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Colleen Cotter likes Cleveland's lawyers: My Cleveland

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By Grant Segall

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Colleen Cotter came to town seven years ago to lead the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

What's with the earrings?

These are recycled typewriter keys. There's a great little store, Green Smart Gifts in Lakewood, that sells them. I imagine younger people don't know what some of the keys are. You don't see "margin release" on a computer.

Do you and Mark live near that store?

We live in Lakewood, near the beach. It's a great location. I like the old houses. I like the diversity: economic and racial and ethnic.

We go to Edgewater Park and Lakewood Park and walk the dog. I love to go to local restaurants and stores: Deagan's and India Garden and TJ's Butcher Block. Blackbird Bakery: great breads,

really crunchy, great scones and croissants. I walk to Lakewood Garden Center, pull the wagon filled with plants to my house, then return the wagon.

Being by the Rocky River Reservation, I go there a lot and again walk the dog. They allow dogs in the nature center. It's all about Bosco.

So tell us about Bosco.

He's a mutt, 60 pounds and scared of his own shadow. He came to us from Rose's Rescue. He was in foster care in Hudson.

How's our weather compared to other places you've lived?

Clevelanders think the weather here is worse than anywhere, and it's really the same in lots of other places. I grew up in South Bend, with lake effect from Lake Michigan. In Maine, there was a lot of snow and no spring.

Are Clevelanders too down on Cleveland?

When you get into conversations, everyone really appreciates what we have. Maybe we don't focus on it as much as we should.

Isn't it great that we have the lake? And we have so many levels of sports and music, from huge shows at The Q to Classical Revolution at the Happy Dog. I like the smaller-scale sports: college and the Lake Erie Monsters and the baseball team in Avon.

Where do you grab a bite downtown?

I get a salad at the West 6th St. Grill, a Middle Eastern place. I like Johnny's Little Bar for a burger; that's a good, relaxing place.



Peggy Turbett, The Plain Dealer

At Public Square, one of my favorite places is Pura Vida. I wish they still served breakfast. Downtown needs more breakfast places.

Q: Is Cleveland a good town for lawyers?

Tremendous. Huge numbers of lawyers and very highly qualified. We have all these old firms. Some are international; some are totally local. They have a standard to keep up.

Good town for Legal Aid?

Tremendous. Cleveland has such a strong philanthropic history: the culture of volunteering, not just writing a check but using your skill to help the community.

We try to be a voice for people who wouldn't have a voice or access to the room. We try to be pre-emptive: talking to agencies about their policies. They are open to that here. It changes their decision-making.

Good town for judges?

Asking the public to vote on judges is really hard. I applaud the bar associations' work in trying to make sure people understand the folks on the ballot and making sure good people run.

Your favorite hangouts?

The room at the art museum with all the Rodins. The sculptures themselves are incredible, and I love looking out at Severance Hall.

I love the free events at the Rock Hall: little concerts or lectures. There's always things to do in Cleveland, but things are relatively easy to get to. I visit friends in D.C. or Chicago and it takes an hour to go anywhere.

When they repay the visits, where do you take them?

I take them to the polka museum in Euclid. People are so proud of their heritage here: engaged with the rest of the community, but still proud of their own.

Where else?

I take them to Lake View Cemetery. There's so much history. There's so much architecture. The sculptures are incredible. There are mausoleums right in the side of the earth.

Every time you go there, you find something new. Have you seen the lion? It's a lifesize bronze. It's beautiful. It has the names of three people: a husband and wife and their son. It's overlooking the dam from the east.

My friends and family are all huge Cleveland fans when they leave.

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April 21, 2012 at 2:26PM

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The judges and attorneys of Cleveland are a mess. It's a politicized system where bad attorneys have to adapt to bad judges.

It's a failed system.

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bg111

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That is a diplomatic response to the question, "Good town for judges?"

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