

Milestones in a century of aid for the poor by the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

1905 — The fifth Legal Aid Society in the nation forms on May 10 in Cleveland, financed by the social elite. Isador Grossman, its sole attorney until 1912, assists European immigrants with divorces and disputes with landlords, employers and loan sharks.

1912, 1913 — Attorneys help create Cleveland Municipal and Small Claims courts that replace corruptible justices of the peace.

1930-1959 — The society, led by Claude E. Clarke, helps Depression and World War II-era families in conjunction with new social service agencies.

1964 — President Lyndon Johnson begins federal funding for Legal Aid Societies.

1966 — The society's current executive director, C. Lyonel Jones, begins his first day on the job at a newly opened office in Cleveland's Hough neighborhood. The buildings around him are looted and burn during the Hough riots.

1970s and '80s — Legal Aid attorneys win cases that improve conditions in nursing homes, psychiatric wards and group homes, public housing and jails. The organization is an advocate for war veterans, the disabled, the institutionalized, and:

- Forces Republic Steel to comply with the Clean Air Act.
- Sues the city prosecutor for failing to prosecute men who beat their wives or girlfriends.
- Forces the local welfare department to speed up providing food stamps.
- Wins lawsuits against the Cleveland Police and Fire departments for failing to hire or promote minorities.

1990s — Attorneys win the right for Vietnam veterans to receive money for vocational training in associate degree programs.

2000 — Merges with neighboring Legal Aid offices to jointly serve Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake and Lorain counties.

April 30, 2005 — Hosts U.S. Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton at a dinner/dance expected to raise \$250,000.

Low-income families needing legal assistance should call 216-687-1900. To make tax-deductible donations; call 216-861-5217. Ticket information for Saturday's 100th anniversary party and fundraiser at 216-861-5217. Order online at www.lasclev.org.