



# POETIC JUSTICE

VOLUME 12 ISSUE 2 SUMMER '15

STORIES OF PHILANTHROPY AND HOPE FROM THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND

## WORKING MOM WINS BACK WITHHELD PAYCHECK



Things are looking up for Krista and her daughter

With a halo of curls and a sharp fashion sense, Krista Davis had a head start on a career in cosmetology and she began her training. But she had to pay the bills, so she found a job at a daycare center.

She enrolled her daughter Kynade at the daycare center where she worked. Krista had a voucher to cover most of the cost and the owner told her that she did not have to pay her co-pay as a benefit of her employment. Ms. Davis worked for a year, earning \$8 an hour and soon receiving a raise to \$8.50. Things seemed to be working out and she was happy.

When she was ready to finish her cosmetology training, Ms. Davis gave one month's notice to the daycare center. About a week after her last day of work, she couldn't understand why her paycheck didn't show up as a direct deposit in her bank account.

"My heart dropped. I had bills to pay and my daughter to think of. I was using that money for school." She later received an invoice for approximately \$1,000 – the equivalent of a year's worth of co-pays for Kynade's daycare, she discovered her employer withheld her last two paychecks to pay for this alleged debt.

Ms. Davis came to Legal Aid for help recovering her wages. While it is patently illegal to withhold a paycheck, even for a debt an employee owes her employer, the employer refused to budge. Ms. Davis' Legal Aid attorney, Julie Cortes, recovered Ms. Davis's \$861 in unpaid wages and damages. The daycare center's attorney at first offered \$500 "nuisance value" and did everything he could to prolong the case, which eventually settled for \$1,750.



Julie Cortes, Esq.

Moreover, when she left her job, her employer reported the alleged "non-payment" of childcare voucher co-pays to Employment and Family Services (EFS). Ms. Davis lost her child care voucher, making it challenging to complete her training.

Ms. Cortes determined that the daycare provider has the burden of collecting co-payments and must enter into a written agreement stating when co-pays are due. Without the written agreement, the agency cannot establish delinquency because there is no stated time when payments were supposed to be made. Following a state hearing on this issue, the hearing office agreed and ordered EFS to reinstate her child care benefits.

"She was extremely motivated to get off public assistance," says Ms. Cortes, who encouraged her client not to give up. "She finished school and wants a better life for herself and her daughter."

Since settling her case, Ms. Davis has renewed her passion for child care. In December she will complete her degree requirements to start her own daycare business and will follow her dreams as she and her family, with a new baby, move into a new home. "It's all working out exactly how I needed it to."

With the help of Legal Aid this working mom was able to get the help she needed, find her passion in life and continue to provide for her family, both financially and as a hard-working positive role model.

## FOUNDATION HONORS MARC KRANTZ

The David and Inez Myers Foundation announces a \$100,000 gift to Legal Aid over the next two years, including \$50,000 to establish The Marc Krantz Fund to Benefit Legal Services for the Poor.

Krantz, who passed away in December 2014 at 54, ran Kohnman Jackson Krantz from 1999 until his death. He led by example, encouraging the attorneys at the firm to volunteer time and financial support to Legal Aid. The Myers

Foundation wanted to memorialize its former trustee, and Legal Aid was the appropriate place.

"I hope when people remember Marc they will remember his kindness, his sensitivity and his awareness that society is uneven, and that it serves us all best when those who have the capacity try to level the playing field," said Myers Foundation President S. Lee Kohnman.

"I'm sure people who knew Marc and value his memory will view this as a fitting memorial. I hope others who feel strongly about his memory and leadership of the whole community will remember the work he did and will be moved to add to this fund at Legal Aid," said Kohnman.

This endowment fund will provide an investment in Legal Aid attorneys focused on civil legal issues of safety, health, shelter and economic security.



A new endowment honors Marc Krantz' commitment to helping those less fortunate than himself.

To make a gift to complement the Myers Foundation support, call 216-861-5590 or give online with the designation of "Marc Krantz Fund."



S. Lee Kohnman, Esq.: "Philanthropy benefits not just the recipients, but all of us."

## RETIRED JUDGE VOLUNTEERS TO HELP PEOPLE TURN THEIR LIVES AROUND



Retired Judge volunteers to help people seal a criminal record and turn their lives around.

Retired Judge Sandra Walker is still inspired by the determination of her first Expungement Clinic client in 2012 - a woman getting her life back on track.

"Her cases were related to drug abuse years ago. She has been sober 15 years," says Judge Walker, now retired from the bench in East Cleveland. In the ensuing years, the woman earned a Bachelor's degree and is working on her Master's.

The client just needed someone to help, and recognize all her hard work. Judge Walker filed the papers herself. The client was ecstatic to have this weight removed from her shoulders, says Judge Walker, "I just continued volunteering from there," joining Legal Aid's Expungement Clinics every month. Volunteer attorneys help individuals who need a criminal record sealed, so they can have barriers to employment and a normal life removed.

"It helps people tremendously," Judge Walker says. "People can't get jobs because of their criminal record and it's just too bad. Some people I've assisted have cases dating back to the 80's," and will fail a background check, even if they are qualified for a good job.

Of course, the best plan is to avoid a criminal record in the first place, and in retirement, Judge Walker joins a group of Legal Aid alumni including retired Judge Burt Griffin and attorney David Dawson to reduce gun violence. She

tutors young people with the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association's 3Rs program, and advises the Shaw High School Mock Trial team.

**"IF YOU WENT TO LAW SCHOOL,  
YOU CAN DO  
SOME OF THE THINGS WE DO."  
- RETIRED JUDGE SANDRA WALKER**

Judge Walker encourages all her retired colleagues to stay active in the field by volunteering with The Legal Aid Society. Legal Aid's Act 2 Program engages late-career and retired attorneys and judges to use their legal experience to help ensure that low-income clients get the same access to justice as those who can afford to hire an attorney. Legal Aid supports Act 2 volunteers with malpractice insurance, office space and support, training and mentoring law students and younger attorneys.

If you are late-career or retired attorney, and you want to join Judge Walker and others volunteering - visit [www.lasclev.org/Act2](http://www.lasclev.org/Act2) to learn more and sign-up!

## BLACK PROSECUTORS FIGHT INJUSTICE ON-AND-OFF THE JOB

After talking with clients at his first Legal Aid clinic, Cleveland Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Jonathon McDonald recognized the need for Legal Aid in the community. "I knew it would be a good partnership for the Prosecutor's Office and a way to build our reputation in the community," said McDonald. As President of the Cleveland Chapter of the Black Prosecutors Association (BPA), McDonald had the tools to make it happen. BPA members volunteer at several Clinics each year, helping Legal Aid to assist community members we otherwise would not have the resources to help.

"Sometimes being able to talk to someone is all people need," said Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Johanna Lopez. She recounted a story about a woman who came to a clinic to get help filling out the

paperwork to secure her divorce. "I was able to speak to her and let her get things off her chest." Lopez noted the benefit to the attorneys participating in the program: "Our work with Legal Aid helps us to develop the skills necessary to interact with people from the community. We learn to be patient and let people express themselves."

"We all do share the same goals. We want to live safely. We want to have a place to call our home. We want to be able to raise our kids and have them thrive," said First Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Duane Deskins. "At the end of the day everyone deserves good legal representation," added Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Brett Hammond, who also volunteers on Legal Aid's Development Committee. "Their finances shouldn't affect their ability to receive that," he continued.

Legal Aid's partnership with the Black Prosecutors Association continues to get stronger every year as more attorneys volunteer and staff free advice clinics. First Founded in 1983, the National Black Prosecutors Association is comprised of more than 800 prosecutors nationwide and in Canada. It includes both chief and line prosecutors from local, state, and



Brett Hammond, Esq.

federal offices. In addition to prosecutors, the association's membership includes law students, former prosecutors, and law enforcement personnel.

Like the BPA, your group or law firm can volunteer with Legal Aid. Or, you can individually volunteer. To learn more, visit [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) and click on "Volunteer."



Eric Foster, Esq. and Terri McNair Hammons-Brown, Esq.



Antonio Nicholson, Esq.



Here's a way to support equal access to justice for everyone – in lieu of corporate holiday gifts to clients and vendors, make an investment in The Legal Aid Society. A gift to Legal Aid is a wonderful way to celebrate the spirit of the holiday season and commemorate special business relationships.

- Your gift will have a lasting impact on the community and help diminish poverty in Northeast Ohio. Your clients and colleagues will know you are generous, civic-minded and socially responsible.

We'll supply a beautifully designed card to insert in a seasonal mailing or to attach to a corporate gift.

Interested? Contact Ellen Brown at Legal Aid who can help you with logistics – email [ebrown@lasclev.org](mailto:ebrown@lasclev.org) or dial 216-861-5590.

# 900 PEOPLE ROCK AT JAM FOR JUSTICE 2015

Special album released, benefits Legal Aid

Photos by Emma Lee and Alexis Ziemski

On June 18, The House of Blues was packed as Cleveland lawyers and judges took the stage performing with incredible musicianship and flair. No one was immune to the catchy beat and it didn't take long for cheering and dancing to begin as the bands proved that judges and lawyers have what it takes to be rock stars outside of the courtroom.

Thanks to sponsors and an audience of over 900 community leaders, attorneys, judges and Cleveland music fans, The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's annual summer event, Jam for Justice, raised more than \$60,000.

The band's talents cover many musical styles starting with **Luke Lindberg and the Hung Jury** and their original track "Hard Promises." Members of the original Jam for Justice line up, the **No Name Band** delighted their fan club playing dance music from the 60s, 70s and beyond. **Gringo Stew**, the newest act on the Jam for Justice stage, mixed it up with their Tex Mex roots, while **Faith & Whiskey** revisited favorite songs from the 80's. **Out of Order's** unique energy and mix of new and classic rock could have filled a stadium, and wrapping up the night was Just Us, who closed out the phenomenal show, hosted by D.J. Wolfe.



Judge Jim Miraldi



Rich Wesorick of Faith & Whiskey



The all-lawyer No Name Band



Michael Rendon of Gringo Stew



This year, Legal Aid welcomed local acoustic artist Brenden Melling who played a quieter set in the Cambridge room.

And, there was another star of the night – and it wasn't a band on stage. The **2015 Jam for Justice Album** was launched the night of June 18. This compilation included a variety of artists of local and national fame. The album, produced by a team of law students in Mark Avsec's class during the **Great Lakes Sports and Entertainment Law Academy**, was a platinum hit. It features Grammy-award winning pianist (and lawyer) Angelin Chang, who also taught the class, Cleveland favorite Michael Stanley, a live performance by Donnie Iris and the Cruisers and other well-known musicians. All proceeds from the album benefit Legal Aid. **You can purchase a download code through December 31 for the album with a donation to Legal Aid at [www.lasclev.org/2015Album](http://www.lasclev.org/2015Album).**



Legal Aid staff with representatives from the Sports & Entertainment Law Academy

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Writers: Ellen Brown, Jasmine Boutros,  
Adrienne Fischer and Kassie Stewart  
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# OUR VOLUNTEERS IN ACTION!



Thank you to Legal Aid’s volunteer attorneys at various community sites in the past few months. Join us! Visit [www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org) to learn about events and community opportunities.

Coming in the Fall of 2015, we are proud to launch two regular “Community Outreach Clinics” at **Catholic Charities in Ashtabula County** and **Oberlin Community Services in Lorain County**. In addition to our regular office hours and brief advice clinics – these Community Outreach Clinics will provide area residents with access to Legal Aid on set days each month in a friendly community center setting.



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## IN REMEMBRANCE

Legal Aid mourns the death of **Congressman Louis Stokes.**

Congressman Stokes began his legal career taking *pro bono* cases from Legal Aid. At the end of his legal career, he served Legal Aid as a board member from 2005 – 2012. Congressman Stokes dedicated his life making ours a more just community. Congressman Stokes was a longtime champion for and friend of Legal Aid – we will miss his leadership and friendship.

