



# BAR JOURNAL

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## *Estate Planning*

IMPACT OF THE ECONOMIC DOWNTURN  
ON BUSINESS VALUATIONS FOR ESTATE  
PLANNING

ARE YOU SMARTER THAN AN ESTATE  
PLANNER? TAKE THIS TRUE/FALSE QUIZ  
AND FIND OUT!

## *Immigration*

SIXTH CIRCUIT RESCUES ALIEN  
WIDOW FROM THREAT OF  
DEPORTATION

A MAN WALKED INTO A BAR...  
A CASE STUDY



# The Greatest Event That Never Happened



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Chair | CMBA Justice for  
All Committee

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RAM Ohio was scheduled to be an historic event, uniting volunteers in the fields of medicine, dentistry and optometry, as well as lawyers, to provide free services to an estimated 6,000 people from northeast Ohio and surrounding areas. Tons of medical, dental and optical equipment were being airlifted to Cleveland from Knoxville, Tennessee. Upwards of 2000 volunteers in numerous areas of expertise were on board, planning to provide assistance in shifts to cover two full days – May 2 and 3, 2009. Buses had been arranged, to start at midnight on Friday, May 1, 2009, to pick up people seeking assistance at Terminal Tower, to get them to the Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, where RAM Ohio was to take place. Volunteers were to be on hand to distribute admission tickets, identifying who was “first come,” so they could be “first served,” whatever their health need.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland – with assistance from the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association’s massive pool of volunteers – had mobilized to provide the largest, longest Brief Advice & Referral Clinic ever, with over 100 volunteers seeking to serve over four shifts across the two-day event, to help an estimated 600 people. Legal Aid lawyers had boned up on health-related legal issues and had gathered supporting materials to help volunteers provide the most up-to-date information to those with legal issues arising out of their medical concerns.

We were ready to go. So why didn’t you see it in your Sunday Plain Dealer?

It didn’t happen.

The Ohio State Department of Health, supported by the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, in response to the concerns about the spread of swine flu perceived to be sweeping the nation, recommended that the program be cancelled. A gathering of thousands of sick people, in the face of a threatened epidemic, was a public health nightmare. With a mission of improving – not compromising – public health, RAM of course consented, canceling its inaugural Ohio program.

But it would have been great.

RAM\* (Remote Area Medical) is a group of dedicated volunteers who have gone on over 500 missions to hard-to-access areas to provide medical and related care to people who literally would otherwise receive none. After serving populations around the world and in rural areas

within the United States, the Ohio mission – RAM’s 570th – was to be the organization’s first venture into an urban setting. In addition, this was to have been the first mission that incorporated pro bono legal services, along with the medical, dental and optical assistance. Expansively envisioned, community oriented, this was a volunteer event for the record books. Except for the fact that it never happened.

So what do we do? Do we resort to wailing and gnashing of teeth? Do we wallow in disappointment? Do we give up?

I say we do not. I say we walk tall and stand proud. We, the members of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, with less than a month’s notice, provided an overwhelming volume of volunteers for a program that had never been tried before. We offered up our weekend for the opportunity to help 600 people we’ve never met, for no pay, in areas of the law most of us see infrequently, at best. Through the Legal Aid Society, we the lawyers of Cleveland reached out to the doctors and said, “Count us in. We want to help.”

Our community is hurting and we, Cleveland’s lawyers, are helping. Even when we can’t dig as deeply as before to fund charity, because our own pockets aren’t as deep as they were before, we can – and RAM Ohio proves that we do – volunteer our time and expertise to help.

I’ve heard some claim that, as lawyers, the last thing we want to do with our free time is to practice law; we’d rather do something else. My response to that is that we can – and should – volunteer to teach, to tutor, to build houses, to paint community centers, to clean parks. But because only we can provide legal assistance to those who otherwise could not get legal help, we can and should do that, too. Whether serving at a Cleveland Homeless Legal Assistance Program shelter clinic, a Legal Aid Society Brief Advice and Referral Clinic, the Pro Se Divorce Clinic at the CMBA, we have the opportunity to use our degree and training to give to the community that has enriched us in so many ways. We must do so.

So if the door through which we hoped to serve 600 people has closed, let us find another way to help 600 people. Or 1,600. Or 6,000. Let us not be discouraged from this energetic outpouring of compassion. Instead, let us work harder to find the programs that need our help and then give it. If the doctors can do it, we can, too. ■