



Army Vet Fights Eviction

It wasn't easy to find a safe, affordable apartment to accommodate his wheelchair and his service dog -- and this veteran needed Legal Aid's help to keep his home.

The walls of Paul LaVette Jr.'s apartment are crowded with framed awards, commendations and certificates from his 30 year career in the U.S. Army and Army Reserves. He served in the U.S., Germany, Korea, Panama, and Vietnam. When he retired from the service he worked as a chef at Trump Plaza and later on the Nautica Queen. But soon he couldn't take the physical strain of daily work and became disabled.

"I'm in good health, but I'm a broken mess because of my injuries," says the 62-year-old. During his time in a mounted unit in Colorado, he was thrown from horses, and once attacked by a bear. A rack of M-16s fell on him, and after years of training soldiers in nine different martial arts, he says, "my joints are shot." Even with a wheelchair to get around, it's hard to hold a job because of all his medical appointments and hospitalizations.

Demoralized because he wasn't working, his Veterans Affairs doctor recommended a service dog. The veteran who once trained ordinance dogs trained Skippy from a tiny puppy to be his own personal service dog. But when Mr. LaVette's property manager saw the dog, she proposed to terminate his lease.

"I felt abandoned, harassed and just stepped on," Mr. LaVette says. He requested a reasonable accommodation based on his disability. He jumped through hoops to show the license, doctor's recommendation, and certificate for his service dog, but he felt the building manager kept throwing up roadblocks. Ultimately, his request for reasonable accommodation was denied, and his lease was terminated.

U.S. Veteran Paul LaVette trained dogs to find explosives during his Army service, and trained a service dog – Skippy – to help him manage life on the homefront.



Mr. LaVette has been living in subsidized housing for six years. He likes the building; it's secure, affordable, wheelchair accessible and close to several bus routes. But most importantly, it is his home.

So, he decided to call Legal Aid.



Hazel Remesch, Esq. LaVette's disability.

Legal Aid Senior Staff Attorney Hazel Remesch advocated for Mr. LaVette and requested that his denial for a reasonable accommodation be reconsidered. She argued that Mr. LaVette's disability warrants the possession of a service dog. And that the service dog provides emotional support and alleviates some of the symptoms that are a result of Mr.

Six weeks later, Mr. LaVette's request for Skippy to stay as his service dog was granted. Mr. LaVette was able to stay in his apartment and Skippy is an integral part of his support system.

Having Ms. Remesch and Legal Aid was a God-sent gift, he says. "She treated me very professionally and reassured me. I could call her or she called me to make sure we'd be ready." Because of Legal Aid, Mr. LaVette can keep his home, his canine companion and his rightful dignity.

Help Legal Aid continue this great work to ensure decent and affordable housing: make a gift to the 2014 Annual Campaign by December 31 at www.lasclev.org/donate or call 216-861-5590.

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Women in Law

Making a Difference

CLEVELAND METROPOLITAN BAR ASSOCIATION

On November 6, the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's Women In Law Section and the Association of Corporate Counsel, Northeast Ohio Chapter hosted "Women in Law: Making a Difference." The event honors a select group of female attorneys for their contributions to our community and profession.

All proceeds from the event support the programs of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Foundation, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and the CMBA Women in Law Section.

Congratulations to the honorees:

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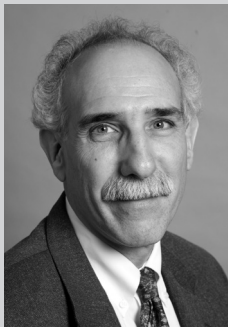
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Deborah W. Yue, Gallagher Sharp
Deborah D. Zielinski, Chicago Title Insurance Company

Visit www.lasclev.org/event/11062014

to learn more or make a gift in honor of one of these great women!

Staff News @ Legal Aid

After 42 years of service at Legal Aid, **Peter Iskin** is retiring. Currently Managing Attorney of Legal Aid's Housing Practice Group, Mr. Iskin is a 1973 graduate of the University of Pennsylvania School of Law. He has served Legal Aid in various capacities: a staff attorney in the Law Reform Unit from 1974 – 1987; Director of the Law Reform Unit from 1987 – 2004; and his present position since 2005. He also served on the Board of Commissioners of the Cuyahoga Metropolitan Housing Authority from 1980 – 1985, where he was chair from 1981 – 1985.



Peter Iskin, Esq.

He has dedicated his career to protecting and enforcing housing rights, especially for the most vulnerable populations, and to expanding access to affordable, decent housing for low income people. Peter is recognized as a state and national leader. He authored the book *Ohio Evictions and Landlord Tenant Law*, the most comprehensive guide to Ohio housing law, used by attorneys and judges throughout the state. Peter's substantive knowledge is unparalleled. His partnerships and advocacy work with other service providers, grass roots organizations, and government officials have helped to shape housing policy and practices, impacting tens of thousands of low income people. Peter is an inspiration to his colleagues, who, through his mentorship, learn to strive for the high standards he sets in quality, commitment and impact on our community.

Attorney **Abigail Staudt** will succeed Mr. Iskin as the Managing Attorney of the Housing Practice Group in January 2015.

Attorneys **Julie Cortes** and **Mary Beth McConville** will receive the 2014 **Claude E. Clarke Award**. Established in 1967, the Award recognizes outstanding service through professional performance and commitment to Legal Aid and its clients.

The **Ohio Domestic Violence Network** recently recognized Legal Aid attorney **Alexandria Ruden** with the Croucher Family Award for Outstanding Advocacy. Ms. Ruden was honored for her achievements in the field of domestic violence advocacy.

Melanie Shakarian, an attorney and Legal Aid's Director of Development & Communications was selected as a member of the **Leadership Cleveland Class** of 2015. Additionally, **Katherine Hollingsworth**, a Supervising Attorney in Legal Aid's Consumer Practice Group, was selected for the **YWCA Boot Camp**.

Julie Robie, Managing Attorney of Legal Aid's Consumer Practice Group, was recently appointed to the City of **Cleveland's Consumer Advisory Board**. She is a graduate of Yale Law School and was a Skadden Fellow.



Alexandria Ruden, Esq.

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Porter Wright Supports Legal Education and *Pro Bono* Volunteers

Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP announces a \$50,000 grant to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland over the next five years. With Porter Wright's support, Legal Aid will bolster legal education and support volunteer attorneys and ultimately, protect the safety, economic security and shelter of more low-income clients.



“There's a moral imperative for lawyers to step up and make sure the scales of justice are balanced.”

- Hugh McKay, Esq.

Our legal system and ultimately our society depend on access to justice for all – regardless of a person's lot in life,” says Hugh E. McKay, Partner-in-Charge of Porter Wright in Cleveland. “There's a moral imperative for lawyers to step up and do whatever they reasonably can do to make sure the scales of justice are balanced. In Cleveland, this means supporting Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. Legal Aid has demonstrated remarkable dedication, efficiency, creativity and effectiveness in making the most of limited resources to fight the good fight for access to justice. Porter Wright is proud to do our part to advance Legal Aid's mission, upon which we depend.”

The generous grant will help Legal Aid:

1. Engage retired attorneys as volunteers; linking them with law students and recent graduates. By creating a multi-generational network linking retired attorneys with law students and novice

attorneys, experienced attorneys can pass on their skills while new graduates can get valuable experience and mentoring. Funding will support staff at Legal Aid to recruit and support the attorney pairs.

2. Create accessible electronic resources for *pro bono* attorneys. Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program can now revise, update and reinvent their current collection of legal resources with new materials available electronically. The goal is to develop a web application that would maximize support through a virtual resource center for *pro bono* attorneys.

3. Attract even more volunteers by offering CLE credit for *pro bono* work. Porter Wright's gift helps Legal Aid focus staff time on outreach related to the recent Ohio Supreme Court rule change, which allows volunteer attorneys to earn Continuing Legal Education credit for *pro bono* work. With Porter Wright's

support, Legal Aid will make it easy for volunteers to report their time to earn credit.

porterwright

“This gift from Porter Wright is a vote of confidence in Legal Aid and in the value of our *pro bono* partners. Volunteers have a huge impact on our clients' lives. They need and deserve Legal Aid's support. Porter Wright will make it possible for even more volunteers to serve clients,” says Legal Aid Executive Director Colleen Cotter. “Legal Aid will leverage this gift with thousands of volunteer hours, impacting thousands of clients.”

Want to join Porter Wright and financially support our Volunteer Lawyers Program? Make a gift to the 2014 Annual Campaign: www.lasclev.org/donate or call 216-861-5590. Or, sign up to volunteer at www.lasclev.org/volunteer/

Volunteer Recognition Awards Announced

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland cannot assist its many clients without relying on the great work of its volunteers. Last year, 20% of the people helped by Legal Aid were assisted by a *pro bono* attorney.

Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program is proud to announce its 2014 volunteer recognition award winners. These individuals are among Legal Aid's 1,500 volunteer attorneys. They performed exceptional service in the past year for Legal Aid's clients – and for that they deserve recognition.

Congratulations to:

Jessica R. Baaklini (volunteered in-house at Legal Aid)

Carolyn J. Brown (solo practice attorney)

Joseph P. Dunson (Dunson Law, LLC)

Robert E. Glaser (Law Office of Robert E. Glaser, Esq.)

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The Lake County Bar Association Family Law Section (Co-Chairs: Anna M. Parise and Darya J. Klammer)

Jenifer E. Novak (Frantz Ward, LLP)

William F. Perry (William F. Perry Co., LPA)

Peter F. Sheney (solo practice attorney)

Curtis L. Tuggle (Thompson Hine, LLP)

Christopher S. Williams (Calfee, Halter & Griswold, LLP)

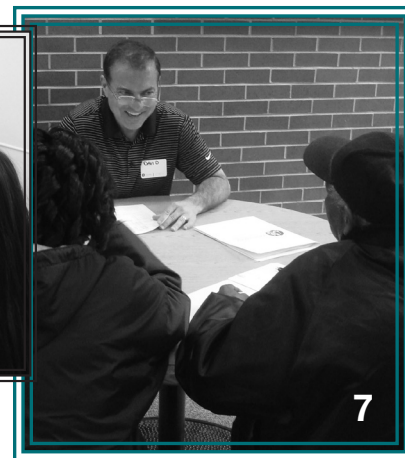
Nadia R. Zaiem (volunteered in-house at Legal Aid)

The 12 individuals receiving recognition volunteered more than 2300 hours in the past year. The organization receiving recognition organized and hosted four new clinics for Legal Aid.

Inspired by these volunteers? Become a *pro bono* volunteer today – www.lasclev.org/volunteer.

2014

Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program: *Pro Bono* Attorneys at Work in the Community!



1. Attorney members of Cleveland City Council used their lawyer skills to volunteer for Legal Aid. Pictured (l-r) are Council President and Ward 13 Councilman Kevin Kelley, Esq., Ward 6 Councilwoman Mamie Mitchell, Esq., Ward 7 Councilman TJ Dow, Esq.
2. Jennifer Heinert O'Leary, Esq. (City of Cleveland)
3. Eric Daniel, Esq. (Thompson Hine LLP)
4. Dena Kobasic, Esq. (PolyOne)
5. Barry Freeman, Esq. (Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC)
6. Brian Ambrosia, Esq. (Taft Stettinius & Hollister LLP)
7. David Drechsler, Esq. (Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLC)

ACT 2

*Late-Career &
Retired Attorneys*
Volunteer Program



The Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1905

... Late-career and retired attorneys, ACT now to get involved with Legal Aid!

- Act to use your legal experience for those who need your expert help,
- Act to make a difference in the lives of others,
- Act to realize the dream that inspired you to become an attorney!

The focus is to engage late-career and retired attorneys in *pro bono* work to help Legal Aid's low-income clients.

Legal Aid's ACT 2 initiative is part of Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program. Volunteer attorneys help ensure shelter, safety and economic security for the most vulnerable.

Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program supports ACT 2 volunteers with malpractice insurance, office space and support, training and mentors.

Interested? Visit www.lasclev.org/ACT2 to sign up today!

Legal Services Corporation Turns 40



The largest national funder of legal services for the poor – the Legal Services Corporation – turned 40 this year. Vice President Joe Biden, former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, U.S. Supreme Court Justices Elena Kagan and Antonin Scalia, and U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder joined

leaders of the legal community, government, and the private sector September 14-16 at a wide-ranging legal aid conference in Washington D.C. to mark the 40th anniversary of the LSC.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland was well represented at this special event: Board President Rick Petrulis and Executive Director Colleen Cotter were invited as guest of the LSC. Additionally, Ms. Cotter participated in a conference panel, along with Board Presidents Emeriti Ilah Adkins (Citizens Bank) and Ann Bergen (Law Offices of Ann Bergen).

In a speech at the event, Supreme Court of the United States Justice Antonin Scalia stated, "We salute the lawyers who have dedicated their careers to justice. For without access to quality representation there is no justice."



Colleen Cotter, Esq. (Legal Aid Executive Director), U.S. Supreme Court Justice Elena Kagan and Ann Bergen, Esq. (Legal Aid President Emeritus)



Ann Bergen, Esq. with U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia

Legal Aid Saves Her Home

For Ms. Johnson, last year the holiday season wasn't a happy time. This year, the holidays will be a little brighter.

Cassandra Johnson lives in an artisan bungalow on a leafy residential street along the Doan Brook in Cleveland. Being a good neighbor, she often ran errands for or visited with the elderly gentleman who lived on the other side of the side-by-side house. When he passed away, he left her the house with its beautiful wood trim and stained glass windows, and a coach house in the rear. Ms. Johnson lived on one side of the house and hoped to rent out the other side so she could earn some income.

Then she became ill and had to leave her job as an Licensed Practical Nurse and go on disability. Her parents, who live in the house next door, were helping her pay her bills, until her father discovered he had cancer. A mistake in her SSI disability payments resulted in her income being reduced to zero. Meanwhile, the fees and penalties accrued on the home mortgage became more than the value of her home. The mortgage lender wasn't willing to work with her.

That was a heavy burden, she recalls, worrying about what was going to happen with her health, her home and her parents. Luckily, she found The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Legal Aid staff attorney Dennis Dobos took the case and started mediation with the lender.

"He gave it all his attention," says Ms. Johnson. "It made me so grateful to go another day with hope."

Mr. Dobos negotiated a fabulous deal. The lender eliminated \$103,522 in interest, fees and principal.



Legal Aid client Cassandra Johnson sits at her dining table, relieved of the stress of her recent home foreclosure proceeding.

Now, Ms. Johnson is in a good place. And, if she can make timely payments for three years, she'll own her home, thanks to Legal Aid.

Join Legal Aid and help us ensure economic security for people like Ms. Johnson. Make a gift today by calling 216-861-5590 or visit www.lasclev.org/donate.



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Since 1905

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6 POETIC JUSTICE Fall 2014



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Each year, Legal Aid's Annual Luncheon & Report to the Community raises more than \$150,000 for Legal Aid. We are grateful to the table sponsors who take a lead to make this happen. If you know someone affiliated with a table sponsor – take the time to mention to them you saw their name on this VIP list... as a way to say “thank you” for supporting Legal Aid’s great work!

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This list is current as of October 23, 2014.

Additional sponsors secured for the November 12 event are highlighted at www.lasclev.org/2014Event.

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To secure justice and resolve fundamental problems for those who are low-income and vulnerable by providing high quality legal services and working for systemic solutions.

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