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Lawyers donate nearly 85,000 hours

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More than 2,100 Cleveland area lawyers devoted nearly 85,000 hours to pro bono- and public service last year under the Cleveland Bar Association's inaugural year of tracking community service.

At an average billable hourly rate of \$200, that adds up to nearly \$17 million worth of time spent helping needy people, schools and community groups.

The campaign, dubbed "Our Commitment to Our Community," or OCTOC, was launched in 2004 under then-president David Kutik.

Some highlights:

84,898 hours of pro bono - donated legal work - and other volunteer service in 2005. Each of the 2,152 lawyers who participated gave an average of 40 hours.

A little more than one-third of the hours were devoted to pro bono services, while nearly two-thirds went to activities such as tutoring.

204 lawyers helped the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland serve more than 1,500 people. Others volunteered at St. Martin de Porres Family Center, Westside Catholic Center and the Spanish-American Committee.

"We served hundreds more low-income families in 2005 because of the OCTOC program," said Colleen Cotter, executive director of the Legal Aid Society.

Bar Association President P. Kelly Tompkins, senior vice president and general counsel of RPM International Inc., said the goal was not just to tally the number of hours volunteered, but to change the pro bono culture within the legal community and set a goal to beat this year.

Incoming President Hugh McKay, partner in charge of the Cleveland office of Porter Wright Morris & Arthur, said the partnerships with Legal Aid and other groups will only grow.

"The more our lawyers do in this area, the more they want to do," he said. "It is very gratifying work."

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