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News

## Lake, Geauga judges ask attorneys to help less fortunate

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By News-Herald staff

[Editor@News-Herald.com](mailto:Editor@News-Herald.com)

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As the economy continues to suffer, the judges of Lake and Geauga counties are making an extra effort to help the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland get more volunteers.

More than 150 attorneys were expected to attend a free continuing education presentation hosted by local judges Monday afternoon. Each lawyer who attended pledged to take a pro bono case or make a donation to Legal Aid, a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services for clients who cannot afford to pay for counsel.

The event was held in Willoughby Municipal Court Judge Harry Field's courtroom.

Speakers included: Field, Geauga County Juvenile/Probate Judge Timothy Grendell, Lake County Domestic Relations Judge Colleen Falkowski, Lake County Probate Judge Ted Klammer, 11th District Court of Appeals Judge Mary Jane Trapp and Chardon Municipal Court Judge Terri Stupica.

Legal Aid's clients face legal problems that could result in loss of housing, education, income, food, safety or family stability without an attorney acting on their behalf.

Last year, Legal Aid helped 26,000 people in Northeast Ohio. The demand for Legal Aid's services has increased 18 percent over the past two years, said Melanie Shakarian, Legal Aid's director of development and communications.

"Because there is no civil right to counsel, Legal Aid does not have the resources to help everyone who needs a lawyer," Shakarian said in a news release. "Last year, nearly 10,000 people were turned away from Legal Aid due to lack of resources. This effort by judges in Lake and Geauga counties will help Legal Aid meet some of the great demand the community has."

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