

2025 Walks of Life Honoree

Hon. Sean C. Gallagher



While in college, Sean C. Gallagher earned extra money working as a janitor cleaning courtrooms at Cuyahoga County Juvenile Court. Since then, he has spent more than 40 years working in various areas of Ohio's justice system. This year, he is completing his 22nd year as a judge in the Eighth District Court of Appeals for the State of Ohio.

Sean is the younger of two children of John F. Gallagher of Achillbeg Island in County Mayo, Ireland, and Margaret T. (Casey) Gallagher of Tuosist in County Kerry, Ireland.

Growing up on Cleveland's West Side, he attended Saints Phillip and James Grade School, St. Edward High School, and Ohio University. He received his law degree from Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 1989. He served as a bailiff and as a probation officer before joining the Cuyahoga County Prosecutor's Office, where he spent three years in its specialized "white collar" Economic Crime Unit.

Prior to becoming an appeals court judge, Sean served five years as a judge in Cleveland Municipal Court and served as president of the Northern Ohio Municipal Judges Association in 2001 and 2002. Sean was chairman of the Supreme Court's Commission on the Rules of Practice and Procedure for Ohio Courts in 2009 and 2010 and was also co-chair of the Ohio Appellate Judges Association for ten years.

Throughout his career, he has produced numerous legal guides on evidence and procedures for Ohio courts. Among them were "Mapp v. Ohio, The Case of Extraordinary Personalities" and "Terry v. Ohio, The Story Behind the Case." The latter article covered, in part, the remarkable career of Cleveland Detective Martin J. McFadden, whose police work led the U.S. Supreme Court to clarify the national "Stop and Frisk" law.

St. Edward High School named him "Legal Eagle - Man of the Year" in 2005. A year later, he received the "President's Award" for his service with the Cuyahoga County Bar Association. He was named the Outstanding Alumnus for Cleveland-Marshall College of Law in 2007 and three years ago was inducted into the law school's Hall of Fame. In 2014, he was named as one of the 'Irish Legal 100' at the Irish Embassy in Washington D.C.

In 2006, he authored "Volunteers-The first 75 years of the West Side Irish American Club."

Among his favorite activities, Sean identified collecting vintage cars and visiting friends and relatives in Ireland several times a year.

He and his wife, Dawn Marie, have a son, Fergus, who also is a graduate of Ohio University and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. The family lives in Cleveland's West Park neighborhood.

2025 Walks of Life Award of the Irish American Archives Society, Cleveland OH