



## Legal Aid wins a fair outcome in an eviction case for a hard-working client.



*Jesse Bonds feared he would be homeless when his landlord threatened to evict him. Thanks to Legal Aid, he found a nice apartment in a safe neighborhood - and he got his security deposit back.*

When his landlord slapped a “three-day” eviction notice on his door, 49-year-old Jesse Bonds feared he’d end up in a homeless shelter.

Soft-spoken, Mr. Bonds loves the “busy-busy-busy” energy of the city – especially around the Ohio City apartment he rented for seven years. It was modern, well-kept and convenient to his job at Subway.

Mr. Bonds could afford the \$625-a-month apartment through Emerald Development Economic Network (EDEN), a federally subsidized housing agency and a close community partner with Legal Aid. Mr. Bonds paid one-third of the rent and EDEN paid the remainder. When Mr. Bonds paid his January rent – on time – the property manager told him, “it’d be better if you moved.”

“There was no paperwork, no notice,” said Mr. Bonds. “I was shocked and scared. I thought he was going to set my stuff on the curb while I was at work.”

Alissa Ayden, his housing manager at EDEN, referred Mr. Bonds to Legal Aid and his case was assigned to attorney Maria Smith. She saw that the property owners hadn’t filed eviction paperwork, but they just kept harassing Mr. Bonds.

“We worked closely with EDEN,” said Ms. Smith. “They were incredible. They got me the documents showing he paid his rent on time and offered to testify if necessary.” Meanwhile, the company cut off communication with EDEN and it wouldn’t accept the rent subsidy – holding Mr. Bonds accountable for the full amount.

{ “Without Legal Aid, I would  
have been homeless.” }

EDEN offered to pay an increase in rent, says Ms. Smith, but the property manager never followed up with an estimated market value.

In several court appearances, the property manager demanded Mr. Bonds leave his apartment within one or two weeks, which Ms. Smith was able to delay. Finally, Ms. Smith gave Mr. Bonds the option to stay and fight the landlord, or move. He appreciated that she gave him the confidence to take charge of the decision. Once he realized it would be easier to move, Ms. Smith negotiated a dismissal of the eviction so it would not appear on the court record and a refund of his security deposit so he could use it on his next apartment. He ended up having enough time to find a new apartment in a safe neighborhood. He saved a few months of rent while the case wound through court and he used the savings for moving expenses.

“Without Legal Aid, I would have been homeless,” said Mr. Bonds. “It was a struggle, but I got through it and that’s so powerful. It’s very important that you keep up this [service] for people like me.”

### INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

- United States Senator Rob Portman on the importance of Legal Aid, *pro bono* service, and the economy
- Board Member Profile: Aaron O’Brien, Esq.
- Ulmer Berne announces renewed support of Legal Aid
- In Memory: Attorney Claire Cloud
- ... and More!

# United States Senator Rob Portman on the importance of Legal Aid, *pro bono* service, and the economy



U.S. Senator Rob Portman addresses Legal Aid staff before the luncheon event.



Legal Aid's Executive Director Colleen Cotter presents Senator Portman with a token of appreciation.



Colleen Cotter, Esq. (Legal Aid) and Ann Bergen, Esq. (Office of Ann S. Bergen)

Ensuring access to justice for everyone is a privilege and a professional obligation, according to United States Senator Rob Portman, speaking at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Annual Luncheon and Report to the Community.

In his keynote speech on September 3, 2013 at Cleveland's Renaissance Hotel, Senator Portman applauded Legal Aid on its 108-year history of helping people solve legal problems. As a young lawyer, Portman volunteered with The Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati. He urged all attorneys to work with the 45 full-time staff attorneys at Legal Aid and volunteer to take *pro bono* cases for low-income clients.



Congressman Louis Stokes (left) and U.S. Senator Rob Portman (right) with retiring Legal Aid board members Barbara Leadbetter and Michelle Wilkerson-Guerry



U.S. Senator Rob Portman and Congressman Louis Stokes

With 370,000 people in Northeast Ohio living in poverty, there will always be a pressing need for Legal Aid, he said, adding that "the best help is a growing economy that provides more jobs and opportunities."

The annual luncheon is Legal Aid's opportunity to highlight its accomplishments over the past year. With some 900 attorneys, members of the judiciary, civic leaders and elected officials and community partners in attendance, the event raised more \$150,000 for Legal Aid. This year brought record sponsorship from 55 law firms and community partners.

## Thank You! Our Annual Luncheon sponsors and supporters

### PLATINUM SPONSOR



GIFFEN & KAMINSKI  
Attorneys at Law

### GOLD SPONSORS

BakerHostetler  
Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association  
Frantz Ward LLP  
Spangenberg, Shibley & Liber, LLP  
Taft/  
Tucker Ellis LLP

### SILVER SPONSORS

Association of Corporate Counsel – Northeast Ohio Chapter  
Cleveland-Marshall College of Law  
Medical Mutual of Ohio  
Wickens, Herzer, Panza, Cook & Batista Co.

### BRONZE SPONSORS

All Covered – IT Services from Konica Minolta  
Avalon Printing  
Calfee, Halter & Griswold, LLP  
Cleveland Academy of Trial Attorneys  
Cleveland Clinic Foundation  
Forest City Enterprises  
Hahn Loeser + Parks  
Ice Miller LLP  
Jones Day  
KeyBank  
Kohrman, Jackson & Krantz, PLL  
Margaret Wong & Associates  
McDonald Hopkins Co., LPA  
Oswald Companies  
Roetzel & Andress Co., LPA  
Squire Sanders (US) LLP



Legal Aid board president Ann Bergen addresses the crowd.



U.S. Senator Rob Portman delivers the keynote address at Legal Aid's 2013 Annual Event.



Mike Lyford, Esq. (Liberty Mutual Group), Sonja Rajki, Esq. (MetroHealth System), Mary Anne Kenney, Esq. (Dreyfuss Williams & Associates Co. LPA), Richard Kenney, Esq. (Richard C. Kenney, Jr. Co., LPA)

To exemplify the broad support and cooperation that Legal Aid fosters, United States Senator Sherrod Brown recorded a video welcome for the event. Former Legal Aid Board member Congressman Louis Stokes introduced Senator Portman as a Legal Aid supporter and a longtime friend.

Colleen Cotter, Legal Aid's Executive Director, and Ann Bergen, Legal Aid's Board president, did a joint presentation to remind the audience that "being poor means you have



Federal Public Defender Dennis Terez with U.S. Senator Portman



Anthony Parker, Esq. and Ruben Pope, Esq.

far more legal problems than most of us will ever face. It means a lifetime of unavoidable debts, substandard housing, foreclosures, trouble accessing credit, uncaring bureaucracies ... and the hordes of others who prey on the powerless."

President Bergen presented staff awards and honored two retiring board members: Michelle Wilkerson-Guerry, representing NEO Coalition for the Homeless and Barbara Leadbetter, representing MetroHealth's Center for Community Health. A short video, featuring former Legal Aid client

Karen Hummel, helped highlight the accomplishments of the retiring board members. Ms. Hummel was helped by Legal Aid in 1995, and today she is an accomplished attorney at Petersen & Ibold in Chardon.

With a staff of 70 including 45 attorneys and the help of 1,600 volunteer lawyers, Legal Aid handled nearly 10,000 cases last year. Unfortunately, due to funding constraints, about half of the people who are eligible and ask for help must be turned away.

## raised more than \$150,000 for Legal Aid:

Thompson Hine, LLP  
Ulmer & Berne, LLP  
Vorys Sater  
Walter | Haverfield  
Zashin & Rich Co., L.P.A.

### OTHER SPONSORS

Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, LLP  
Law Offices of Ann S. Bergen, Esq.  
BNY Mellon  
Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP  
Cavitch Familo & Durkin  
Charter One  
Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Alumni Association  
Cliffs Natural Resources  
Colleen M. Cotter  
DDR Corp.

Hyatt Legal Plans  
Jackson|Lewis LLP  
Littler Mendelson  
Ogletree Deakins  
Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation  
Norman S. Minor Bar Association  
Petersen & Ibold  
PNC Bank  
Porter, Wright, Morris & Arthur, LLP  
Reminger  
Republican Party of Cuyahoga County  
Tarolli Sundheim Covell Tummino LLP  
Thacker Martinsek LPA  
Weston Hurd

### LEGAL AID BOARD OF DIRECTORS

**Ann S. Bergen, Esq.**  
Law Offices of Ann S. Bergen, Co. LPA

**Carolyn Dennis**  
Community Representative  
nominated by JFK Recreation Center

**Frank R. DeSantis, Esq.**  
Thompson Hine LLP

**James Gemelas, Esq.**  
Smith, Illner & Gemelas Co.

**Karen Giffen, Esq.**  
Giffen & Kaminski

**Patrick Haggerty, Esq.**  
Frantz Ward

**Vanetta J. Jamison**  
Community Representative  
nominated by Beech Brook

**Barbara Leadbetter**  
Community Representative  
nominated by MetroHealth's Center for Community Health

**John Q. Lewis, Esq.**  
Tucker, Ellis & West LLP

**G. Christopher Meyer, Esq.**  
Squire Sanders (US) LLP

**Matt Nakon, Esq.**  
Wickens, Herzer, Panza, Cook & Batista

**Heather Nicastro**  
Community Representative  
nominated by The Arc of Greater Cleveland

**Aaron O'Brien, Esq.**  
Baker ostetter

**Richard D. Petrusis, Esq.**

**Betsy Rader, Esq.**  
Cleveland Clinic Foundation

**Rebecca Ruppert McMahon, Esq.**

**Adrian D. Thompson, Esq.**  
Tatt/

**Tim Walters**  
Community Representative  
nominated by Merrick House

**Michelle Wilkerson-Guerry**  
Community Representative  
nominated by the NEO Coalition for the Homeless

**Ida R. Williams**  
Community Representative  
nominated by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lorain County

**Rebecca L. Wojtko**  
Community Representative  
nominated by the Big Brothers Big Sisters of Lorain County

### EXECUTIVE TEAM

**Colleen M. Cotter, Esq.**  
Executive Director

**Tom Mlakar, Esq.**  
Deputy Director for Advocacy

**Bettina Kaplan**  
Director of Finance and Administrative Operations

**Melanie A. Shakarian, Esq.**  
Director of Development and Communications

**Jennifer Teeter**  
Executive Assistant and  
Organizational Development Coordinator

### NEWSLETTER STAFF

**Ellen Brown**  
**Adrienne Fischer**  
Contributors

**Melanie A. Shakarian, Esq.**  
Editor

**Candis Hecking**  
Art Direction & Design

# Women Honoring Women

**NOVEMBER 21, 2013**

5:30 - 8:00 p.m. at The Club at Key Center

**Proceeds benefit**

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and the  
CMBMA's Women in Law Section.

Register at **[www.clemetrobar.org](http://www.clemetrobar.org)**



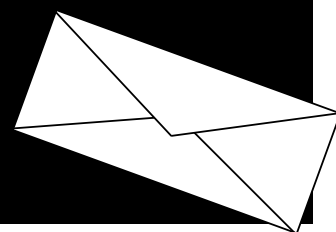
**Don't Forget!**

Make your gift to  
Legal Aid by 12/31!

Give online at

**[www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)**

OR use the enclosed  
envelope.



## Board Member Profile: Aaron O'Brien, Esq.



Attorney Aaron O'Brien began his relationship with The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland as many other attorneys have: by volunteering at one of the Volunteer Lawyers Program's many Brief Advice Clinics. His first clinic experience was while he was still a student at Case Western Reserve University's

School of Law. Since graduation, he has remained involved with Legal Aid by first becoming a *Partner in Justice* with Legal Aid through his employer, BakerHostetler, then by joining Legal Aid's Development Committee before being elected to the Board of Directors in 2013.

As a board member, Mr. O'Brien continues to volunteer at many Brief Advice Clinics because "it is a unique civic opportunity which requires the use of the craft and expertise that we, as lawyers, have devoted our lives to as stewards of justice."

In 2013, BakerHostetler committed to a \$120,000 grant to strengthen Legal Aid's education law practice. Mr. O'Brien says this grant shows "a historical commitment to being involved and engaged with the community, which is upheld by the firm's leaders."

One Legal Aid client affected by BakerHostetler's support was 12-year-old Jamal Stevens\*. Jamal was diagnosed with cognitive disabilities and already had an Individual Education Plan (IEP) when his mother came to Legal Aid for help, but his mother felt his school was not complying with the IEP. Mrs. Stevens had not been receiving regular progress reports, but she knew Jamal was struggling and wanted the school to do more. Legal Aid attorney Shelly Okere met with the district on Jamal's behalf and secured new assessments along with 180 hours of compensatory education.

Mr. O'Brien is proud to work for BakerHostetler, a firm that understands "the value of service and community." He adds, "Legal Aid is an organization that strikes at the core elements of what it means to be a community."

\* Client names in this story were changed to protect privacy.

# BakerHostetler

# Photos from Legal Aid's VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROGRAM



Volunteer Lawyers Program  
[vlp]



3



1



2

1. Joe Dunson, Esq.  
(Dunson & Dunson Co., LPA)

2. Leslie Wolfe, Esq.  
(Walter | Haverfield)

3. John Heer, Esq.  
(Walter | Haverfield)

## ulmer|berne|llp renews support of Legal Aid ATTORNEYS

### Four-year grant will help prevent homelessness

Ulmer Berne recently announced an \$80,000 four-year gift to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. The funds will focus on Legal Aid's housing law work. Additionally, the firm renewed its commitment to *pro bono* work in this same practice area.

Over the past three years, Ulmer Berne supported Legal Aid and helped 7,935 people who faced housing insecurity. This gift renewal – for a longer timespan – highlights the firm's commitment to Legal Aid and the entire Northeast Ohio community.

Ulmer Berne's support helped people like seventh-grader Mike\* who is a gifted pianist and good student. His sister, Sally, is a talented ballerina. Their mother contacted Legal Aid after she was denied public housing. She proudly shared with her Legal Aid attorney a video of Mike performing piano at Case Western Reserve University and a picture of her children with Mayor Jackson.

Homeless, the family had no place for her family to stay. Legal Aid established

they were actually eligible for public housing. The housing authority approved them for public housing, and they were able to afford a safe home, create a stable living environment, and ensure the children could stay in their same school. Ensuring safe housing is a key element of developing financial stability.

Ulmer Berne's grant will continue to help children like Mike and Sally: funds will support the work of Legal Aid's staff attorneys who focus on subsidized housing issues. It will also support *pro bono* volunteers who assist with private landlord-tenant issues.

*\*Client's name changed to protect privacy.*

**"We are privileged to support the extraordinary efforts of the Legal Aid team, and we are proud to be a small part of it," said Ulmer Berne's managing partner Harold "Kip" Reader.**



Harold "Kip" Reader, Esq.  
Managing Partner, Ulmer Berne



*The*  
**Legal Aid Society**  
*of Cleveland*  
*Since 1905*

**The Annual Campaign for Legal Aid**  
1223 West Sixth Street  
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

Non Profit  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Cleveland, Ohio  
Permit No. 104

**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**

6 POETIC JUSTICE Fall 2013

## *In Memory of Claire Cloud*

*by Marley Eiger, Senior Attorney at Legal Aid*



*Claire Cloud, Esq.*

Claire Cloud worked at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for nine years, representing clients in family law and housing cases. She passed away after a battle with cancer last month at the age of 46. She loved her clients, her colleagues and Legal Aid. She had deep respect for her fellow members of the bar. She was independent in all things, confident and capable, principled, and reliable.

A graduate of Cleveland Marshall College of Law, she worked at Legal Aid for nearly her entire legal career. Prior to law school, she had a diverse background. She served in the military as a radar instructor. She was a cosmetologist. She taught paralegal studies.

She loved Hawaii and the time that she spent there as a college student. Her office in Legal Aid's Painesville Office was an island paradise. There was a colorful calendar with photos of ocean sunsets. And she framed 1950's tourist posters featuring hula dancers who were wearing leis and crowns of flowers, swaying in grass skirts under palm trees in the moonlight. It was serene. It felt happy. It was fun. It was Claire.

Claire's other love was her dogs. They were rescues and she made up for their abandonment and deprivation by spoiling them. The day before she died she rewrote her epitaph. She wanted it to say, "...out walking my dog."

Her friends at Legal Aid will miss her.

### **OUR MISSION**

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.

### **NEED TO CALL LEGAL AID?**

Intake for New Clients

Phone: **216-687-1900**

Phone (toll free): **888-817-3777**

Cleveland, Elyria,

Jefferson and Painesville Offices

Phone (toll free): **888-808-2800**

Development & Communications

Office Phone: **216-861-5217**

**[www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)**

