

### The Honorable Patrick Fox (Ret.)

Judge Patrick Fox could have easily decided that retirement from his life as a District Court judge meant long days on the golf course, or trips to Florida. But, luckily for the low income residents of Worcester County, he chose to become a pro bono poster child for all retiring justices in the Commonwealth instead. As one of the inaugural class of Access to Justice Fellows two years ago, he devoted ten to twenty hours a week during his fellowship year to a series of impressive pro bono projects throughout Worcester County. And, fortunately for the Commonwealth and Worcester County, he has continued with this work after his fellowship ended.

Through the Access to Justice Fellows Program, Judge Fox partnered with three organizations to provide legal services to underserved populations. First, he made it his mission to establish a "Lawyer for the Day" program in Worcester District Court. As a judge, he had seen that small claims litigants, as the song goes, were "bewitched, bothered and bewildered" by the legal

system. After his retirement, with support from the Massachusetts Justice Project and the Worcester County Bar Association's Committee on Services to the Poor and Homeless, he was instrumental in creating in October 2012 a Lawyer for the Day program where, every Tuesday morning when the court holds its small claims and supplemental process sessions, volunteer lawyers provide assistance to low income litigants who arrive that day without a lawyer. To date, over 260 individuals have received legal assistance through the program. According to Gordon Shaw of Community Legal Aid, the Worcester District Court's Lawyer for the Day program "would not have taken off but for the vision and leadership of Judge Fox." Judge Fox remains an active participant, both as a monthly volunteer and as a mentor to less experienced attorneys.

In his second partnership as a Fellow, Judge Fox showed that the teacher can once again become the student. He accepted his first immigration case through Lutheran Social Services, although he had no

prior experience in immigration law. Lutheran Social Services provides care for children arriving at the United States border without a legal guardian or legal documentation. Some children come to escape abuse, neglect, or abandonment in their home countries; others are sent by their parents to work and contribute to their family's survival. If detained, these children are subject to removal proceedings and face an uphill battle in the immigration and juvenile courts.

Judge Fox went to bat for them. He helped two minor clients petition for a visa known as Special Immigrant Juvenile Status, which enables undocumented children to apply for lawful permanent residency. To qualify, though, a child must first obtain a state juvenile court order finding that the child is dependent.

Judge Fox immersed himself in unfamiliar areas of the law, navigated complex procedures, and consulted with experienced immigration and juvenile law attorneys. He made a conscientious effort to gain the

trust of his young clients who came from cultures and experiences where lawyers are not necessarily trusted. He found interpreters and encouraged his clients to share their stories with pride. Ultimately, Judge Fox succeeded in achieving Special Immigrant Juvenile Status for both of his clients, and he continues to work on a third case.

Through his third partnership, Judge Fox worked with Dismas House to help ex-offenders stay out of jail. Dismas House provides transitional housing in which former prisoners live together like a family unit; they work or attend school and contribute to the household's operation. In particular, Judge Fox helped a group of recently released inmates find employment opportunities through the Worcester Initiative for Supported Reentry, which in 2013 served eighty former prisoners who relocated to the Worcester area.

Judge Fox's commitment to public service, however, began long before and extends far beyond his Access to Justice Fellowship. He serves as president of the

Board of Directors of Our Father's House, Inc., a nonprofit organization managing homeless shelters and addiction recovery programs in Worcester County. He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Worcester County Food Bank, the region's leading anti-hunger organization, which views food as a fundamental right of all people and hunger as an issue of social justice.

Had Judge Fox been a ballplayer, we would be hanging his uniform number from the façade in right field at Fenway. But not quite yet, since a commitment to public service is a personal calling from which he might never retire. The legacy of Judge Fox will carry on through the countless number of lawyers he has mentored, clients he has served, and communities he has empowered. He serves as a true role model for retired judges, and will inspire many to follow in his footsteps. Judge Fox's pro bono commitment exemplifies the spirit of the Adams Award, and the legal community extends its gratitude and heartfelt thanks.