

Gross Fund makes a difference for practicing attorneys, families

Practicing attorneys, or their immediate families, who may need assistance in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, or who may otherwise be facing hardship, can seek financial support from the Nebraska State Bar Foundation.

The Gross Fund offers a financial lifeline to practicing attorneys and their families who need help to promote their welfare and overcome the difficulty of poverty.

“It’s there for a purpose,” said Steven E. Guenzel, president of the Nebraska State Bar Foundation.

Support from the fund has gone to pay for medical treatment, rent, utility bills, drug and alcohol rehab and disability accommodations.

The foundation is hoping to raise awareness of the fund, which was established by an endowment in memory of Daniel J. Gross.

Gross was a storied Omaha trial lawyer who graduated Creighton University Law School at age 19. He also earned a law degree from Georgetown University, according to an obituary, and enlisted in the



Navy during World War I.

Gross went on to be a co-founder of the Omaha law firm of Gross & Welch. The Walnut, Iowa-native donated funds upon his death to establish the Gross Fund. His widow, Louise, later gave the financial support to build Gross Catholic High School in Bellevue.

“He was a terrific trial lawyer,” Guenzel said. “Mr. Gross wanted

a fund that would benefit a specific group: practicing lawyers and their spouses and their children.”

Gross gave a gift of \$25,000 in 1958 to establish the specific fund.

The Gross Fund has been administered by the Nebraska State Bar Foundation since 1997. The foundation has helped grow the fund to have more than \$400,000, said Executive Director Doris J. Huffman, who oversees it with a three-member board of trustees.

Huffman receives requests for assistance from the fund, which are held in strict confidence. Each request is considered on its own, and there are no restrictions beyond the requirement that funds go to a practicing attorney, their family or the survivors of an attorney who died as an active bar member.

“We have an obligation to the donor to accomplish the objective that they set out,” Guenzel said.

Huffman said the fund has been used to support practicing attorneys receiving other help from the Nebraska Lawyers Assistance



Daniel J. Gross
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Program, which offers support for substance abuse, cognitive decline, stress, depression and other issues that can impair an attorney’s ability to practice law.

“We have assisted numerous attorneys over the years with either some kind of substance abuse, rehab or whatever their other needs may be,” Huffman said.

Checks are written directly to a vendor, not the grantee. There are no caps for the fund, nor any limits on the number of requests the trustees consider each year.

To seek assistance from the Gross Fund, request an application by emailing doris@nebarfnd.org, or learn more at nebarfnd.org.