

Legal Aid Society presents free clinics

Cleveland group now offering help for residents of Lake, Geauga and Ashabula counties

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Staff Writer

People in smaller towns like Painesville have just as many legal problems as individuals in big cities like Cleveland.

That is the sentiment a Painesville woman wants people to understand when they think about free legal help.

Martha Williams is receiving assistance from the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Painesville office, which handles cases in Lake and Geauga counties.

The group, which also has an office in Jefferson Village, recently started to offer legal advice at free clinics hosted by

Inside

■ Eligibility guidelines and contact information for the Legal Aid Society

Page A6

Cleveland law firms.

Legal Aid officials plan to expand the program to surrounding counties after its test run. A clinic is being planned in Painesville, but dates have not been set.

Williams thinks it is a good idea.

"It would be very beneficial because small towns have the same problems," she said. "We might be small, but we need the same help."

Case stories

The Painesville Legal Aid office began helping Williams with her divorce about a year ago.

"It's not final yet, but so far they've done a very good job pulling information together,"



Michael Blair/News-Herald

Legal Aid attorneys Claire Cloud, left, confers with Tonya Whitsett during a case at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Painesville office.

Painesville, named Kathy.

"I was really at my wits' end because it was a tough situation," said Kathy, who did not want her last name published. "I called them as a last resort to see if I could get a referral for a

See AID, Page A6

she said.

"Most times when you get something that you don't have to pay for, it usually is really bad. With Legal Aid, they have been very kind, very informative."

Legal Aid also received high praise from another client from