

poetic justice

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Legal Aid helps Lorain County Family in Need *Clients benefit from expertise of numerous Legal Aid attorneys*

Jeanne Baker knew she needed help; brain surgery had compromised her son Gene's independence and ability to take care of himself. Gene, thirty-one, had been born with cerebral palsy, and now Ms. Baker found it impossible to be both at work and at home to care for him. She applied for a Medicaid nursing assistance waiver, which provides professional home health care and other benefits for qualifying applicants, but was denied.

"We were very worried because we knew he needed someone with him and we did not know where to turn," says Ms. Baker.

Deborah Dallmann, staff attorney in Legal Aid's Lorain County Office, explained her client's situation: "Without the waiver, Gene would end up in a nursing home. Legal Aid was [Ms. Baker's] last hope."

Ms. Dallmann joined forces with her colleague Karla Perry, Legal Aid's supervising attorney for public benefits cases. Ms. Dallmann and Ms. Perry developed a strategy to obtain the much-needed waiver for Gene.

Ms. Baker's original request for a Medicaid waiver was denied because Gene was ineligible for skilled physical care (care ordered by a physician's prescription and provided by licensed medical professionals seven days a week). Ms. Dallmann and Ms. Perry represented Gene at a second hearing, where the original determination was still ruled to be valid. However, Gene's condition had worsened in the time since the original hearing. Instead of denying the claim and forcing Gene to go through the entire reapplication process, the hearing officer ordered a reassessment. The new information provided by doctors confirmed that Gene's condition had deteriorated to the point where skilled care was necessary, and the waiver was granted.

"It has lifted a great weight off my shoulders knowing my son is being cared for while I am away at work. Gene is now getting the care he needs and his spirits are much better," says Ms. Baker.

"Sometimes administrative issues can be like a whole other language, making it important to have representatives that can guide clients to meet the criteria," says Ms. Perry. "Clearly this was one of those situations." ●



Deborah Dallmann, Esq., Legal Aid Staff Attorney

ulmer berne llp works with Legal Aid to Prevent Homelessness

Ulmer & Berne has pledged \$60,000 and volunteer time to Legal Aid's Private Tenant-Landlord Project. For low-income people facing homelessness, legal representation is often the difference between living in a home and being on the street.

The need for legal services is overwhelming, and Legal Aid's Housing Unit focuses mostly on cases involving government-subsidized housing. However, the limited availability of subsidized housing often drives low-income people to the private market and unscrupulous landlords. Evictions destabilize families, resulting in lost jobs, abandoned household property, and disruption in education and community ties. Michael N. Ungar, Ulmer & Berne Partner and President-Elect of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association, was instrumental in forging the partnership between his firm and Legal Aid. He notes, "Money's important, but there is something more when you can contribute a skill set. People don't have money for legal services, and it's important the legal community step up and do something about it." Harold (Kip) Reader, Managing Partner, adds that Ulmer & Berne supports "organizations whose missions we value and with whom we have an active relationship through our attorneys."

In February, Ulmer & Berne volunteer attorneys attended a training run by Peter Iskin, Managing Attorney of Legal Aid's Housing Unit. Ulmer & Berne partner Jennifer Lawry Adams says the Private-Tenant Landlord project allows both

organizations to achieve complementary goals: Ulmer & Berne associates get hands-on courtroom experience and opportunities to "think quickly on their feet" while helping those most in need. Additionally "volunteer attorneys expand Legal Aid's ability to help more individuals in need," says Ann McGowan Porath, Managing Attorney for Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program.

The recent pledge of \$60,000 over three years also continues a strong philanthropic relationship between Ulmer & Berne and Legal Aid. In 2008, Ulmer & Berne marked its 100th Anniversary with a \$100,000 gift.

Additionally, Legal Aid will work with Ulmer & Berne to identify systemic issues including court procedures, chronically negligent landlords and trends in causes of eviction.

*Other law firms in addition to **Ulmer & Berne** have pledged considerable pro bono support to the Private Tenant-Landlord Project, including **Jones Day, Calfee Halter & Griswold, Hahn Loeser + Parks, and Thompson Hine**. Legal Aid initiated the Private Tenant-Landlord Project in 2008 with pilot support from the **Charter One Foundation, Sisters of Charity Foundation and United Way of Greater Cleveland**. Today, the Project is funded by the **Charter One Foundation, the Cleveland Tenants Organization (through ARRA), Eva L. and Joseph M. Bruening Foundation, Murphy Family Foundation and United Way**. ●*

A farewell letter from Alida Struze

Alida Struze is a true champion of Legal Aid's mission. She began her Legal Aid career in 1967 as a social worker and then transitioned to referral specialist, helping thousands of clients by matching their cases with pro bono attorneys. On December 31, 2009, Ms. Struze retired from Legal Aid after 42 years of service.



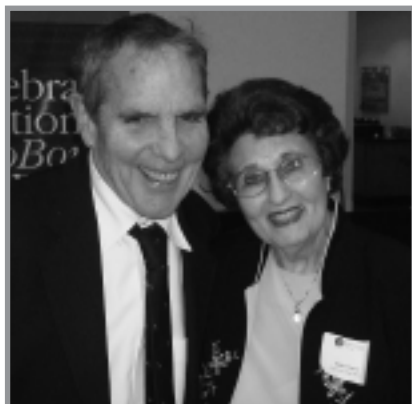
Alida Struze, late 1960s.

Dear Friends,

Alida speechless? Would never happen! But it did on October 29, 2009. A reception was held after a seminar for attorneys. I went to honor twelve attorneys who represented many others who had taken *pro bono* referrals for many years – they called it 'Alida's Army.' Ann McGowan Porath came to the podium and, as she spoke, I realized I, too, was being honored. Why didn't I say more than just 'thank you,' which some expected? I was jolted because I knew in three days I was going to give notice that I was retiring. What a mixture of feelings that left me speechless.

I would like to make amends now by saying I will always treasure being honored and receiving the beautiful vase with its meaningful inscription. Even more, I'll never forget the joy I had working at Legal Aid helping clients first as a counselor for 10 years and then as a referral person for 32 years. And what a joy it was getting to know and love all 'my attorneys.' You all enriched my life. Thanks for the memories! I will miss you very much!

Sincerely,
Alida H. Struze



Alida Struze at the 2009 Celebrate Pro Bono Week Reception with volunteer attorney John C. Kealy, Esq.

CAP Award

Stephen E. Chappellear, Esq. (Hahn Loeser + Parks), President of the Ohio State Bar Foundation, presents the 2009 Outstanding Organization Award to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for the Community Advocacy Program (CAP), a medical-legal partnership with The MetroHealth System. The Saint Luke's Foundation nominated Legal Aid for the prestigious award which was presented in Columbus in late 2009 and accepted by Executive Director Colleen Cotter, Esq. and CAP Supervising Attorney Mallory Curran, Esq.



Kenneth J. Kleppel honored as Legal Aid's United Way Spotlight Volunteer

Kenneth J. Kleppel attended his first Volunteer Lawyers Program (VLP) event in 2005 while working as a summer associate at a Cleveland law firm. The event, Legal Aid's inaugural Brief Advice and Referral Clinic, was a formative experience for Mr. Kleppel. Today, Mr. Kleppel is an associate at Frantz Ward and he remains a dedicated Legal Aid volunteer, attending clinics and taking one-to-one matches for extended representation.

Most notably, Mr. Kleppel is dedicated to expanding VLP's network of *pro bono* attorneys. He actively recruits law firm colleagues, fellow University of Notre Dame law school alumni and St. John's Cathedral parishioners to volunteer for Legal Aid. Says Ann McGowan Porath, VLP's Managing Attorney, "Ken sees the opportunity to have other groups embrace *pro bono* through VLP. Working with his alumni group and his church group, he saw that this is not limited to a firm project."

Mr. Kleppel emphasizes parallels between Legal Aid's work and the respective missions of his law school and church. To recruit new volunteers, Mr. Kleppel says, "I just send out an email and the responses come quickly. There are always eager people on the other end; it's a matter of connecting the two entities, connecting the dots." He notes that Frantz Ward summer associates were particularly excited when they helped out at a summer clinic and seemed to enjoy the evening "more than any other summer event we coordinated."

Ms. McGowan Porath also praises Mr. Kleppel's dedication during a particularly busy year for VLP: "We know if we're short on help, we can call on Ken and he's always willing to come in." This commitment and enthusiasm to "connect the dots" has led Legal Aid to name Mr. Kleppel its United Way of Greater Cleveland Spotlight Volunteer. He attended the United Way Annual Luncheon with Legal Aid staff and received honors with other agency volunteers.

Still, Mr. Kleppel, who also volunteers for Habitat for Humanity and the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's 3R's program, is clearly not looking for accolades. "It's a real honor to volunteer," he says, "I feel like I'm the fortunate one."

If you, your law firm, business or affinity group would like to work with the Volunteer Lawyers Program, please contact Ann McGowan Porath at 216-861-5332. ●



Legal Aid in Ashtabula, Lake & Geauga Counties

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland serves five counties in Northeast Ohio through various offices and outreach clinics.

Legal Aid's Eastern offices in Painesville and Jefferson serve low-income people in Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga counties.

The challenges facing the poor in Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga counties are the same challenges facing the rest of Northeast Ohio's low-income communities: foreclosure, bankruptcy and job loss. Davida Dodson, Managing Attorney of Legal Aid's Eastern Offices, notes that growing poverty and government cutbacks "affect the entire region."

The Eastern offices have responded by establishing new partnerships and strengthening existing partnerships with other community organizations. Ms. Dodson and Tonya Whitsett, Managing Attorney of Legal Aid's Family Law Unit, have visited domestic violence agencies and plan to conduct an in-service for the staff of Forbes House, a women's shelter. The offices have noted an increase in referrals for divorces and civil protection orders for domestic violence victims – a direct result of community outreach and collaboration.

Ms. Dodson and staff attorney Camille Gill are also building relationships with the region's Spanish-speaking residents. Legal Aid attorneys attend monthly networking meetings for the Hispanic community, and Legal Aid is collaborating with Catholic Charities and the American Immigration Lawyers Association to staff a Brief Advice and Referral Clinic.

Like all of Legal Aid's offices, the Eastern offices collaborate frequently with members of the private bar and judiciary. Legal Aid staff work with the Lake County Bar Association and Judge Mary Jane Trapp, of the Eleventh District Court of Appeals, on a foreclosure mediation program in Lake County. Ms. Dodson says this new step "is intended to produce more loan modifications in order to save family homes." Local *pro bono* attorneys frequently take foreclosure cases through the state of Ohio's "Save the Dream" foreclosure prevention program. The Eastern offices also have two staff attorneys devoted almost fully to handling foreclosure cases, allowing Legal Aid to help more people fighting to keep their homes in Ashtabula, Lake and Geauga counties. ●

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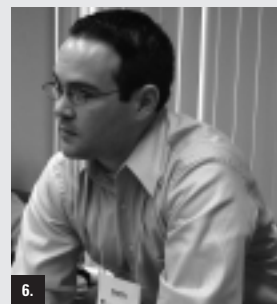
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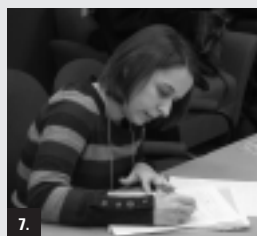
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vlp Volunteer Lawyers in Action



- Anne M. Proaño, Esq. - Notre Dame Law School Alumna
- Taft/ attorneys at East Technical High School, Cleveland
- William T. Davis, Esq. - National City, now a part of PNC (NEOACC)
- Ann M. Hunt, Esq. - McDonald Hopkins LLC
- Scott W. Hackwelder - Jones Day
- Seth J. Linnick, Esq. - Jones Day
- Michele Knapp Boal, Esq. - Jones Day
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Stories of philanthropy and hope from The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

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Legal Aid takes supporters and friends on a Journey for Justice

On November 13, Legal Aid held "Journey for Justice," its 2009 Annual Luncheon and Report to the Community. Legal Aid staff members, Board president David Kutik (Jones Day), and Jill Sell, a former Legal Aid client, made remarks emphasizing the importance of legal services in Northeast Ohio. Several Legal Aid staff and Board members were also presented with awards for their service. The sold-out event, held at Cleveland Marriott Downtown at Key Center, was sponsored by:

GOLD (\$3,000):

- Baker Hostetler
- Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association
- Jones Day

SILVER (\$2,000):

- Case Western Reserve University School of Law
- Charter One
- Frantz Ward, LLP
- Taft/
- Wickens, Herzer, Panza, Cook & Batista Co.

BRONZE (\$1,000):

- Buckingham, Doolittle & Burroughs, LLP
- The Cleveland Clinic Foundation
- Cleveland-Marshall College of Law
- Cooper & Walinski LPA
- Giffen & Kaminski, LLC
- Majestic Steel USA
- McDonald Hopkins, LLC
- Ogletree, Deakins, Nash, Smoak & Stewart, PC
- Porter Wright Morris & Arthur LLP
- Reminger
- Schneider, Smeltz, Ranney & LaFond, PLL
- Squire, Sanders & Dempsey LLP
- Stautzenberger College
- KeyBank Foundation
- Thompson Hine LLP
- Tucker Ellis & West LLP
- Ulmer & Berne LLP
- Vorys, Sater, Seymour and Pease LLP



Legal Aid

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.

Correction In *Poetic Justice* Volume 6, Issue 3, the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law Employment Law Clinic was referred to as an unemployment law clinic. We regret the error.



Deputy Director **David B. Dawson, Esq.** is honored with the C. Lyonel Jones Lifetime Achievement Award as Intake Specialist **Ivia Hobbs**, Leadership Award honoree, looks on.



From left to right: **Fred J. Ball, Esq.**, **Glenn E. Billington, Esq.**, **Judge Burt W. Griffin**, **Robert D. Storey, Esq.**



Legal Aid staff award recipients with Board president **David Kutik, Esq.** From left to right: **Dennis A. Dobos, Esq.**, Senior Attorney - Consumer Unit; **Karla L. Perry, Esq.**, Staff Attorney - HEWII Unit; **Kevin Brooks**, Docket Clerk; **Stephen Williams**, Paralegal - HEWII Unit

Please Save the Date
for Legal Aid's
2010 Annual Luncheon
& Report to the Community
Thursday, November 18
at Cleveland Marriott
Downtown, Key Center.