

Free legal clinic to lend a hand

John Arthur Hutchison

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Foreclosure and family law will be given a special focus when the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland provides an opportunity for people to speak with an attorney at no charge June 11 in Painesville.

The Brief Advice and Referral Clinic will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. at St. Mary's School, 268 N. State St.

Legal Aid provides free legal assistance about civil legal problems to low-income clients in Lake, Geauga, Ashtabula, Cuyahoga and Lorain counties.

Through the Brief Advice and Referral Clinics, clients have an opportunity to discuss civil legal problems with volunteer attorneys, said Melanie Shakarian, director

of development for Legal Aid.

"We do these brief advice clinics when our office is overwhelmed," she said. "This is the first time in Painesville; we've done many in Cleveland."

The organization can offer assistance to help handle civil problems, like divorce, disputes with landlords, getting special education at public schools, battling predatory lenders and rental centers, getting public benefits and the earned income tax credit, contracts and bankruptcy, Shakarian said.

Legal Aid cannot help with criminal issues, she said.

For this event, Legal Aid's Lake and Geauga County office will partner with Catholic Charities.

"Catholic Charities helps Legal Aid

reach those in need through community centers, schools and churches," said Marley Eiger, managing attorney of Legal Aid's Lake and Geauga County office. "Together, we can holistically serve the community and provide legal aid to those who are low income and vulnerable."

The law firm Dworken & Bernstein, which has offices in Painesville and Cleveland, will provide staff attorneys at the clinic.

"We feel it is our duty to provide pro bono service to the community and our partnership with Legal Aid provides the most benefit to those less fortunate," said Howard Rabb of Dworken & Bernstein.

Ann McGowan Porath of Legal Aid said she is pleased the law firm is lending a hand for the event.

"Their assistance expands how many individuals we can serve in Lake and Geauga (counties)," she said.

Within the past year more than 8,500 cases were handled by 55 full-time attorneys, 700 pro bono volunteers and 130 law students.

This work affects thousands of vulnerable children, needy families and the elderly.

Even with this staff and volunteer support, more than 10,000 low-income individuals were turned away.

For more information about the Free Brief Advice and Referral Clinic or The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, visit: www.lascleve.org or call Legal Aid's Lake and Geauga County Office at (440) 951-7240.

District takes flight

Mentor Schools takes look back, prepares for future

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It's not exactly entertaining or upbeat to reflect on the closing of schools, cutting staff positions or being \$20 million in debt, but members of the Mentor School District



Health board honors Riverside

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When she began changing the nutritional guideline policy at Riverside Schools, Kelly Minnick braced herself for a student rebel-