



# THE SUMMONS

Saginaw County Bar Association

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**CHRISTOPHER J. RADKE**  
Saginaw County Bar Association  
President 2017-2018

# THE SUMMONS

## SAGINAW COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

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The articles in THE SUMMONS, unless clearly designated otherwise, are those of the author. They do not necessarily represent the opinion of the Saginaw County Bar Association or its members. Please direct your comments on THE SUMMONS, to its Assistant Editor, Ann R. Van Hautte, 4301 Fashion Square Boulevard, Saginaw, Michigan 48603 • (989) 498-2100.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By: Christopher J. Radke

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I would like to begin this, my first SCBA President's message by thanking the membership for the confidence you have shown in choosing me to be this year's SCBA President. My predecessors have established extraordinarily high standards for this position, and I will do my utmost to continue the tradition.

During my four years on the SCBA Board, I have observed the large number of "usual suspects" who ensure the SCBA and Saginaw's judicial systems function effectively. Executive Director Kelli Scorsone being the "Chief Usual Suspect". Others include, Summons Editor, Tom Luplow and Assistant Editor, Ann Van Haute; quality Presidents like Katheryn Houck, Nate Collison, Andrea Labean, and John Humphreys; dedicated Board Members like this past year's: Jon Huffman, Eldor Hermann, Katie Baluha, Dan Straka, Elian Fichtner, Hon. Barbara Meter, Trevis Ruffin, and Gary Patterson. The list continues with non-Board Member Committee Chairs and Members, the ever-energetic Lawyer's Auxiliary members, our proactive Saginaw Judges and their staffs, court personnel, the various police forces, judicial and social worker support agencies, the Prosecutor's Of-

fice, and many more, not the least of whom includes our members and their staffs. Thank you! And please continue to provide us with issues you would like addressed, and assistance in making Saginaw County a great place to practice law.

Recently, the Saginaw County Bar and this Association have faced many challenges head on, working diligently to make our County's legal system one of the very best in the State. These system challenges, like: (1) the reorganization of courthouse space, (2) implementation of specialty courts, (3) legislative, appellate court, court rule, SCAO, and other changes that drastically impacted different practice areas, (4) reductions in governmental funding, (5) the effect of poorer U.S. Mail service on the court and contract procedures, etc., - were diligently addressed by many dedicated people from different areas of the practice of law, with the SCBA right at the center of the process. Despite participant's different perspectives and nuanced differences in their desired goals, the challenges were addressed directly, promptly, and intelligently, and were resolved in the best manner possible.

I am very proud of the SCBA's work

and history of success. The 2016-2017 SCBA Board is dedicated to achieving similar success.

Some of the issues to be addressed this year include:

- Increasing attendance at our social events. The SCBA Board, the Lawyer's Auxiliary and others hold many events where we can come to know one another, network, turn off the advocating, put a face and personal history on the attorney you've been negotiating deals with over the internet for years, get to know each other's spouses and families, golf, bowl, drink, eat, learn to cook, event after event. We have so many social events that each SCBA member should try one event they have not tried before: dinner and drinks and cooking lessons at the Maple Grill, the Talent Show, St. Patrick's Day Celebration, Young Lawyer Events (where "Young" remains open to self-interpretation), the Christmas Party, the celebrations of deceased practitioners lives in the Probate Court, the Golf Outing, the Annual Meeting with cocktail hours and dinner, feeding the poor at the Soup Kitchen, cleaning up the Riverfront, etc.

The SCBA Board has agreed to reduce early registration admission costs and correspondingly increase the at-the-door charges, to have a higher non-SCBA-member rates for event attendance but to invite non-members to

events and to pursue their enrollment.

- Increase attendance at educational events. The SCBA, alone and in concert with others, holds a host of educational events. These events are not just the ones where we practitioners are giving of our time to educate the public like the "Ask The Lawyer", Veteran's Assistance Event, and Law Day Moot Court Competition, but also events where we learn how to practice better law like at the recent Specialty Court Event held on March 21, 2017. The Specialty Court Judges and their staffs dedicated hours and days preparing to meet and educating practitioners on how each of their Courts and Programs worked, deadlines, contact persons, things to do to help our clients, things to avoid that are detrimental to our clients' likely success. We need attendance at such events to increase.

- Increasing implementation of best practices. Given the increasing competition in our industry as well as reduced governmental funding toward programs of justice, we all need to practice law as efficiently as possible – both for our clients and for our own financial well-being. The Specialty Court event was one such SCBA event. However, I and our Board are dedicated to holding more events to help with practice management and best practices. You

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## IN MEMORIAM

**None**

*Please help the Memorial Committee make sure no member is forgotten. Contact SCBA office at 790-8488 regarding the passing of any Saginaw County Attorney.*



will see more of these events this year.

- Increasing the public's positive perception of attorneys. It is amazing to me that we are all trained advocates. The very best advocates, working in the best, most competitive civil adversarial system in the world – and yet we do not advocate effectively for ourselves, the value of our services, and the value of the legal system. This year's SCBA Board will do more to tell the Saginaw Community about the value lawyers add to the quality of their lives. We will work to publish your and the SCBA's great works.

- Increasing communications with Judges, SCAO, State Bar Association, and the Legislature. This is a two-way street and the SCBA's ears are open to listen to practitioners, Judges, Legislature, etc. However, we need to talk to these bodies to make them aware of issues and possible solutions.

For instance, despite increases in the quality and timeliness of U.S. Mail delivery since the SCBA's letters to the Postmaster and others in 2016, problems persist for practitioners and the courts. The judicial system cannot rely on the "Mailbox Rule" if the mail is not reliably delivered within 1-2 days as it was 5-7 years ago. Especially if the occasional mailing takes 30-60 days to be delivered. We need to implement and take advantage of practicing in "the digital age". Emails arrive consistently within seconds of being sent. The SCBA will work to implement digital service and notice both within court procedures, but also in member's contracts as a 'practice suggestion'.

- Other issues. If you are not familiar with how the SCBA Board functions,

you should understand that we have 12 Directors, one of whom is consistently a sitting Judge. We also have 24 Committees, almost all with 2+ Board Members serving on them. This means that even the most well-informed President does not know all of the issues being addressed by each Committee. Please feel free to contact the current Committee Chairs or Liaisons with issues, or better yet to volunteer your time and expertise to that area:

1. ADR/Case Evaluation & Facilitation - Liaison Gary Paterson; Chairperson Donald Gilbert
2. Bench and Bar - Liaison Kathy Houck; Chairperson: Alex Bommarito
3. Criminal Justice - Liaison Eldor Herrmann
4. Diversity Committee - Liaison Christopher Radke; Chairperson: Jonathon Huffman
5. Domestic Relations & Family Court - Liaisons Katherine Baluha; Chairperson: Colin Dill
6. Historical Committee - Chairperson: Nathan Collison
7. Law Day - Liaison Christopher Radke; Chairperson: Christopher Radke, William Cowdry, Mary Ann Farris
8. Lawyers Auxiliary - President Terry Oeming
9. Membership Committee - Liaison Kelli Scorsone
10. Memorial Committee - Liaison Elian Fichtner; Chairperson:
11. Pro Bono Committee - Liaison Eldor Herrmann; Chairperson: Valerie Kutz-Otway, Marilyn Hackett
12. Public Relations - Liaison all board members

13. Publicity Committee - Liaison all board members
14. Recognition & Awards Committee - Liaison Kelli Scorsone
15. Red Mass Committee - Liaison Chris Radke, Kelli Scorsone; Chairperson: St. Thomas Moore Society, Hugh LeFevre
16. Social Committee Liaison Nathan Collison & Katie Baluha
17. Specialty Courts - Liaison Trevis Ruffin; Drug Court, Mental Health Court, Business Court, Veterans Court, & Swift & Sure Sanctions Probation Program
18. The Children's Law Section - Liaison Judge B. Meter & Katie Baluha; Chairperson: Michael Sovansky
19. Woman Lawyers - Liaison Katheryn Houck; Chairperson: Julie Gafkay
20. Young Lawyers - Liaison: Katherine Baluha
21. SPECIAL COMMITTEE - Bar Foundation - Liaison Elian Fichtner
22. SPECIAL COMMITTEE - Continuing Legal Education -

- Liaison Jonathon Huffman
23. SPECIAL COMMITTEE – (Deceased Attorney) Inventory Attorney Rule - Liaison Kelli Scorsone; Chairperson: Alex Bommarito
  24. Digital Resource Committee - Liaison: Katie Baluha

• Finally, the Lawyer's Auxiliary is expanding membership. The Lawyer's Auxiliary is considering changing its name because it has decided to broaden the qualifications of its membership to include not only attorneys' spouses, but also for those non-attorneys involved in the practice of law and pursuit of justice, like law office and pro-securitorial support staff.

The 2017-2018 SCBA Board is dedicated to advancing the SCBA's purpose, which is: 'To maintain the honor and dignity of the profession of the law, to increase its usefulness in promoting the due administration of justice, and to cultivate social interaction among its members.'

We look forward to this task.



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## PORTRAIT OF A LAWYER CHRISTOPHER J. RADKE

By: Karen S. Radke

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I would like to introduce my husband, Christopher J. Radke as the President of the Saginaw County Bar Association for 2017-2018.

As you may or may not know, Chris is the Managing Shareholder and a real estate, estate planning, and transactional attorney at the 6-attorney law firm of Shinners & Cook, P.C. in Kochville Township north of the Fashion Square Mall. Shinners & Cook specializes in business, real estate, civil litigation, estate planning, taxation and the sub-specialties affiliated with each of those areas of law. Chris loves being an attorney, his areas of practice, and helping clients and other professionals solve legal issues – very much like all of you members of the SCBA.

In addition to achieving one of his biggest accomplishments 21 years ago (marrying this wonderful, Saginaw native), Chris, I, and the Saginaw Community have raised three tremendous children in Lilly (Grand Valley State University- Nursing), John (UofM Engineering) and Brenna (Nouvel Catholic Central High School).

Chris has been a shareholder of Shinners & Cook for 10 years with Tom Basil, Jr. and Robert Miller – attributing much of the firm’s success to their individual and collective leadership and

drive. The firm’s associate attorneys (Scot Putzig and Andrew Walker), expert paralegals and technicians, and new full-of-energy assistants ensure that clients receive prompt, high-quality legal services.

Jake Shinners and Robert Cook (the firm’s founders) were significant legal mentors to Chris. Prior to Jake largely stepping out of the practice of law and moving into manufacturing, Jake Shinners and Chris had a long run of working hard and fast, and producing high-quality results for area business owners; this work included much of the complex real estate development and tax and non-tax driven estate planning and administration that Chris relishes. Jake’s exceptional business and legal intellect, his continuous reinvestment in learning, and his results-oriented focus all impacted Chris significantly.

Bob Cook was a different kind of attorney mentor to Chris, as Bob was in his late 80’s when Chris joined Shinners & Cook in 1996. Bob Cook had been an attorney for almost 50 years, was ‘old-school’ collegial, but sharp. Because of this, Bob emphasized the humanity of clients from all walks of life, and the humanity of their legal issues. Chris did and does appreciate both of them and what they taught him

about the law and life.

I think this will help Chris be an effective Bar President for all of you. He is a problem solver, a consensus builder, an appreciator of individual's differences and abilities, and is willing to take risks or innovate for clients – and in your case for Saginaw's attorneys and the practice of law.

Just a little more personal background for you and your understanding of this coming year's Bar President – prior to moving to Saginaw 21 years ago, Chris practiced solo law for 3 years in Milford, Michigan, which is in western Oakland County. Prior to that he graduated from the University of Detroit Law School, received his Bachelor's Degree in English and Political Science at the University of Michigan and attended many of you fellow Saginaw natives' rival high school – Orchard Lake St. Mary's. However, educationally Chris is most proud and most appreciative of his 1st thru 8th Grade education at Kingsbury School in Oxford, Michigan, which had Grades (not class sizes) of 15 or fewer students, was located way out in country in the middle of nowhere, had started as a one-room-schoolhouse not long before

Chris started attending, and where the elementary education and experience was tremendous because everyone involved at every phase worked hard, smart, collectively and happily for the common and individual goals.

Chris was born and raised in Washington, Michigan and spent much of his childhood like most boys do; playing outside and getting into trouble until dark with all of the wonderful neighborhood friends that he still speaks so fondly of to this day. He played hard and worked hard, too, as the youngest in a household of twelve. Always chores to be done living in a rural area, but I know he wouldn't trade his childhood days for anything. Those moments are a big part of what made Chris the person he is today.

As an adult, Chris has always volunteered and served on multiple charitable Boards. Some of these charitable activities involved: finding a permanent home for the Downtown Saginaw Farmers Market; helping the Saginaw Community Foundation find a permanent home; working on the Catholic Community Foundation of Mid-Michigan's Board of Directors and many of its Committees; attending the Com-

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munity Affairs Committee Breakfasts to discuss and seek solutions to area challenges; working with Michigan State Bar Association's Commercial Real Estate Development, Ownership & Finance Committee and Diversity Committee; assisting the Japanese Tea Garden and Saginaw Children's Zoo; 20+ years of working with the local, state and national leadership levels of Trout Unlimited – a cold-water conservancy group; his current project getting local conservationist's, Art Neumann, a large permanent exhibit in the Michigan Historical Museum behind the State Capitol; forming and participating in the SCBA's Diversity Committee with Heidi Hendrick; and many more.

When not at the office or at a meet-

ing, Chris' interests include camping, backpacking, fishing, cooking (he makes the best soups!) and spending time with his family and friends. As I wrote above, together we have raised three really great children and I think it's safe to say that some of Chris' best times have been spent with our children making school projects. Always a stickler for detail, I saw first-hand how there was always a lesson learned with each project and how much the kids enjoyed this time with him. He taught them how important it is to give 100%, that a project is not complete unless done correctly, and I know that this quality will be evident to you all as Chris becomes your President of the Saginaw County Bar Association.

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