Community

We encourage involvement and leadership in the communities in which we live.

The Varnum Team Promise

Varnum's commitment to the community includes significant financial contributions to a variety of organizations, from arts, education and health care agencies to social service, community and economic development endeavors. Our Contributions Committee meets monthly to review and evaluate requests.

Community Involvement

We are more than just lawyers; Varnum attorneys are leaders in the communities in which we live and work. Our attorneys serve many community organizations, including the following:

- AARP
- Achieve Charter Academy
- Alliance for Health
- Alma College West Michigan Roundtable
- American Civil Liberties Union
- American Red Cross
- Aquinas College
- Arthritis Foundation of West Michigan, Region
- Association for Corporate Growth, West Michigan
- Battle Creek Chamber of Commerce
- Bethany Christian Services
- Better Business Bureau
- Bible Study Fellowship International
- Big Brothers/Big Sisters
- Bluebird Cancer Retreat
- Brookmoor Estates Neighborhood Association
- Camp Roger
- Chamber Music Society of Detroit
- Children's Assessment Center
- Children's Leukemia Foundation of Michigan
- Christian Legal Services/Mel Trotter Clinic
- Christian Living Services
COMMUNITY

- Citizens Research Council of Michigan
- City of Grand Haven Construction Board of Appeals
- Community Foundation of Southeastern Michigan
- Community Rebuilders
- Criminal Justice Chaplaincy
- Davenport University
- Degage Ministries
- Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings
- Detroit Christo Rey High School Leadership Board
- Detroit Institute of Arts
- Diocese of Grand Rapids
- Ducks Unlimited
- Dwelling Place of Grand Rapids
- East Grand Rapids Schools Foundation
- Economic Club of Grand Rapids
- Economic Club of Southwestern Michigan
- Executive Women's Golf Association
- Faith Hospice
- Fifth Reformed Church
- First United Methodist Church of Grand Rapids
- First United Methodist Church of Kalamazoo
- Foundation for Catholic Secondary Education of Greater Grand Rapids
- Fountain Street Church
- Fountain Street Church Foundation
- Fr. Gabriel Richard High School Athletic Booster Club
- Frederik Meijer Gardens and Sculpture Park
- Frederik Meijer Gardens Foundation
- Fresh Start Church
- Gerontology Network
- Gilda's Club Grand Rapids
- Golf Association of Michigan
- Good Shepherd United Church of Christ (Sahuarita, AZ)
COMMUNITY

- Grand Haven Area Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Haven Area Community Foundation
- Grand Haven Area Young Professionals
- Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce
- Grand Rapids Area Realtors
- Grand Rapids Art Museum
- Grand Rapids Ballet Company
- Grand Rapids Children's Museum
- Grand Rapids Community College Foundation
- Grand Rapids Community Foundation
- Grand Rapids Downtown Market
- Grand Rapids Healthy Communities
- Grand Rapids Metropolitan YMCA
- Grand Rapids Public Library Foundation
- Grand Rapids Public Museum Friends Foundation
- Grand Rapids Public Schools
- Grand Rapids Rotary Club
- Grand Rapids Symphony
- Grand Valley State University
- Grandville Avenue Arts and Humanities
- Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association
- Greater Ottawa County United Way
- Guardian Angel Homes
- GVSU Seidman School of Business
- Habitat for Humanity
- Harvard Club of West Michigan
- Heart of West Michigan United Way
- Heartside Ministry
- Helen DeVos Children's Hospital Foundation
- Hello West Michigan
- HHS Health Options
- Hillman Advocacy Clinic
COMMUNITY

- Holland Home
- Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church Endowment Fund
- Home Repair Services Board of Directors
- Hope College Alumni Association
- Humane Society of West Michigan
- Inforum of West Michigan
- Inside Grand Rapids
- International Centre for Healing and the Law, John Fetzer Foundation
- Jennings Memorial Foundation (Genesee County)
- John Ball Zoological Society
- Junior Achievement of the Michigan Great Lakes Inc
- Justice for our Neighbors
- Kalamazoo Area Chamber of Commerce
- Kalamazoo Area Labor Management Committee
- Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra
- Kalastar
- Kent County Unit of American Cancer Society
- Kent District Library Fund Development Board
- Kent Health Plan Corporation
- LaGrave Avenue Christian Reformed Church
- Lakeshore Ethnic Diversity Alliance Council
- Land Conservancy of West Michigan
- LaughFest
- Leadership Grand Rapids
- Legacy Christian School
- Literacy Center of West Michigan
- Long Lake Association Inc
- Loutit District Library
- Love Inc
- March of Dimes
- Mary Free bed Institutional Review Board
- Mayflower Congregational Church Endowment fund board
COMMUNITY

- Michigan Campus Compact
- Michigan Chamber of Commerce
- Michigan Chapter of Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation
- Michigan Council for Economic Education
- MOKA Corporation
- MSU School of Law Low Income Taxpayer Clinic
- National Justice for our Neighbors
- New North Center
- North Ottawa Rod & Gun Club
- Northview Education Foundation
- Northview Little League
- Northville High school Football Association
- Notre Dame Club of Grand Rapids
- Novi Chamber of Commerce
- Opera Grand Rapids
- Partnership for Philanthropic Planning
- Planetary Society
- Planned Parenthood of West and Northern Michigan
- Portage Education Foundation
- Porter Hills Retirement Communities and Services Inc
- Pretty Lake Vacation Camp
- Project Rehab
- Public Museum of Grand Rapids
- Richland Bible Church
- Rotary Club
- Salvation Army
- Second Christian Reformed Church
- Senior Neighbors
- South Christian High school
- Spring Lake Country Club
- St. Andrews Cathedral
- St. Cecilia Music Society
• St. John's Home, D.A. Blodgett
• St. Mary Magdalen Church
• St. Mary's Doran Foundation
• Saint Mary's Hospital Foundation
• St. Patrick's Church Men's Group
• Student Mentor Partners
• Sweet House Foundation
• The Right Place
• Thornapple Valley Baseball League
• United States Golf Association Senior Amateur Championship
• University of Michigan Club of Grand Rapids
• Urban Institute of Contemporary Art
• Van Andel Institute
• Vocaris of Grand Rapids
• Volunteers in Service
• Vriesland Reformed Church
• VSA Arts of Michigan, Grand Rapids
• Wayne State University Law School Board Visitors Committee
• Well House Community
• West Michigan Bio
• West Michigan Christian Legal Ministries
• West Michigan Energy
• West Michigan Environmental Leadership Network
• West Michigan Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
• West Michigan Land Conservancy
• West Michigan New Horizons Music Ensembles
• West Michigan Planned Giving Group
• West Michigan Solar Supply Chain
• West Michigan Sports Commission
• West Michigan Strategic Alliance
• West Michigan Trails and Greenways Coalition
• West Michigan Wind Manufacturers Network
COMMUNITY

- West Michigan World Affairs Council
- Western Michigan University’s Industry Advisory Board for Chemical Engineering
- Whitewood Farms Neighborhood Association
- YMCA

Buchanan Elementary School

Varnum’s Grand Rapids office initially began a holiday sharing relationship with Buchanan Elementary School in 1989. Quickly realizing that the needs of Buchanan families are ongoing, the firm-wide Seasons for Giving program was developed. The program provides for a year-long commitment to the school, its students and families through a variety of seasonal activities:

- February – proceeds from a firm bake sale go to purchase books for March reading month and Valentine’s Day cards so each student may participate in classroom parties and festivities.
- March – Varnum volunteers visit the school and read to students during reading month. Books are also donated to each classroom.
- May – an appreciation luncheon is hosted by Varnum at the school to thank the teachers for all they do for the students throughout the year.
- June – Varnum staff and summer associates scoop, sprinkle and top ice cream for each student and teacher at the annual celebration on the last day of school.
- August/September – teachers provide a class-and-grade-specific wish list of school supplies that are fulfilled by Varnum volunteer shoppers. The Seasons for Giving program funds the purchase of these supplies as well as at least one school uniform for each student. At Varnum, Buchanan student-of-the-month tee shirts are sold to members of the firm who sign the shirts for presentation as student rewards throughout the year.
- November/December – every student at Buchanan and SECOM receives a holiday gift and Santa (and many of his elves) visits to sing songs, read stories, share smiles and decorate cookies. Family bags filled with everyday essential toiletry items are given to parents and caretakers for home use. In addition, since 2006 the Varnum client holiday card sent to over 10,000 recipients has been created and designed by a fourth-grade art student.

Varnum’s relationship with Buchanan Elementary is significant and is just one of many ways Varnum is honored to be involved in the communities in which we live and work.

Pro Bono Work

An important part of our overall responsibility as attorneys is to provide free legal services to those in need. Varnum undertakes this duty by securing its pro bono files through referrals from the Pro Bono Program of Western Michigan (a program established in 1982 by the Grand Rapids Bar Association and Legal Aid of Western Michigan), the Mel Trotter Ministries Legal Clinic, and other entities that refer matters for veterans to us.
Varnum participates in these programs by providing legal services to individuals who are qualified to receive *pro bono* services. Although Varnum provides free legal services to other individuals and on behalf of various nonprofit agencies, we take *pro bono* credit only for files from Legal Aid of Western Michigan and the Mel Trotter Ministries Legal Clinic, and assisting veterans. We treat time spent on these cases in the same manner as billable client time. In addition, Varnum provides a financial contribution that far exceeds the Voluntary Standard established by the State Bar of Michigan. Varnum also pays all costs associated with each representation, and waives reimbursement for these expenses from the referring entity.

Our commitment to *pro bono* representation begins with our summer associates, who are offered the opportunity to handle at least one referral case during their clerkship, a unique and positive aspect of our summer program, and continues with our associate level attorneys. Our partners also devote a significant amount of time to the program through handling *pro bono* files, and supervising younger attorneys and summer clerks. Mark Allard, litigation partner, is our *pro bono* coordinator.

In 2018, the firm provided 1,862 hours in *pro bono* services on 81 files that met these criteria. The $675,985 in fees and $14,417 in waived costs, combined with a $40,000 cash contribution to the Access to Justice Fund, brought Varnum’s total contribution to $730,402.

Varnum is recognized by the State Bar of Michigan for its *pro bono* contributions. The firm is part of the State Bar’s "Circle of Excellence" at the Leadership level, reserved for law firms with 100 percent aggregate contributions at the Pro Bono Voluntary Standard level (30 hours or $500 per attorney in financial donations).

Varnum is proud of its *pro bono* commitment. The support and participation by attorneys throughout the firm makes it clear that *pro bono* representation is part of the fabric of our firm.