

# Legal Aid assists with employment issues

By RHONDA CROWDER  
Staff Reporter

Within the past couple of years, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has received a grant to support its wage project, which provides outreach and education concerning issues surrounding employment law. Basically, its staff members are helping people understand their rights when it comes to minimum wage, discrimination, criminal/credit checks, and independent contracting among other topics.

They haven't provided this service in over 20 years but, because Cuyahoga County's unemployment rate has increased, it's a program they felt a need to re-instate.

And through this initiative, Legal Aid is able to offer direct representation to persons who have been recently terminated or laid off and have not received wages due to unlawful discretions from pay. They are also gathering information on Cleveland's low-wage immigrants, as they are typ-

ically unaware of their employment rights.

"There wasn't a lot of information two years ago on that issue," said Julie A. Clutter Cortes, Legal Aid Society staff attorney.

Through research, Legal Aid has found a 68 percent increase in immigrants over the past couple of years despite that being a population that's hard to reach and often taken advantage of since they're afraid to speak out because they are undocumented.

However, there are laws to protect them, she explained. "They are still entitled to minimum wage and overtime. If you work, you got to be paid."

The wage project focuses on work/employment issues among people who were terminated or laid off and wasn't paid as well. It has to be a wage related issue.

And, as of late, Legal Aid has also to on a number of cases involving independent child care providers, where they had their license denied. They've helped a number providers get their per-

mits re-instated.

Stephanie Jackson, Legal Aid's managing attorney for health, education, income, and immigration, explained that the agency is required to provide a notice and, many times, they've had to advice them to do so.

She said providers should be aware that they can sue and appeal but the typical provider is usually a grandmother or someone in the neighborhood who are certified through the county. Many are also women coming off of welfare, she added.

"It's double important we help these people. They need their wages," she said.

Katie Laskey-Donovan, another Legal Aid staff attorney, mentioned that a private attorney wouldn't take on a wage case unless it's for \$5,000 or more.

That why they believe it's a much need service to the public while The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is the only branch in the state of Ohio working with low-wage workers.

They are also helping individ-

ual employees, of small businesses, who may not have received their last paycheck for whatever reason - there's several including it bounced and they never made good. With a strain on the econo-

my, it's likely to happen.

But, according to the statues within the Ohio Revised Code, employers can't withhold pay for uniforms and things of that nature. Most employees are sim-

ply ignorant to the law. And, Legal Aid goes after the employer for back pay yet some don't return calls while they've had to pursue litigation several times.

## Gail Peters, OSU regional coordinator, for Northern Ohio retires after 30 years

A Retirement Brunch was given for Gail Peters at the home of her Father, Amos Watson on Saturday, Aug. 8, 2009. Her daughter, Dana Peters, and her Dad, Amos Watson, co-hosted the special event to celebrate Gail's retirement from Ohio State University on June 30, after 30 1/2 years with the Ohio Public Employees Retirement System.

She has been with OSU since 1979, and joined the Ohio Learning Network in September 2000 to provide distance learning support to Ohio's colleges and universities and manage one of six regional distance learning outreach programs. She has provided coordination and leadership for the E 4 ME program since 2006. E 4 ME program is an on line introductory course available to

all Ohio students to get acquainted with the on line learning environment.

Previously, Gail led customer technical education programs across The Ohio State University (OSU) campus, including the University Technology Services, for 20 years. She also taught part-time for the Office of Continuing Education (1987-1999) at OSU and for Columbus State Community College - Business and Industry (1990-1993).

Gail holds a bachelor's degree in interpersonal/organizational communication and a master's degree in adult education from The Ohio State University. Gail has three certifications: in instructional design/development, in training management, and as a master trainer. She is an award



Gail Peters

recipient of the International Who's Who of Professional and Business Women.

## FREE HEALTH SCREENINGS

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Get to know us better as we open our doors to the community with free health screenings for the whole family.

## Renewable energy bills need revising

By RHONDA CROWDER  
Staff Reporter

Earlier this year, the Energy and Commerce Committee reported that the American Clean Energy and Security Act passed

that not all states will be able to meet the standards and provisions of the legislation due to environmental factors and circumstances beyond their control.

According to Alford, it will be easy for states such as Montana

cost?"

Alford does believe the United States need to start using alternative sources as it will decrease global warming by conserving energy in addition to the fact that other countries have