



Legal Aid Secures Health Coverage *for a Foster Baby*

With a loving home and proper therapy, one child may avoid learning disabilities and behavior problems common to drug-addicted babies



When Debra Weita found she could formally adopt Lizzie, she wanted to be able to provide for her future health needs.

There's barely room to sit in William and Debra Weita's Ohio City home, between the books and children's toys, a large doll house and a stack of bibs. But it's a warm and loving environment for babies who need foster parents.

Elizabeth, their ninth foster baby, was placed with them days after her birth in 2011 because of prenatal exposure to heroin, cigarettes and alcohol. The county tried to find a relative who wanted Elizabeth, but they ran out of options.

William and Debra were thrilled in 2012 to permanently adopt the energetic toddler who wears her bathing suit over her sweater, but their main concern was how to pay for her therapy.

Elizabeth's exposure to drugs caused apraxia, or speech delays, and other developmental delays requiring therapy that would cost nearly 50% of the family's income without insurance. Elizabeth's speech therapy alone costs \$800 a month.

As foster parents, the Weitas receive county assistance for medical and other expenses, but Ms. Weita applied for a federal program called Title IVe that supports families who adopt children with special needs. The benefits are the same, but the federal Medicaid is permanent and stays with the child until she turns 18; county Medicaid must be renewed every year, and Ms. Weita was concerned that someday they might not qualify.

As an adoptive parent, she clearly met the criteria for the federal program, but Ohio Department of Jobs and Family Services (ODJFS) at first denied her application.

She filed an appeal herself, but realized she was in over her head. "I was getting bullied in that meeting. I knew they would respect an attorney, but we didn't have money for that," she said. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland was listed on the denial form, so she called. When supervising attorney Karla Perry took the case, Ms. Weita felt immediate relief.



Karla Perry, Esq.

Ms. Perry argued that the county was not using the prescribed standard to determine IVe eligibility and was applying their own interpretation of the rules. The hearing officer agreed.

With Ms. Perry's support, the family now receives around \$500 a month to help with expenses for the child. Ms. Perry was also able to secure uninterrupted medical coverage during the transition, and Elizabeth can continue making progress with her speech therapy.

"Having an attorney made her feel empowered, like there was someone in her corner," said Ms. Perry; although Ms. Weita knew the statutes, she needed the legal procedural knowledge.

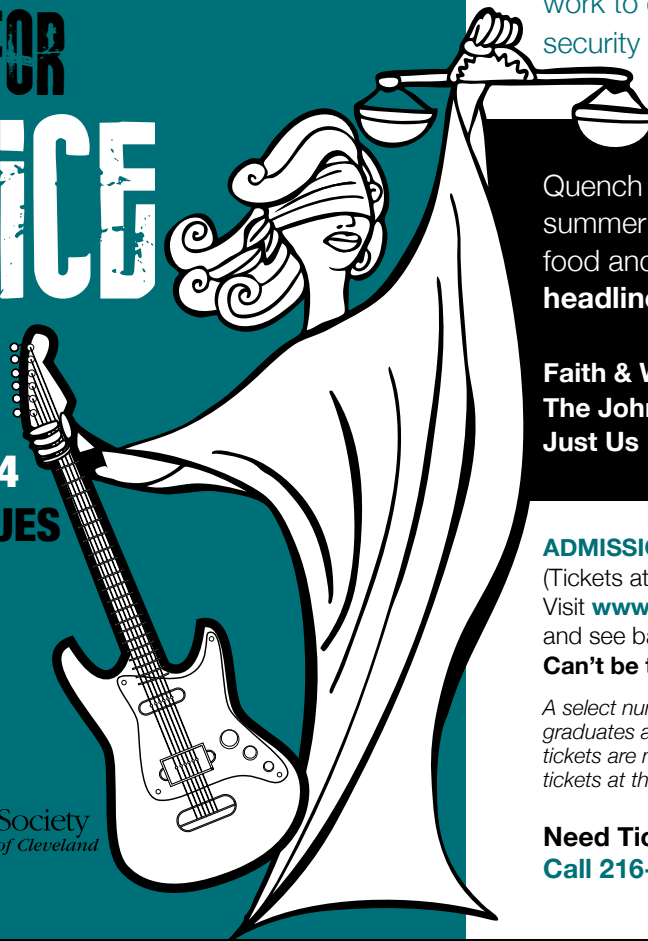
"I might have lost the appeal and I might have given up," said Ms. Weita. "There's nothing else out there like Legal Aid."

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- Tribute to Ivia Hobbs, Legal Aid intake specialist
- Five Members Elected to Legal Aid's Board of Directors
- Rick Petruilis is new Board President
- Legal Aid Clients Say Thank You
- ... and More!

JAM FOR JUSTICE

JUNE 11, 2014
HOUSE OF BLUES
5:30 pm – 9:30 pm



All proceeds from the event will support The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland and its work to ensure shelter, safety and economic security for those most in need.

Quench your thirst for justice at Legal Aid's annual summer fundraiser – Jam for Justice. Enjoy drinks, food and the music of **six awesome bands... all headlined by local attorneys and judges:**

Faith & Whiskey
The John Hanley Band
Just Us

The No Name Band
Out of Order
Rule 11 and the Sanctions

ADMISSION: \$50 IN ADVANCE

(Tickets at the door only if available.)

Visit www.lasclev.org/2014jam to purchase your tickets online and see band performance times.

Can't be there? Your online donation is appreciated!

A select number of \$25 tickets are available for law students, recent law graduates and attorneys who passed the bar exam 2011 – 2014. Those tickets are not available online: call 216-861-5590 by June 9 to reserve tickets at this special rate.

Need Tickets? Want to Sponsor? Have Questions?
Call 216-861-5590 or email events@lasclev.org

Tribute to Ivia Hobbs

by Ann McGowan Porath, Esq. – Managing Attorney of Intake and the Volunteer Lawyers Program



In 2009, from left, Legal Aid Executive Director Colleen Cotter, Ivia Hobbs, and then-Board President David Kutik.

On January 3, 2014, Ivia Hobbs, Intake Specialist at The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, passed away. The loss to our organization is immeasurable. Joining Legal Aid in 1970, Ivia worked tirelessly to create better, more efficient and effective systems to make Legal Aid more accessible to clients.

She was a no-nonsense person who would speak the truth, even when the truth was hard to hear. She was a clear thinker. Ivia never saw a problem she didn't work to solve, and did so successfully. She was giving. She would always pitch in, always fill in, always do the task that needed to be done. She was kind and forgiving. She understood that everyone has challenges, and she was always supportive. She was a great listener. She had a great sense of humor.

Ivia taught us so much at Legal Aid. In recognition of her critical and central role at Legal Aid, Ivia received Legal Aid's Leadership Award in 2009. Ivia was an inspiration for us all. She continues to be an inspiration.

When Ivia Hobbs celebrated her fortieth anniversary with Legal Aid, she was asked what kept her at Legal Aid all those years. Ivia explained, "I've stuck around because of the people. Legal Aid is a very caring place to work. That's rare – and exceptional." Ivia was rare and exceptional and we will continue to feel this loss for a long, long time. Mostly, we will miss our friend.

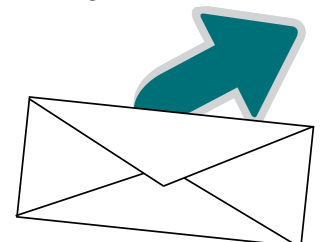
In Ivia's honor, Legal Aid will dedicate our Intake Call Center in her name. Ivia's spirit will continue to guide how we welcome new clients to Legal Aid.

YOUR FINANCIAL SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE!

Your early pledge of support will help Legal Aid plan for the future.

Use this envelope

... and make an early gift to **Legal Aid** in 2014.



Five New Members Elected to Legal Aid's Board of Directors

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Board of Directors is comprised of 24 members, mostly recommended by partner organizations. Board members serve three-year terms and are actively engaged in the organization. Eight of the 24 board members are people with low income and 15 are attorneys. Board members bring diverse experience and skills together with shared commitment to Legal Aid.

Members of Cleveland Legal Aid's Board of Directors serve as ambassadors, educating the community and building relationships that support our mission. In 2014, five new members were elected to Legal Aid's Board of Directors:



Philip S. Fastenau, Ph.D.
University Hospitals



Delores Gray
Community Representative



Ronald V. Johnson, Esq.
Key Bank National Association



Edward W. Moore, Esq.
RPM International



Mary Jane Trapp, Esq.
Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan LPA

Richard D. Petrulis, Esq. is Legal Aid's *new* Board President



Board President Rick Petrulis volunteers at a Legal Aid advice clinic alongside pro bono attorneys from KeyBank and Thompson Hine.

As a small boy, Rick Petrulis' family of seven lived in a run-down two-bedroom apartment with unreliable heat and no yard. When his family could afford to move to a four-bedroom home in Wickliffe, he remembers what a difference it made to have a comfortable and safe place to live.

With his home life secure, he went on to graduate from John Carroll University. Working during the day as a law clerk, he attended Cleveland-Marshall College of Law at night. Years later, as an attorney with KeyBank, his manager suggested he apply his experience as an Employee Benefit Trust attorney to volunteering with The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland. His personal experience came flooding back as he knew Legal Aid provides better lives for families: a comfortable home, safety from violence and access to a good education.

As Mr. Petrulis became more involved with Legal Aid, a chance encounter with a woman he met at a brief advice clinic made an indelible impression. The deplorable conditions of her apartment caused physical problems and she ended up living in a women's shelter. There were tears in her eyes after the conversation with the volunteer attorney who spent so much time helping her find a new place to live.

"There is a sense of fairness and fair play that has always been part of American culture. Lawyers have the skills to secure justice and help people build a better life," Mr. Petrulis says.

As Mr. Petrulis begins his term as president of Legal Aid's board of directors for 2014, he hopes to spread the message of Legal Aid's mission to the legal community: "the results of a legal dispute should not be dictated solely by whether or not a person can afford legal representation."

Retired from KeyBank after 30 years, Mr. Petrulis lives in Westlake with his wife, Dr. Alice Petrulis, who also works with vulnerable populations at Cleveland MetroHealth.

"My hope this year is to be a catalyst to channel all the energy of the board members. If we can energize the community, we can make this a productive year for Legal Aid," he says.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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

Carolyn Dennis
Community Representative
nominated by The City of Cleveland's J.F.K. Recreation Center

Frank R. DeSantis, Esq.
Thompson Hine LLP

Philip S. Fastenau, Ph.D.
University Hospitals

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

Karen L. Giffen, Esq.
Giffen & Kaminski LLC

Delores Gray
Community Representative
nominated by Promise Neighborhood

Patrick Haggerty, Esq.
Frantz Ward

Vanetta Jamison
Community Representative
nominated by Beech Brook

Ronald V. Johnson, Esq.
Key Bank National Association

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

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

Edward W. Moore, Esq.
RPM International

Matthew Nakon, Esq.
Wickens, Herzer, Panza, Cook & Batista

Heather Nicastro
Community Representative
nominated by The Arc of Greater Cleveland

Aaron O'Brien, Esq.
BakerHostetler

Richard D. Petrulis, Esq.

Betsy Rader, Esq.

Mary Jane Trapp, Esq.
Thrasher, Dinsmore & Dolan LPA

Adrian D. Thompson, Esq.
Taft/

Tim Walters
Community Representative
nominated by Merrick House

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

Rebecca L. Wojtko
Community Representative
nominated by 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

Thank You Messages from Legal Aid Clients

*Their experiences could not have happened
without your support*

(Attorney Joseph) Lopez was great.
Very professional and helpful.
Thanks for everything, Legal Aid.
– Sheila Aguilera

I just wanted to say thanks to Ms. Andrea Price and the Legal Aid Society for the patience, understanding and efforts. I refer friends to the Legal Aid Society, saying, 'They will do all they can. That's what the Legal Aid Society provides – Hope!'
– Ruben Shetton

From the second I walked into the Legal Aid offices, I was treated wonderful and with respect. Alexandria Ruden was my attorney and went above and beyond expectations. They have changed my life forever – Thank You.
– Emilie Tahsin

Thank you again and don't change anything. You're doing a good job. Regards to [Legal Aid attorney] Megan Sprecher. She is a great person and a good worker at Legal Aid.
– Anonymous, translated from the original Spanish

The Legal Aid has people who really care for people in need. I would like to thank my lawyer Julie Cortes. She is a blessing and God-sent person. Thank you so very much.
– Michelle Robinson

Legal Aid Remembers Long-Time Supporter



Attorney
Mark O'Neill

Mark P. O'Neill, Esq., longtime trial lawyer and former president of the Cleveland Bar Association, died February 18. He was 88 years old. In a career that spanned 58 years at one firm, Weston Hurd LLP, Mark tried more than 150 jury cases to verdict as well as more than 50 bench trials. He was admired not only for his courtroom skills, but for his lifelong emphasis on collegiality, courtesy and ethical practice. Mr. O'Neill was a longtime Legal Aid supporter and *pro bono* volunteer.

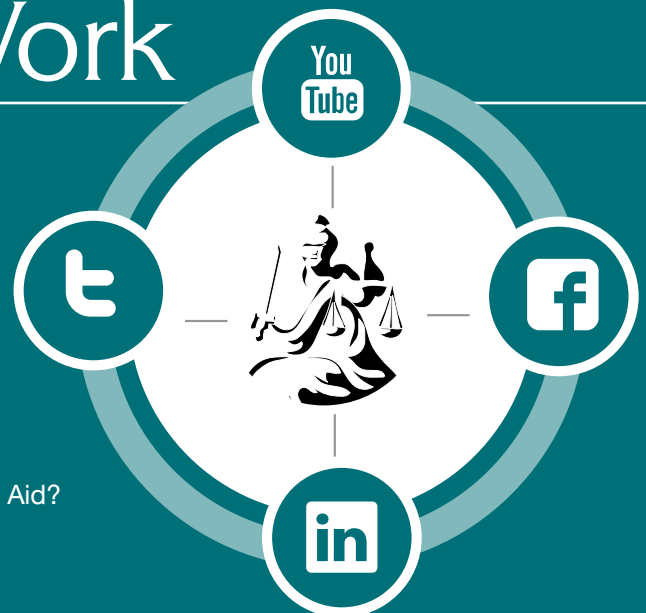
Help Share Legal Aid's Great Work

Subscribe on **YouTube**
"LegalAidCleveland"

Find us on **Facebook**
www.facebook.com/legalaidcleveland

Follus us on **LinkedIn**
"The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland"

Why do you care about Legal Aid?
Tweet your feedback!
[@LegalAidCLE](https://twitter.com/LegalAidCLE)



New for 2014!

Earn CLE Credit for *Pro Bono* Work

The Ohio Supreme Court in the Rules for the Government of the Bar allows for Continuing Legal Education (CLE) Credit to be earned for the provision of *pro bono* services.

Six hours of *pro bono* service earns one hour of CLE credit. A maximum of 6 hours (36 hours of *pro bono*) can be earned during each biennial reporting period.

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is an accredited sponsor for earning CLE credit for *pro bono* service to a person of limited means. The Volunteer Lawyers Program collects and verifies the

information required from each attorney and reports the number of CLE credits earned to the CLE Commission.

Contact Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program to inquire about coming to a clinic or taking a case – and start earning CLE credit!

For more details including necessary documentation and reporting requirements, visit:

www.lasclev.org/CLEforProBono.

Volunteer Today & Earn CLE Credit

Call **216-861-5332**

Email **probono@lasclev.org**

Visit **www.lasclev.org/volunteer**

Legal Aid is grateful for the 1600+ *pro bono* attorneys that work with us each day.

These photos highlight some volunteers at clinics and other Volunteer Lawyers Program events:



1



2



3



4



5



6



7



8

1. David Weiss, Esq. (DDR)
2. Lisa Khoury Leszynski, Esq. (KeyBank)
3. Steven M. Dettelbach, Esq. (US Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio)
4. Attorneys from Calfee Halter & Griswold
5. Lauren C. Tompkins, Esq. (Giffen & Kaminski)
6. Mark McGuire, Esq. (Eaton) and Cipriano Beredo (Squire Sanders (US))
7. Jim Wooley, Esq. (Jones Day)
8. Patricia Poole, Esq. (Baker Hostetler)



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 Spring 2014

Legal Aid Argues before the Ohio Supreme Court

On December 10, 2013, Cleveland Legal Aid attorney Julie Robie argued before the Supreme Court of Ohio that the payday loan industry should not be allowed to continue evading Ohio law. Ever since Ohio's Short Term Loan Act was passed in 2008 to limit payday loan APRs to 28% and restrict other loan features, not a single lender has complied with that law, instead misusing other lending licenses to continue charging triple-digit APRs on payday loans.

In the case of *Cashland v. Scott*, Ms. Robie told the Supreme Court Justices that "short-term loans are not legal in Ohio unless they comply with the Short Term Loan Act." In addition to capping APRs, the Short Term Loan Act caps loan size at \$500 and requires lenders to give borrowers at least 31 days to repay. The Ohio legislature specifically provided for payday lenders operating under the pre-2008 law to become licensed under the Short Term Loan Act and, Ms. Robie said, prohibited lenders from trying to circumvent the law. "The Short Term Loan Act, by the plain language of that law, applies both to lenders who are licensed and those required to be licensed," Ms. Robie told the Court.



Legal Aid Consumer Law Practice attorneys Julie Robie (Managing Attorney) and Katherine Barr Hollingsworth (Senior Attorney) at the Ohio Supreme Court in December 2013.

The Court's decision is expected to determine how and whether payday lenders will continue to operate in Ohio.

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

