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Schmitt to Retire as Executive Director of Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois

Chicago – Ruth Ann Schmitt, the executive director of the Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois since the organization's founding in 1983, has announced her decision to retire, effective June 30, 2015. The Lawyers Trust Fund's board of directors has selected deputy director Mark Marquardt to succeed her.

"Ruth Ann has made tremendous contributions to the legal aid system in our state," said Lawyers Trust Fund president Jennifer T. Nijman of Nijman Franzetti LLP. "She helped create the Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) program in Illinois and was the founding director of the Lawyers Trust Fund. She has not only made LTF a major source of funding for legal aid, but a force for innovation and improvement, as well."

Under Ms. Schmitt's leadership, the Lawyers Trust Fund has distributed over \$135 million in grants to support not-for-profit legal aid agencies in Illinois. Her signature initiatives include investing in computer technology for legal aid programs (1990 – 1998), two statewide legal needs studies (1989, 2005), the launch of CARPLS Legal Aid (1991), and significant start-up investments in the organization now known as Illinois Legal Aid Online (2000 – 2001).

"Ruth Ann's creativity and drive changed the face of legal assistance in Illinois," said former Lawyers Trust Fund president Michael A. Pope, a partner at McDermott Will & Emery in Chicago. "The Legal Needs Study, the computerization project for legal clinics, the creation of CARPLS—all were terrific ideas that needed her leadership to become reality. She is a jewel and will be sorely missed. "

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Before becoming executive director of the Lawyers Trust Fund in 1983, Ms. Schmitt served as executive director of the Chicago Volunteer Legal Services Foundation and was the national pro bono coordinator for the American Bar Association. She has received numerous awards, including The Chicago Bar Foundation's Maurice Weigle Award, the Illinois State Bar Association's Board of Governors Award, and the DePaul College of Law Outstanding Alumni Service Award. Ms. Schmitt has served as a member of The Chicago Bar Association's Board of Managers, the ISBA Assembly, the ABA Delivery of Legal Services Committee, the ABA Commission on IOLTA, and as vice president of the National Association of IOLTA Programs.

Deputy director Mark Marquardt joined the Lawyers Trust Fund in 1991. He served as the research director and principal author of *The Legal Aid Safety Net: A Report on the Legal Needs of Low-Income Illinoisans* (2005). Mr. Marquardt is a former co-chair of the Fund for Immigrants & Refugees, a former chair of the Illinois State Bar Association's Delivery of Legal Services Committee, and a member of the board of directors of the National Association of IOLTA Programs. Mr. Marquardt was a volunteer mediator with the Center for Conflict Resolution for 20 years and served on the organization's board of directors from 2006 – 2010.

Mr. Marquardt will become acting executive director on April 1 and executive director on July 1, 2015. Ms. Schmitt has agreed to serve as an advisor to the organization during the transition period of April 1 to June 30 in order to ensure a smooth changeover.

The Lawyers Trust Fund of Illinois is a not-for-profit foundation that works to make equal justice a reality for the state's most vulnerable residents. The Lawyers Trust Fund was created in 1983 by the Illinois State and Chicago Bar Associations to administer the Interest on Lawyer Trust Account (IOLTA) program created by the Supreme Court of Illinois and makes grants to support civil legal aid programs. The Lawyers Trust Fund is governed by a nine-member board of directors, with three members appointed by the Illinois State Bar Association, The Chicago Bar Association, and the Illinois Supreme Court, respectively. Illinois attorneys make the work of the Lawyers Trust Fund possible through a portion of their annual registration fee and through participation in the IOLTA program. More information about the Lawyers Trust Fund is available at www.ltf.org.

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