

LEGAL AFFAIRS

18 Businesses turn to NE Ohio firms with IP work 20 Tulane student ousted by Katrina gets a leg up from Hahn Loeser

Fighting for the underdog

For the past 100 years, the Legal Aid Society has been standing up for the rights of the poor

By **CHRISSEY KADLECK**
clbfreelancer@crain.com

Not much — and everything — has changed at the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland in its 100 years.

Attorneys still work to battle issues on behalf of clients who can't afford to pay them, but the attorneys' caseloads are heavier and the ranks of the working poor are more numerous.

However, the battles themselves aren't that different than they were back when the organization was founded.

"We're compiling a history right now, and when you look at the draft and you look at the legal problems of the poor back in 1905, my God, they're the same," said David Dawson,

deputy director at Legal Aid since 1985 and an attorney with the organization since 1971.

"They center around shelter, economic survival and economic justice," he said. "Family problems were as prevalent, but what they were concerned about in 1905 were usurious loans and wages, and now if you look at two of our significant issues they're payday loans and predatory lending."

For the past 100 years, Legal Aid attorneys have taken the side of the underdog — those without money, power or influence — in civil cases and made it their mission

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MARC GOLUB

Legal Aid Society attorney Anne Sweeney combs over documents with her client just before entering housing court. Ms. Sweeney's client sought out Legal Aid's services because she believed she was wrongly being evicted from public housing.

SHORT TAKES

■ **A SALUTE TO SERVICE:** The Cleveland Bar Association this fall received the American Bar Association's 2005 Harrison Tweed Award, which lauds state and local bar associations that develop or expand programs that increase access to legal services to poor people. This year, more than 2,000 Cleveland-area attorneys pledged 71,300 hours of pro bono and public service work through the Our Commitment to Our Community program. The initiative began under past bar president David A. Kutik, a partner at Jones Day.

■ **EDUCATIONAL EFFORT:** About 100 Cleveland city schools students took part in Criminal Justice Day last week at Cleveland State University's Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. The event was developed by the Criminal Law Section of the Cleveland Bar Association and Cleveland-Marshall College of Law. Among the participants were federal and local judges, prosecutors, criminal defense attorneys and law enforcement agents. It included a mock criminal trial.

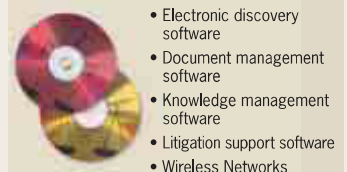
■ **HEADING SOUTH:** Squire Sanders & Dempsey LLP has acquired Florida firm Steel Hector & Davis LLP. Terms of the deal were not disclosed. The move gives Squire Sanders a stronger presence in Latin America. Steel Hector forged an international presence through expansion in South America and the Caribbean. Former U.S. attorney general Janet Reno was a partner at Steel Hector, and the firm represented the Florida secretary of state in the litigation following the 2000 presidential election.

■ **DOUBLE THE DEGREE:** The University of Akron now offers a joint juris doctor/master of applied politics degree. The program is a collaboration among the university's Bliss Institute of Applied Politics, its department of political science and its school of law. "Students appropriately see a law degree as an entry to the world of politics," said John Green, Bliss Institute director. "Having a joint juris doctor/master of applied politics will make them even better prepared."

SNAPSHOT

KEEPING UP WITH THE TECHNO-JONESES

Paralegals nationwide are reporting an increased use of technology on a daily basis. More than 59% of paralegals surveyed said their employers seek their input for technology-related decisions. Among the tools gaining in use are:



- Electronic discovery software
- Document management software
- Knowledge management software
- Litigation support software
- Wireless Networks

SOURCE: Legal Assistant Today's 4th Annual Technology Survey