

SHAKER LIFE

City of Shaker Heights, Ohio

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features



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How a family of prominent musicians – all members of The Cleveland Orchestra – found a home in Shaker.



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on the cover: The first Stokes Scholars graduates. (See page 48.) The program was established by the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association under its president, Shaker resident Carter Strang (front, middle). Flanking him are former Congressman Louis Stokes, the program's namesake, and program co-chair Ayesha Bell Hardaway, both Shaker residents.



Stokes Scholars Program co-chairs Ayesha Bell Hardaway and Anne Owings Ford; Brandon Brown, Stokes Scholar and student at Oberlin College; Trevor Scott, Stokes Scholar and student at Cleveland State; Drew Odum, Stokes Scholar Mentor and attorney at Tucker Ellis; Paul Smith, Stokes Scholar Mentor and attorney at Tucker Ellis; and Carter Strang.

Diversity and Pride

The Stokes Scholars Program gives minorities a leg up in the legal profession.

BY SUE STARRETT

As the president of the 6,000-member Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, Shaker resident Carter Strang has launched a new initiative to help ensure that more minorities seek employment in law and related fields. The Stokes Scholars Program offers paid summer internships at local law firms, courts, and legal nonprofit organizations to college students who are graduates of the Cleveland and East Cleveland school districts.

“It is no coincidence that I wanted to live in Shaker,” says Strang, a partner at the law firm Tucker Ellis. “We focus on diversity and pride ourselves on inclusion as a community.”

The seeds for the Stokes Scholars Program were planted in 2006, when the bar association recruited attorneys, including Strang, to teach basic Constitutional Law to small groups of high school students to help them pass the social studies portion of the Ohio Graduation Test. The 3Rs program teaches rights, responsibilities, and realities to 10th graders in the Cleveland and East Cleveland districts. This led to the establishment of mock trial teams at several high schools and summer internship programs at several local law firms, with Tucker Ellis first among them.

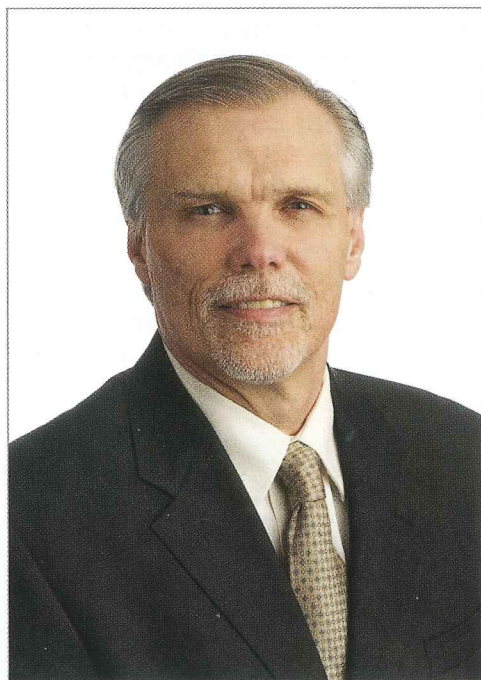
While the 3Rs program captures high school students’ enthusiasm for the law, it was soon discovered that continuity of interest was lost during the students’ college years. The Stokes program was created to fill the enthusiasm gap.

The Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association has been a model for others – the 3Rs Program has won state and national awards – and continues to take a leadership role under Strang’s thoughtful guidance.

At Tucker Ellis, Strang specializes in energy and environmental law, mass tort and product liability, and oil and gas. His law career began at Arter Hadden with a summer job in 1983; he was hired as an associate in 1984, became a partner, and worked there until the firm dissolved in 2003. He has been with Tucker Ellis since then.

Strang also has been a member and president of the Federal Bar Association Northern Ohio Chapter. That experience prepared him for mission-based projects. Not only was the Stokes Scholars Program ready to begin three days after Strang was sworn in as the Cleveland bar association’s president, another new initiative, the Citizens Legal Academy, launched in September. Strang’s other plans include a medical/legal summit in April and a Great Lakes summit, as well as the creation of task forces on civility and professionalism, and law school debt.

It all started with a teaching job at Shaker Heights High School.





Above, Shaker High's 1976-'77 hockey team. Strang, an assistant coach at the time, is in the second row at the far right. In the black and white photo, which ran in the New York Times in 1991, Strang coaches a group of Youth Hockey players at Thornton Park. PHOTOS COURTESY OF CARTER STRANG.



Where did you grow up and attend college? What brought you to Shaker Heights?

I grew up in Massillon, and my family moved to Kent in 1964, when my dad became head football coach at Kent State University. I graduated from Kent Roosevelt High School in 1969, and from Kent State University's Honors College in 1973. I later earned a Master of Education degree at Kent. I moved to Shaker Heights in fall 1974 as a teacher at Shaker High.

I had interviewed in Shaker with Bob Morris, who anticipated an opening – and needed coaches. In those days, you had to teach in order to coach. Being hired by Shaker was a dream come true. My degree was in social studies, so I taught government, U.S. history, and criminology. I was assistant coach for football and ice hockey, both of which I'd played at Kent State.

How did the Stokes Scholars Program come about? What does the

program involve?

Shaker connections so often come around. Congressman Louis Stokes was one of the guest speakers in my criminology classes at Shaker High. He was very high-profile at that time. Last year when I approached him about Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's new pipeline program, he remembered being at the high school. He was so excited about the Scholars Program that he not only lent his name, he also became involved.

We established no GPA requirements for the Stokes Scholars Program, but asked applicants to write an essay about their interest in the law, provide references, and participate in interviews. Fifty students applied, 19 were accepted, and 18 finished the eight-week program last summer.

We didn't want our Scholars to feel lost, so we paired each one with a mentor. Not only did the mentors meet daily with their young colleagues, they have committed to continuing their relationships with the

Stokes Scholars through college and, we hope, law school. We held a graduation ceremony to which the students, their families, and their mentors were invited, and Louis Stokes was one of our speakers. We hope to build the program to 25 Stokes Scholars this summer.

Our message to the 3Rs students and the Stokes Scholars is: There are people in this community who value you. And we're going to demonstrate that not with our words but with our conduct. Through both programs we're breaking down walls that have for far too long separated too many urban public school students from opportunity. Our motto is: Changing Lives One Student at a Time.

What prompted you to attend law school?

I often invited guest speakers to my criminology classes; one was Tom Chema, an attorney from Arter Had-

den, and his work interested me. About the same time, some of my teacher colleagues were starting law school. I needed a new challenge, so in 1980 I began taking night classes at Cleveland-Marshall College of Law, and earned my degree in 1984. At least seven of my former students were also enrolled there, and I felt a lot of pressure to do well. They still called me 'Mr. Strang.' I left teaching in 1983 so that I could go full-time to law school. We had no income for that year, and two little boys.

Tell us about your family.

While I was teaching at Shaker, one of the football players told me about a home economics teacher, Jan Heinlen. We dated, married, and had three sons: Steven, Carson, and Kevin. Steven graduated from Shaker in 1999 and is an attorney at Gallagher Sharp; he and his fiancée are looking for a house in Shaker Heights. Carson (SHHS

2001) played ice hockey for the Air Force Academy for one year, and then was an academic, all-conference baseball player at Union College in New York. He lives in Boston and is in law school. Kevin is a 2006 Shaker graduate and was a music major at Skidmore College. He is also in Boston.

Some years later, after Jan and I divorced, I went on a blind date with Deedra Siegel, a speech and language therapy specialist at Mercer. We subsequently married and live on Chalfant Road. Deedra's two sons, Adam and Jason, also are Shaker alumni.


When did you become involved with the local bar association?

It was through the 3Rs. I volunteered and was assigned to John Hay High School, which I passed every day on my way to work. I wondered what was going on in the building, what kind of education the students were receiving. Well, I fell in love with the students

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Strang and his wife Deedra Siegel Strang, a speech pathologist at Mercer Elementary School. PHOTO COURTESY OF CARTER STRANG.

and the teachers there. Eventually, Tucker Ellis became a partner with the school, and the 3Rs has grown to include 500 attorneys.

The Citizens Legal Academy is your latest initiative. Tell us about that.

The Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association has been doing great things for young people, and we felt we needed to do something to increase the general public's knowledge and appreciation of our legal system and the attorneys and judges who practice in it. We are presenting free quarterly programs on hot button legal topics, in partnership with representatives of the legal profession and related organizations.

Our first Citizens Legal Academy focused on election law and was held at the Board of Elections. The second, on consumer and investor fraud, was in conjunction with the FBI, FTC, and Justice Department. Future programs will provide insight on immigration law, consumer protection, foreclosure,

criminal law, and domestic relations. (Details are at clemetrobar.org.)

What do you do when you're not working?

When my sons were younger, I coached for Shaker Youth Baseball and the Shaker Youth Hockey Association and was involved in Cub Scouts. Those were good connections to the community. I started biking about 10 years ago, when my orthopedic surgeon told me to stop running. I cycle to and from work at least three to four days a week.

We started a cycle club at Tucker Ellis, and we also have created Club CMBA, which focuses on the passions and interests of our members. About 400 attorneys are involved in the biking club, book club, performing arts group, and the dining group. These social interactions are fun, and they promote civility and respect in our profession. 🍃



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