

**PRESENTATION OF THE 2014 JUSTICE POTTER STEWART AWARD
TO
LEGAL COUNSEL FOR THE ELDERLY**

Steven M. Schneebaum
Fox Rothschild LLP

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It is a great honor and privilege for me, on behalf of the Council for Court Excellence, to present one of the 2014 Justice Potter Stewart Awards to Legal Counsel for the Elderly.

I start from a simple premise, which seems to me to be self-evident: the esteem to which a provider of free legal assistance is entitled varies in direct proportion to the vulnerability of the population it serves, and the efficiency with which it does so. If you accept that premise, then there can be no more worthy recipient of this wonderful Award than Legal Counsel for the Elderly.

Its mission for over 35 years has been what its name discloses. Its constituency is older residents of Our Nation's Capital who are voiceless, who are poor, and who are overlooked or exploited by people and institutions more powerful, and more agile. LCE has been in the forefront of developing effective means of marshalling pro bono resources – the lawyers and law firms of our City – to represent our elderly neighbors in asserting the rights to which they are entitled. Many are the legal services providers who have patterned themselves on the LCE model.

LCE's Volunteer Lawyers Panel – which, in the spirit of full disclosure I must tell you I joined in 1978, and served as Chairman in 1987 – continues to make it possible for seniors to obtain their public benefits, to right the wrongs done to them by unscrupulous lenders and fly-by-night contractors, and to move into their last years knowing that their wills will be enforceable and their final wishes honored. And that is the tip of the iceberg: it is a general services law firm for a population that cannot afford lawyers, but has no shortage of need for them.

One of the remarkable achievements of Legal Counsel for the Elderly is its suppleness. While continuing to act as a clearing house for legal representation of individuals and their families, LCE has also addressed with singular success the systemic issues that plague its clients. Ranging in focus from predatory lending practices to accelerated tax sales of their homes, LCE has blazed the trail in reformation of laws and regulations that allows those so disposed to take advantage of older residents of Washington, D.C.

Its work is difficult, and often thankless. LCE is the voice of people living in nursing homes, sometimes with dementia, and often completely and desperately alone. It is the voice of

victims of scams and frauds, which may be in superficial compliance with governing legislation, but which cause untold suffering on the part of elderly victims who so easily fall prey to them. It speaks for the homebound, many of whom spent their active lives attempting to overcome disadvantages that would have deterred people of less resolve and less character. It is the champion of our parents and our grandparents – and increasingly, of our contemporaries – who cannot navigate the complexities of today’s technological and bureaucratic realities without competent and compassionate professional help.

When I took my first case from LCE more than a third of a century ago, I did it as a gesture of respect for my parents, then aged, and now long since passed away. I thought of seniors as having legal issues with which I might help, but that were entirely foreign to my own age cohort.

Like many of you, and especially those of you whose roots with the Council for Court Excellence have withstood the ravages of time, I am now squarely within Legal Counsel for the Elderly’s demographic (and I can report that it easily beats the alternative). Its support for seniors has been unwavering, and it has been inspiring. As we all grow older, perhaps we can spare a moment’s thought for those of our own ages just as needy, just as deserving, and just as overlooked as were the members of the generations before our own. It is they whose legal needs LCE continues to serve. And it is that service that so clearly merits this honor.

The Council for Court Excellence, with great pride, presents the 2014 Justice Potter Stewart Award to Legal Counsel for the Elderly. I call upon my friend Jan May, the organization’s longtime Executive Director, to come up to receive the Award.