



The
Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1905

THURSDAY, JULY 19, 2018
5:00 – doors open / 6:00 – music begins

The Veranda at Lago Custom Events
connected to Ernst & Young Tower

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 (and one DJ)...
all headlined by attorneys and judges:

DJ Wolfe Entertainment • Faith & Whiskey • First Offenders
Luke Lindberg and the Hung Jury • Lost Bob and the Ozone Ramblers • Out of Order • SIX sometimes SEVEN

PRESENTING SPONSOR: **ACCELLIS**
TECHNOLOGY GROUP

VENUE SPONSOR: **Lago**
CUSTOM EVENTS

MEDIA SPONSOR: **3**
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Silver: Jones Day | Tarolli, Sundheim, Covell & Tummino | Squire Patton Boggs | Ulmer & Berne | Walter | Haverfield

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Rock 'n Roll Sponsors: Fisher Phillips | Forest City | Jackson Lewis | Lake Business Products | Landskroner, Grieco, Merriman | Thacker Robinson Zinz | University Hospitals | Zashin & Rich

All proceeds support Legal Aid's work to ensure shelter, safety and economic security for those most in need.

ADMISSION: \$50 IN ADVANCE. (Tickets on sale at the door if available – a sell-out is expected!)
Visit www.lasclev.org/2018jam 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 2013 – 2018.
Those tickets are not available online: call 216-861-5450 by July 13 to reserve tickets at this special rate.

Need Tickets? Want to Sponsor? Have Questions? Call 216-861-5450 or email amy.vavra@lasclev.org



The
Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland

1223 West Sixth Street
Cleveland, Ohio 44113

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Poetic Justice

Volume 15 Issue 2 Summer 2018

Stories of Philanthropy and Hope from The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland

Mom fights illegal eviction after unexpected homebirth

When Emma Westmoreland's water broke, she called the ambulance.

"I hear them coming, but I'm like, 'Oh no! She's coming!'"
Westmoreland said. "Car'Mani was born right there in my apartment."

Mom and baby were in good health, but the hasty homebirth led to other complications. In the bleary days of newborn motherhood, Westmoreland had trouble securing a birth certificate — a typically seamless process with hospital births.

Unable to recertify her housing subsidy without the birth certificate, Westmoreland faced eviction unless she paid market rate at \$822/month for the modest unit.

"I was so stressed out because I was going to be homeless with my kids," Westmoreland said, adding that her job readiness coach at OhioGuidestone brought her to Legal Aid, where staff attorney Michael Russell took her case.

Russell felt the urgency of the situation. An eviction from a federally subsidized home could lock a family out of all other federally subsidized housing for up to five years.

"She didn't have any family to stay with, nowhere to go," Russell said. "But through the case and through her hard work, she got Car'Mani's birth certificate, she got her Social Security card, and she beat the eviction."

With Legal Aid's help, Westmoreland presented Car'Mani's documentation to the property manager before her trial. But the company insisted on the eviction unless she paid thousands in unwarranted back rent. In response, Russell filed a trial brief



Emma Westmoreland and her daughters Car'Mani and Le'Aydra smile on the porch of their apartment.



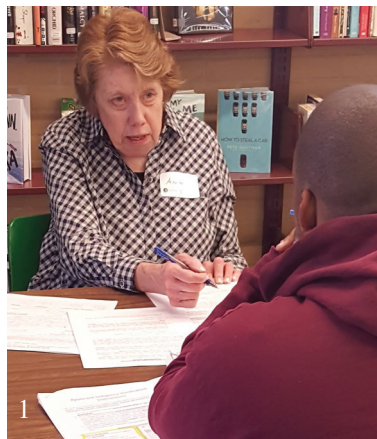
Michael Russell, Esq.

detailing the company's unlawful efforts to force the family out of their home: failure to send all the required notices, incorrect information on notices they did send, and failure to consider Westmoreland's unique circumstances.

Seeing the evidence stacked against them, the company dropped the eviction the day of the trial. For Westmoreland, the threat of homelessness disappeared as suddenly as Car'Mani had arrived two years before.

Now that the days of running around to file and refile paperwork have passed, Westmoreland can focus on her daughters—headed to preschool this fall— and on her new job doing special event security with the Cleveland Browns.

"I appreciate everybody who helped me," Westmoreland said, "because I was doing everything, but it still wasn't enough. When I finally got through this, I felt so happy and blessed."



1. Ann McGowan Porath, Esq. - Managing Attorney of Intake and Volunteer Lawyers Program (Legal Aid)

2. Ellen Meehan, Esq. (Squire Patton Boggs (US))

3. Margaret Toohey, Esq. (Jones Day)

4. (r) Susan Stauffer, Esq. (Legal Aid) works with law students Ari Rainbow and Jamielle Lamson-Buscho

5. Joe Dunson, Esq. (Dunson Law, LLC)

6. Shelly Hillyer, Esq. (Cleveland-Cliffs); Norma Jeanne Mudry, Esq. (ABB, Inc.); Dena Kobasic, Esq. (PolyOne)



Inside

- 2** Benesch helps Legal Aid create new partnership with University Hospitals
- 5** Summer fundraiser, Jam for Justice, returns on July 19!
- 6** See Legal Aid staff and volunteers in action at brief advice clinics



Legal Aid begins new partnership with University Hospitals

Thanks to philanthropy from Benesch law firm

Danielle Gadomski Littleton, who since 2013 has focused on youth and Legal Aid's medical-legal partnership (MLP) with The MetroHealth System, is now lead attorney for an MLP with University Hospitals, serving the Hough and Fairfax neighborhoods through the new Rainbow Center for Women & Children.



Legal Aid attorney Danielle Gadomski Littleton, Esq., and University Hospital's Marie Clark, MD, MPH are part of the new medical-legal partnership.

"The providers at the new UH Rainbow Center have a vision and passion for providing health to their patients and the community in holistic and non-traditional ways," Gadomski Littleton said. "I am grateful our team at Legal Aid will partner with them and further that mission."

The partnership launches with a generous \$550,000 gift from Benesch, which funds a full-time Legal Aid attorney at the UH facility for five years in an effort to promote its commitment to diversity, provide *pro bono* opportunities for its attorneys and support the community.



Kevin Margolis, Esq.



Benesch partner Kevin Margolis, who oversees the firm's *pro bono* efforts, expressed his excitement over serving a diverse and underserved part of the city: "Lawyers will help patients navigate the court systems and complex government programs to help remove barriers that often are major factors in our health outcomes."

Learn more about the new medical-legal partnership in Crain's Cleveland Business: <https://lasclev.org/05122018/>

Attorney Karen Giffen is Legal Aid's 2018 Board President



Legal Aid welcomes Karen Giffen as president of Legal Aid's Board of Directors for 2018. Giffen has not only been a leader on Legal Aid's board for five years, but is also the co-founder with Kerin Kaminski of Giffen & Kaminski, LLC, a firm that embraces diversity and inclusion. Since 2004, their firm has grown into a full-service law firm employing twelve attorneys, eleven of whom are women.

Karen Giffen's work with Legal Aid reflects her profound commitment to community service. Even before becoming a Board Member, Karen served on Legal Aid's Finance and Development Committees. Giffen frequently engages in Legal Aid presentations and events where she shares her enthusiasm for Legal Aid and encourages others to join her. As a wise counselor to Legal Aid, her leadership has made the organization stronger, more responsive to client needs, and better able to fulfill its mission of securing justice.



Abby Staudt, Esq.

Managing Attorney **Abby Staudt** was selected as a 2018 recipient of The Honorable Abraham Lincoln Marovitz Public Interest Law Award by her alma mater, Chicago-Kent College of Law.



Melanie Shakarian, Esq.

Director of Development and Communications **Melanie Shakarian** is one of 75 people from the U.S. and Europe chosen as a 2018-2019 Marshall Memorial Fellow by the German Marshall Fund. The fellowship empowers emerging leaders from business, government,

and civil society for transatlantic engagement and cooperation. The program also provides an intense learning and networking experience for those working on issues of shared concern for communities on both sides of the Atlantic.



Join the fight for fairness with a recurring gift and be a Justice Hero

- **Convenience:** No checks to write and Legal Aid saves resources on printing and postage.
- **No Solicitations:** We know we can count on your support every month.

- **Timeliness:** With predictable cash flow, Legal Aid can focus on offering legal services where and when clients need representation.

A gift of any size brings justice within reach for more families living in poverty. Please consider a monthly gift of \$15, \$30, \$100 at www.lasclev.org/RecurringGift

Legal Aid Staff News

Legal Aid welcomed new attorneys, paralegals and support staff in recent months, including:

Rosalie Candau, an administrative assistant for the Volunteer Lawyers Program;

Lisa Splawinski and **Corylee Drozda**, staff attorneys focused on our immigration work;

Dinola Phillips, a staff attorney dedicated to the education-legal partnership with Near West Intergenerational School and Cleveland Metropolitan School District;

Gardner Hensill, a staff attorney focused on the medical-legal partnership with MetroHealth's Broadway and Buckeye clinics;

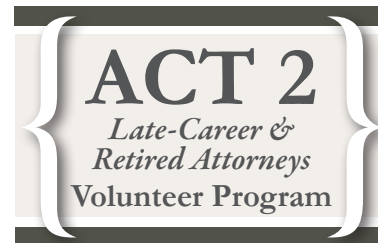
Jennifer Kinsley, a staff attorney focused on the expanded medical-legal partnership with St. Vincent Charity Medical Center;

Valerie Staten-Holley, an intake specialist for Legal Aid's Tenant Information Line

Alexandra De León, an administrative assistant in the Development and Communications Department;

Chloé Sudduth, a paralegal in the Community Engagement Practice Group.

ACT 2 volunteer helps young adoptive parents eliminate tax debt



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

Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program supports ACT 2 volunteers with: Malpractice insurance, office space and resources, training, mentors, administrative support and complimentary CLE



Elyria family Kody, Tina and Phoenix no longer worry about tax debt. Legal Aid ACT 2 attorney John Kim helped them gather documents they needed to show they had been supporting Kody's nephews as dependents.

Elyria residents Kody and Tina had not anticipated becoming foster parents to pre-teens.

"We went from being a young couple in our early 20s with no roommates, to all of a sudden having to be responsible," Tina said as she remembered what it was like to take in her husband's nephews.

Though their hearts expanded with their household, the couple found life to be busy and finances tight. With permission from the boys' parent, Kody claimed them on his tax return for two years without incident.

But when the IRS decided to audit, the family struggled to provide proof that the boys were under their care. Facing \$10,000 in back taxes, Kody reached out to Legal Aid, where ACT 2 in-house volunteer John Kim helped the couple identify and obtain the documents they needed.

"It was a mess, but our attorney was awesome. He really helped us a lot, calling us each week to update us," Tina said. "And now we know what documents we need in the future."

As an adoptive father himself, Kim holds his *pro bono* clients in high esteem.

"They're such admirable people," Kim said. "The problem was that at least until the court granted custody, they had to establish that they really had them in their care, and we guided them through the process."

Over the next several months, Kim helped the couple obtain and submit the documentation they needed for the IRS. They also acquired another bright spot in their life.

"Along came number three, the youngest nephew," Kim said.

With Legal Aid's representation and guidance, the family received the news that they no longer owed the staggering debt. And while Kody's oldest nephews have been reunited with their biological parent, the couple is in the final stages of becoming forever parents and a safe, stable home to Kody's youngest nephew.

Special thanks to The Cleveland Foundation's Encore Prize and the Legal Services Corporation Pro Bono Innovation Fund for supporting Legal Aid's ACT 2 volunteer program for retired and late-career attorneys.

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