



POETIC JUSTICE

VOLUME 14 ISSUE 1 SPRING '17

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

LEGAL AID IN AN ERA OF FEDERAL BUDGET AUSTERITY

Special comments by Legal Services Corporation President Jim Sandman



James J. Sandman has been president of the Legal Services Corporation since 2011. He practiced law with Arnold & Porter LLP for 30 years and served as the firm's managing partner for a decade.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

New Board Members



Quick Facts about LSC



10-Year Giving Society



Volunteer Profile



ACT 2



VLP in the Community



Financial Win for Client



Legal Aid at CIFF



In Memoriam: Fred J. Ball

In a time of shrinking budgets and conflicting priorities, we must not lose sight of our core values. Access to justice is one of our nation's most important.

It has been fundamental to our country even before we were a country. In 1620, as they made their way to the New World, the Pilgrims drew up a governing agreement, the Mayflower Compact. Chief among its principles — a call for "just and equal laws."

A similar call for justice is enshrined in the first line of the Constitution: "We the People of the United States, in order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice...." It is also engraved on the facade the Supreme Court and recited every day by school children who proclaim we are a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

Thomas Jefferson recognized the importance of this value when he said, "The most sacred of the duties of a government [is] to do equal and impartial justice to all its citizens."

To remain true to this sacred duty, we must ensure that there is equal access to justice, regardless of economic means. This is the mission of the organization I am privileged to lead, the Legal Services Corporation, and the legal aid providers across the country that it funds, such as The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

This mission to expand access to justice not only advances a quintessentially American commitment, it yields economic benefits as well. Civil legal aid, for example, reduces repeat incidents of domestic violence, thus cutting public spending on medical care, special education and counseling for affected children, and police resources. Representation in housing court reduces evictions, unjust foreclosures, and homelessness, saving public dollars on emergency shelter, healthcare, foster care, and law enforcement. Providing assistance in child welfare cases, landlord safety disputes, and other matters realizes similar benefits.

Civil legal aid also improves the smooth functioning of our courts by reducing the number of self-represented litigants. Cases involving self-represented parties frequently reach the courts as litigation, when — had counsel been involved — they would have been resolved long before reaching any court. And once they are in court, they take up significantly more time, as judges and clerks must explain information commonly understood by lawyers.

More importantly, by reducing the number of self-represented litigants, civil legal aid improves the quality of justice in our judicial system, since many objectively meritorious claims fail for lack of legal expertise, particularly when unrepresented parties are opposed by experienced attorneys.

To those who must go it alone in court, many civil legal aid providers offer document assembly apps, instructional videos, and other self-help resources, many available online.

In this time of transition, when in Washington and elsewhere we are deciding what to preserve and what to jettison, we should heed the warning of Judge Learned Hand: "If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice."

»» Learn more Quick Facts about LSC inside ««

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LEGAL AID ELECTS NEW BOARD MEMBERS



The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland’s Board of Directors is comprised of 24 members. Board members serve three-year terms and are actively engaged in the organization. Eight of the 24 board members represent low-income community and the remainder are attorneys or other professionals. Board members bring diverse experience and skills together with shared commitment to Legal Aid.



In 2017, two new attorney members were elected to Legal Aid’s Board of Directors, **Rita Maimbourg** (Tucker Ellis LLP) and **Steven Dettelbach** (BakerHostetler). Upon election, Mr. Dettelbach commented, “Legal Aid is the place where law and justice actually meet. That is why I love it and that is why our profession, our community, and our country need it now more than ever.” Ms. Maimbourg, a long-time Legal Aid supporter shared, “I care about Legal Aid because I believe that our civil justice system should work for all, regardless of financial means.”

QUICK FACTS ABOUT THE LEGAL SERVICES CORPORATION (LSC)

Legal Services Corporation (LSC) is an independent nonprofit established by Congress in 1974 to provide financial support for civil legal aid to low-income Americans.

LSC promotes equal access to justice by providing funding to 134 independent non-profit legal aid programs in every state, the District of Columbia, and U.S. Territories. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland is the LSC grantee that serves Ashtabula, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain counties.

The funding from LSC:

- Fulfills crucial community needs at low cost,
- Assures fairness in the justice system, and
- Provides critical services to the working poor, veterans and military families, homeowners and renters, families with children, farmers, the disabled, and the elderly.



Former Legal Aid Board President Ann Bergen with the late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia at the 40th Anniversary of LSC in 2014.

We salute the lawyers who have dedicated their careers to justice. For without access to quality representation there is no justice.

– late U.S. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia



Applause FOR MEMBERS OF OUR 10-YEAR GIVING SOCIETY

The following people provided annual support to The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland for 10 years or more, as of 12/31/16. Special receptions to honor current and new members of Legal Aid's Giving Societies will be held at Westwood Country Club on April 25 and the Maltz Museum of Jewish History on May 8. Giving Society members will receive an invitation in the mail for these special events.

In the meantime, we hold these 10-Year Giving Society Members in high esteem. We publicly thank them for the consistent support – our work is not possible without their partnership.

Donors noted with an asterisk are new members in the 10-Year Giving Society as of 12/31/16

- Thomas Adams
- Jason and Shruti Aring *
- Susan Becker *
- Todd and Stacey Behrens
- Ann Bergen *
- Jeffrey Bomberger and Elaine Thallner
- Carolyn Buller and William Doll
- Judge Nancy Fuerst and John Burke *
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ACT 2 Late-Career & Retired Attorneys Volunteer Program

LEGAL AID'S VOLUNTEER LAWYERS

Malpractice insurance • Office space and resources • Training

ACT 2 at Legal Aid is possible with the support of The Cleveland Foundation's 2015 Encore Program

VOLUNTEER PROFILE: KATE FENNER



ACT 2 volunteer Kate Fenner has lived in the Cleveland area her entire life. She worked at KeyBank practicing employee benefits and employment law for 28 years before retiring in 2013.

For the past three years, Ms. Fenner has been a *pro bono* attorney with Legal Aid, volunteering both at clinics and in-house. Ms. Fenner participated in Brief Advice Clinics in Cuyahoga County and Community Outreach Clinics in Lorain County. She enjoys working with the clients and providing them with "common-sense" legal solutions to their problems; she says, "People are so genuinely grateful. You just want to help them." She is exposed to areas of the law that she otherwise would not be.

Ms. Fenner says, "It forces you out of your niche; It's fun!" Since August 2016, Ms. Fenner focused on in-house *pro bono* work at Legal Aid's Cleveland office helping with Legal Aid's estate planning practice. She is at Legal Aid's downtown office one day each week and prepares wills and advanced directives for low-income people. Without Kate's hard work, these preventative and proactive legal services would not be available. "It keeps me engaged and active. I walk away and feel I've done a good deed!"

Legal Aid's ACT 2 program is part of the Volunteer Lawyers Program. ACT 2 engages late-career and retired attorneys in pro bono work for vulnerable Legal Aid clients who, without the help of a volunteer, would not have access to counsel. Learn more and sign-up today at www.lasclev.org/ACT2

WHAT WILL YOUR NEXT STEP BE? ACT NOW TO GET INVOLVED WITH LEGAL AID!

Act to use your years of legal experience to help those in need • Act to contribute to your professional legacy • Act to ensure shelter, safety, and economic security for vulnerable members of our community.

ACT 2 OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE:

In-house practice group volunteer: work with one of Legal Aid’s practice groups to represent clients

In-house Volunteer Lawyers Program projects: work with VLP staff to administer a VLP project, support volunteers, and help clients

Traditional *pro bono* work: participate in brief advice or *pro se* clinics, or represent clients in individual cases

OUR PROGRAM SUPPORTS ACT 2 VOLUNTEERS WITH:

Training, mentors, and administrative support • Complimentary CLE

and the Legal Services Corporation’s Pro Bono Innovation Fund.

LEGAL AID’S VOLUNTEER LAWYERS IN THE COMMUNITY: PHOTOS FROM RECENT LEGAL CLINICS



1. **Jozeff Gebolys, Esq.** (Brouse McDowell),
Jean McQuillan, Esq. (CWRU Law School),
Colleen Geib, Esq. (Brouse McDowell)
2. An attorney volunteer from St. Edward High School’s
“Legal Eagles” alumni group at the West Side Catholic Center
3. **Scott Heasley, Esq.** (Gallagher Sharp)

4. **George Coakley, Esq.** (Coakley Lammert)
5. **Leslie Wolfe, Esq.** (Walter Haverfield)
6. **Rich Lobas, Esq.** (Coakley Lammert)
7. **David Sporar, Esq.** (Brouse McDowell)

FINANCIAL WIN FOR WIDOWED OLDER ADULT CLIENT



Russell Hauser, a Legal Aid paralegal, recently put his love for problem-solving into action to help a client regain a vital part of her monthly income.

In her early 70s and financially dependent on her deceased husband's Social Security and her own Supplemental Social Income (SSI) benefits, Ms. Jones (*name changed to protect privacy*) was shocked to receive a notice that her benefits were being terminated. Social Security deemed she had exceeded the restrictive resource limit. Without the SSI, she found her ability to pay her rent, utilities, and other necessities was at risk. "We try to prioritize those cases which impact financial security for vulnerable people," Mr. Hauser said.

At the heart of the issue were a life insurance policy and a burial policy. The misunderstanding arose from what seemed to be several policies, when in fact, Mr. Hauser explained, "Her insurance company changed hands and names at least two times since she took out the policy in the 80s."

The multiple names made it appear Ms. Jones had a number of policies. It was the paralegal's persistence that helped: Mr. Hauser contacted the current insurance company for proof that the company had changed names and that Ms. Jones only had one policy.

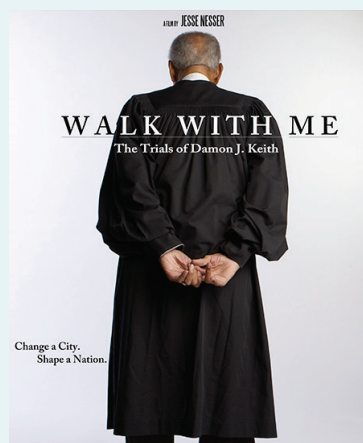
After months of work on her behalf, Mr. Hauser was able to accompany Ms. Jones to the Social Security office as she received retroactive payments and had her SSI reinstated.

"She really appreciated the work we put in," Mr. Hauser said of his client. "It would have been hard to handle this on her own without Legal Aid's help."

Paralegals are an important part of Legal Aid's structure and help Legal Aid leverage its full-time staff attorney and *pro bono* lawyer resources. Legal Aid's paralegals perform legal work under the supervision of attorneys.

Russell Hauser has been with the Legal Aid as a paralegal for the last 18 months. Prior to that, he spent two years working with children after working at the American Civil Liberties Union as an office assistant. Mr. Hauser is considering law school because he has a desire to make a career "fighting for justice."

JOIN LEGAL AID AT CLEVELAND INTERNATIONAL FILM FESTIVAL



Legal Aid is a proud community partner with the 41st annual CIFF for the film "Walk with Me: The Trials of Damon J. Keith." The film is the story of civil rights giant, Judge Damon J. Keith, who has decided some of the most landmark and

controversial rulings of the last 50 years. Learn more and get tickets at: www.lasclev.org/event/2017cliff/

Legal Aid supporters can save \$2 on any CIFF movie ticket when you use the code "LASOC."

IN MEMORIAM: FRED J. BALL



Fred J. Ball, long-time supporter of Legal Aid, passed away on February 21 at the age of 97.

After law school at Columbia University, Mr. Ball practiced for 17 years at Johnson Savings & Loan. As a young attorney he was elected treasurer of The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland.

Mr. Ball has played a critical role in expanding access to justice for people with low income in Northeast Ohio, in both the civil and criminal defense contexts. As a Legal Aid Board Member (and then President, 1966-70) he pursued his vision that low-income people should have the benefit of professional, well-trained and mission-driven attorneys to represent them.

He helped move Legal Aid in the 1950s and 1960s into a new era of professionalism with its own staff, focused on a wide range of civil legal problems. His passion for justice and his tireless work to ensure that all those with low income have equal access to high quality representation is an inspiration to the entire legal community. The family requests gifts in honor of Mr. Ball's legacy be made to Legal Aid: visit www.lasclev.org/fredball.



The
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of Cleveland

The Annual Campaign for Legal Aid
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5:00 – doors open • 6:00 – music begins
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