

WE WERE WATCHING



WE POINTED AT MELANIE SHAKARIAN as "one to watch" in May 2005. Before she joined the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, the nonprofit was pulling in \$73,000 from fundraising each year. She had a lofty goal to raise \$400,000 that year.

Now you can look back on those numbers as the bad old days.

Last year, Shakarian, Legal Aid's director of development, oversaw \$1.1 million in private philanthropic donations. Fundraising revenue now comprises 12 percent of the budget, up from 1 percent when she started.

Shakarian, 31, manages fundraising, public relations and marketing for the nonprofit law firm. She no longer practices law as an attorney, saying her current position is more rewarding than if she took on individual cases. "I am able to affect the lives of thousands more low income people in Northeast Ohio," Shakarian says.

In part, she's raised money by drawing high-profile speakers: In 2005, then-Senator Hillary Clinton headlined the nonprofit's 100th anniversary gala. Most of her efforts, though, are focused on attracting donations from individuals, companies and firms.

Shakarian's influence in Northeast Ohio extends beyond work, too. She grew up in Cleveland's Edgewater neighborhood and has moved back to that part of town with her husband, Peter Kvidera, a John Carroll faculty member. She's the president of Cudell Improvement Inc., the community development corporation overseeing her neighborhood.

The 31-year-old hopes other young professionals will embrace their love of this city to help it thrive.

"Be brave. I encourage any young professional who's determining what their next career move [will be] to really look at how their talents can benefit Cleveland. Cleveland is just a wonderful place for a young professional to learn and grow and develop a career."

— LH



WISDOM

(in 50 words or less)

Editor's note: In a new monthly feature, Inside Business will ask a Northeast Ohio business leader for one piece of business wisdom to share with our readers each month, always in 50 words or less.

Paul Dolan, president of the Cleveland Indians

"It's important to know a particular field well. Once you feel comfortable and you see an opportunity, seize it. Have confidence in your knowledge and the opportunity and you can make a difference."

— INTERVIEW BY SETH SHAPIRO



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