

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE FOR OCTOBER, 2009

We need your help.

The Miami-Dade County Law Library (MDCLL) is in dire need of funding to keep its doors open. Sometimes called "The Courthouse Law Library", the facility opened in July, 1937 and has since provided valuable resources to lawyers, judges, students and members of the public.

An amendment to Article 5 of the Florida Constitution in 2005 removed funding for county law libraries in Florida by ending their entitlement to income from court filing fees. Consequently, many county law libraries across the state have closed, including the Miami-Dade Criminal Courthouse Law Library.

The MDCLL has managed to keep operating by reducing expenses and raising funds through service fees, criminal fines, and donations from the legal and business communities. The effort to maintain the library has been led by 11th Judicial Circuit Court Judge Gill S. Freeman along with a dedicated Board of Trustees representing a cross section of our diverse legal community.

Located on the third floor of the Dade County Courthouse, the library collection contains in excess of 80,000 volumes, including historical Florida Statutes, Session Laws and many rare volumes dating back to the 1800s. The library is also 21st century oriented with Westlaw and Lexis on public terminals, together with Hein on Line, a law journal database containing legal articles from 1,200 law reviews and journals.

The library serves an average of 2,000 attorneys, 1,000 pro se litigants and the public (including Miami-Dade College students) each month. A multi-lingual staff is available to assist in English, Spanish, and Creole. As the only public law library in Miami-Dade County, the MDCLL often serves as the only source of legal information for those who cannot afford an attorney.

You can support the library and gain substantial benefits by becoming a member of the MDCLL for a \$100 annual fee. This membership entitles you to use of the member's lounge and discounted services, including use of library conference rooms and legal research assistance from the staff. Another great feature of service is being able to call or e-mail the staff and have any court file copied without the hassle of going through the normal file retrieval process.

Please join now by logging on to www.mdcll.org or by calling (305) 349-7548. The library Director, Johanna Propiglia will be happy to answer any questions you may have.

Also...and this is where we really need your help...on October 15 at 6:00 p.m., the Board of Trustees will host the Third Annual Fund Raiser and Silent Auction to Support the Law Library. Please come to the courthouse for food, drink and fellowship. We

expect many of our great judges and lawyers from throughout the county to be in attendance. All donations are tax deductible. With your help, we can continue to provide a public law library where equal access to justice may be served to those in need.