggled with anxiety and other mental health related issues, and they tried to ignore their problems. As a result, some of these people struggled on a daily basis and eventually things became more difficult. It can be scary asking for assistance, but the key is to take things one day at a time.

**6. You have a variety of options:** There are many mental health support groups, organizations, and counselors in your area that can help get your life back on track. Talk to your doctor to get more details on where you can go for some assistance. Help is available but you must be willing to make the choice of getting better. Remember that every problem has a solution. You just have to make the effort to find the answers.

About the Author: Stan is the author of "A Layman's Guide to Managing Fear" which covers a variety of techniques that can drastically improve your mental health. For more information, please visit Stan's website at <http://www.managingfear.com>

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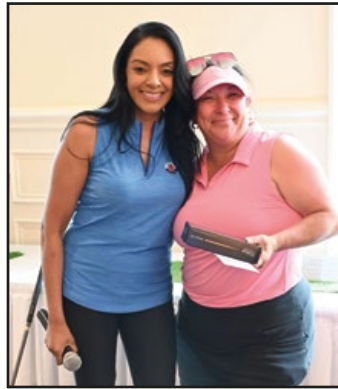
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# Annual Golf Outing 2026

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# Annual Golf Outing 2026 (cont.)





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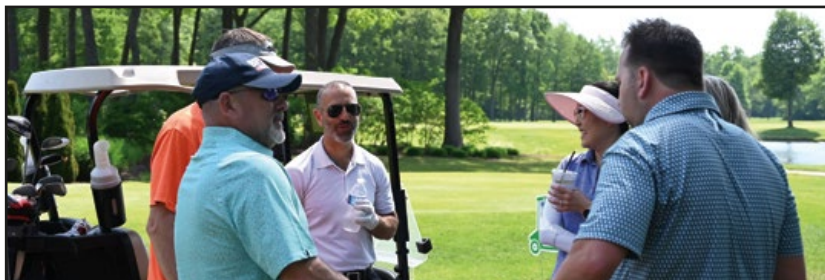






**Cherry Creek Golf Club**

**June 5th, 2026**



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in Writing**

**DAVID C. FEMMININEO**

**Femminineo Law**

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**586.940.1555**

## CLASSIFIED ADS

Contact Executive Director Maddie Bennage for ad placements and rates.  
Call (586) 468-2940 or email: [Mbennage@macombbar.org](mailto:Mbennage@macombbar.org)



### UPCOMING SEMINARS

REGISTRATION TYPE: MACOMB, LAPEER, ST. CLAIR unless otherwise stated  
Register at <https://cdam.wildapricot.org>

#### SKILLS TRAINING 101 (BASIC)

September 9, 2026 | 9:00 AM  
Oakland County Bar Association | Bloomfield Township  
REGISTRATION CODE: TBD

#### SENTENCING CASE LAW: UPDATES & GUIDELINES

September 18, 2026 | 1:00 PM  
Robert A. Verkuilen Building | Clinton Township  
REGISTRATION CODE: TBD

#### SENTENCING GUIDELINES PART ONE: THE BASICS (ZOOM)

September 22, 2026 | 2:00 PM  
REGISTRATION CODE: TBD

## MACOMB COUNTY PROSECUTOR PETER J. LUCIDO

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### JOIN THE MACOMB COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE EMAIL NEWSLETTER

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# Refer Your Injury Cases To Macomb County's Robert Lantzy

Attorney Robert Lantzy brings deep Macomb County connections to Buckfire Law. His perspective has been shaped by years in the local community, including by the influence of his father, Michigan high school Hall-of-Fame Football Coach, Bob Lantzy.

That familiarity with the community translates to real insight in serious, high-stakes cases.

Robert is trusted by attorneys and retired judges who refer him complex injury and wrongful death matters.



Coach Bob Lantzy, and Robert J. Lantzy, Attorney

## ROBERT'S RESULTS IN SERIOUS CASES

**\$9,000,000** Autistic child abuse settlement  
**\$6,000,000** Boating accident death  
**\$4,250,000** Carbon monoxide poisoning  
**\$4,000,000** Construction accident settlement  
**\$4,000,000** Police chase accident settlement  
**\$3,850,000** Truck accident settlement  
**\$3,000,000** Sexual assault settlement  
**\$2,000,000** Pedestrian death settlement  
**\$1,990,000** Auto accident settlement  
**\$1,400,000** Premises liability settlement  
**\$1,750,000** Macomb County premises liability jury verdict (2025)  
**\$1,000,000** Motorcycle accident settlement  
**\$ 465,000** Oakland County auto crash jury verdict (2025)

## BUCKFIRE LAW HONORS REFERRAL FEES

We use sophisticated intake software to attribute sources of our referrals, and referral fees are promptly paid in accordance with MRPC 1.5(e). We guarantee it in writing.

## HOW TO REFER US YOUR CASE

Referring us your case is fast and easy. You can:

1. Call us at **(586) 800-4004**
2. Go to **<https://buckfirelaw.com/attorney-referral>**
3. Scan the QR code with your cell phone camera

Attorney Lawrence J. Buckfire is responsible for this ad: (586) 800-4004

## Refer Us These Injury Cases

- Auto Accidents
- Truck Accidents
- Motorcycle Accidents
- No-Fault Insurance
- Dog Attacks
- Medical Malpractice
- Cerebral Palsy/Birth Injury
- Nursing Home Neglect
- Wrongful Death
- Police Misconduct
- Sexual Assault
- Defective Premises
- Poisonings
- Other Personal Injuries



**BuckfireLaw.com**



**Macomb County Bar Association**

40 N. Main St., Suite 435

Mt. Clemens, MI 48043

[MacombBar.org](http://MacombBar.org)

**MACOMB COUNTY  
BAR ASSOCIATION**  
*120<sup>th</sup>* **ANNIVERSARY**  
**CELEBRATION**  
**& PRESIDENTIAL INSTALLATION**



**JOIN US FOR A SPECTACULAR, FESTIVE EVENING AS WE TOAST TO  
OUR RICH HISTORY AND VIBRANT FUTURE!**

**EVENT DETAILS**



**DATE:**

Wednesday, October 14, 2026



**TIME:**

5:30 PM Reception | 6:30 PM Celebration



**LOCATION:**

Anton Art Center,  
125 Macomb Place, Mt. Clemens, MI 48043

**HIGHLIGHTS**



Strolling Dinner  
Signature Cocktails  
Live Music  
Awards

**TICKETS:**

[MacombBar.org/Events](http://MacombBar.org/Events) • Business Attire

