

Free legal advice clinic to hit Chardon Oct. 24

By Cassandra Shofar

If you've got a civil legal question and can't afford a lawyer, now's your chance.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and Geauga County Bar Association have teamed up to provide their second annual brief advice clinic from 5 to 7 p.m. Oct. 24 at Chardon Methodist Church.

The event, held at 515 North St., is in conjunction with National Pro Bono Week, said Davida Dodson, public relations and public service committee member for the Geauga County Bar Association.

"There are lots of people who are unable to afford a private lawyer to be able to discuss their civil legal problems with because it's very costly," Dodson said. "So this is an opportunity for the public to be able to speak with lawyers from the private bar who want to be able to provide their time so there is access to justice. Whether they're civil problems, whether it be foreclosure, family law and bankruptcy, it's just an opportunity to see what their options are."

During National Pro Bono Week, The American Bar Association encourages all the private bars throughout the United States to volunteer and to try to partner with legal aids and with other associations so that we can better serve the public, Dodson said.

"These are very troubling economic times and this is really an

opportunity for the bar association and legal aid to serve the public so that any unmet legal needs can be discussed and people have an opportunity to look at what their options are," she added.

Roughly six to eight lawyers will be at the advice clinic, which the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland tries to do every two weeks throughout Northeast Ohio, said Melanie Shakarian, director of development and communications for the society.

"It's just civil cases, no criminal," she said. "(Lawyers) will answer any questions about consumer rights, including foreclosure and bankruptcy, housing law, including questions about landlord/tenant relations and any legal questions related to health, education, work and common immigration. Also, some family law cases, especially where there's domestic violence or children who are at risk."

Shakarian anticipates helping upwards of 30 people at the clinic in Chardon and encourages people to take advantage and bring any important papers they need.

"It's a free legal clinic and if there's a question or issue that is worrisome, just stop by and ask questions," she said. "That's why we're here to help."

Clinic attorneys do provide legal representation, but if needed, people may be referred to the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland or another service provider. For more information or questions, contact Shakarian at 216-861-5217.

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