

Legal Aid Society**Some of area's finest lawyers work pro bono**

By **JaNAE' BATES**
Contributing Writer

Are you having trouble with your housing contract or landlord? Are you in danger or in need of bankruptcy? Having a domestic violence problem? Think you may need a lawyer, but not sure of how to get or pay for one? Your solution has arrived.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has been serving the community since 1905 and has a newly established Lawyer Volunteers Program that is very beneficial to Cleveland. Every second and last Saturday in the month, from 10 a.m. until noon, Legal Aid will be providing free legal clinics open to the public.

At these clinics individuals can have any and all legal questions answered by quality lawyers. Law firms from all across the county are represented and they've volunteered to give assistance and

Turner

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The Port of Oakland, in Oakland, Calif., applauded Turner's efforts to successfully implement the Port's own local business utilization policy, which calls for the hiring of local contractors to perform at least 30 percent of the work on major development projects.

"Turner Construction has stepped up to the plate and exceeded our requirements in such a way that it truly benefits our local business area," said Patricia Scates, Port of Oakland's board president.

Al Barber, president of the National Association of Minority Contractors, commended

advice.

The attorneys will give you their professional opinions on your situations. If your case is something that they can directly help you with and if you meet the income requirements, either a lawyer will handle your case at no charge.

"In this profession, yes, we have our paying clients, but we also have an ethical obligation to provide pro bono services for free," said Ann McGowan Porath, the managing attorney of the Lawyers Program at Legal Aid. "Cleveland is so blessed to have so many attorneys and so many willing volunteers. There has been wonderful success. It's great."

In 2005, 38 Legal Aid attorneys handled over 8,500 cases. With the establishment of the new program in 2005, an additional 1,500 cases were handled with the aid of more than 700 attorneys and the assistance of 130 more law students. There are some Member Award.

"Not only was Turner one of our first members, they have made improvements for diversity on project sites across America. They are diligent to include minority subcontractors on their projects," he said.

restrictions to having a free Legal Aid attorney, such as having no criminal cases or fee-generated cases.

Last Saturday's clinic was held at the Helen S. Brown Senior Center in East Cleveland and the featured law firm was Squire, Sanders & Dempsey. Every week Legal Aid rotates the law firms and the area where the clinics are held, with a preference of alternating between Cleveland's East Side and West Sides.

Squire, Sanders & Dempsey is a large prestigious firm with offices worldwide. Some of these attorneys make hundreds of dollars an hour for their services and they are known for representing large corporations.

Heather Tonsing, a litigation attorney for SS&D and a former Legal Aid attorney, revealed, "When I first came to Squire Sanders I said, 'We have to do this [Lawyers] program' ... It's a completely different type of law. It makes you a well-rounded individual, as well as a well-rounded attorney."

Richard Gurbst, 25-year attorney at Squire and a former Legal Aid attorney felt, had another reason. "I want to

represent people who don't have representation or being denied their rights because they didn't have a spokesperson, a lawyer," he said. "It is sometimes a strange thing for people [who aren't lawyers] to interface with the law, so we assist them."

Legal Aid's next legal clinic will take place on Saturday, July 8, from 10 a.m. to noon, at the West Side Catholic Center, 3135 Lorain Ave., in Cleveland. The featured law firm will be Baker Hostetler.

To learn more about Legal Aid or the program visit lasclev.org or call (216) 687-1900.

MetroHealth proves diversity beyond work

MetroHealth efforts to reinforce its commitment to diversity were recognized by the Urban League of Greater Cleveland with the 2005 Corporate Excellence Award, honoring the medical center for its commitment toward equal opportunity for all, demonstrated through inclusion of minorities on the board of trustees, in senior management and throughout the MetroHealth workforce.

MetroHealth's diversity is the result of a comprehensive strategic plan to strengthen cultural competence throughout the organization and reduce health disparities in the community.

The percentage of ethnic minorities among nurses and physicians at MetroHealth exceeds national averages for hospitals. As the patient population grows more diverse, so does the need for new initiatives to recruit and retain physicians

and nurses who reflect MetroHealth's commitment to culturally and linguistically appropriate care.

"Equal opportunity and access to good care is what defines MetroHealth," said Sideras, MetroHealth's president and CEO.

More than half of the medical staff is bilingual, speaking 49 different languages. MetroHealth translators provide 1,000 person interpretations every month in 100 languages; and a dedicated telephone language line offers medical interpretations in more than 100 languages.

MetroHealth is home to the Case Center for Reducing Health Disparities, performing research to identify more effective approaches tailored to the needs of different populations.



Legal Aid Society volunteer attorneys Heather Tonsing and Richard Gurbst of the law firm Squire, Sanders & Dempsey assist a woman with her legal issues at legal clinic. The free Saturday clinics are held twice monthly.
(PHOTO COURTESY OF LEGAL AID SOCIETY)

The Cleveland-Cuyahoga County Port Authority