



Poetic Justice

Volume 15 Issue 3 Fall 2018

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

Apartment complex bills \$2800 in sprinkler damage to grieving daughter

Euclid woman finally able to mourn mother's passing without threat of frivolous suits

After Ingrid Perry's mother passed away two years ago, the manager at the housing complex where they both lived gave Perry 15 days to get her mother's unit cleared out.

"I was cleaning her apartment, and all of a sudden the fire alarm and sprinkler system went off. Nobody knew how to turn it off, so it was on for 15 minutes or more," Perry said, "Everything was soaked, all my mother's photos, everything."

The loss of precious keepsakes was painful enough, but then Perry got a \$1,500 bill for water damage and a threat to evict from her landlord.

Perry called Legal Aid, where attorney Maria Smith took her case and negotiated an agreement with the apartment complex that prevented her eviction. The landlord also agreed to provide a neutral reference as Perry prepared to move into subsidized housing.

Keen to avoid both the fine and an eviction record that could jeopardize her new housing, Perry moved out by the deadline, received back her mother's security deposit, and found a new home without incident. For the time being, Perry had some closure to a painful chapter. But two years later, the young woman received another invoice from the corporate headquarters of the complex — this time for \$2,800 in damages.

"It felt like they were tearing the scar off an old wound," Perry said. "Didn't I already go through enough?" Perry had left her own unit in fine condition, with a housing inspection report to prove it.



Ingrid Perry lost her mom and all of her mother's precious keepsakes in the same week after a faulty sprinkler soaked her mom's apartment as she was packing up the belongings.

Perry called Legal Aid for the follow-up help and staff attorney Callie Dendrinis was her advocate. The corporate office alleged that she had hit the sprinkler head while cleaning out the apartment. At a petite 4'11" it was unlikely any part of Perry could have set off the sprinkler.

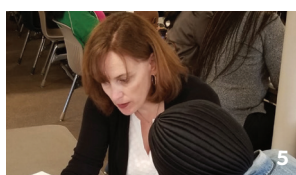
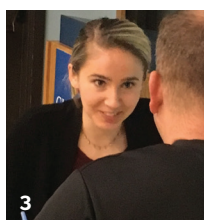
"It seemed they were hoping she wouldn't show and they'd get a default judgement against her," Dendrinis said. "When it was clear we were going to litigate this, they lost their appetite." With Legal Aid's representation, Perry received her second favorable outcome as the plaintiff dropped the suit. "The news lifted such a weight off me," Perry said. "I was finally able to move forward in my life."

Did you know, if people don't have a lawyer by their side, an eviction case ends in only 3-7 minutes? Having an attorney by your side in court makes all the difference when your home is at risk.

Special thanks to the Bruening Foundation, First Federal of Lakewood, Higley Fund, KeyBank Foundation, Murphy Family Foundation, Sisters of Charity Foundation, Ulmer & Berne, and United Way of Greater Cleveland: all groups helped underwrite Legal Aid's housing advocacy over the past year. Ms. Perry's case would not be possible without their support.

Legal Aid in the neighborhood

1. Attorneys from **Eaton and Squire Patton Boggs (Cleveland)** kick-off Legal Aid's series of Access to Education clinics at the Boys & Girls Club of Cleveland.
2. **Barbara Roman, Esq.** (Meyers, Roman, Friedberg & Lewis)
3. Intern **Katie Killeen** (Legal Aid)
4. **Nathalie Dibo, Esq.** (Moore Yourkvitch & Dibo)
5. **Mary Beth McConville, Esq.** (Legal Aid)
6. **Judy Lipton** (CWRU School of Law) works with a law student volunteer.
7. **Harlin Adelman, Esq.** (University Hospitals) and **Joe Gross** (Benesch) together at UH's new Rainbow Center for Women & Children. Benesch is fully funding a full-time Legal Aid attorney on-site at UH and supplementing that with *pro bono* support.



Deborah Coleman, receives ABA's National Pro Bono Publico Award



Deborah Coleman (L) with Legal Aid's Colleen Cotter and Ann McGowan Porath

Deborah Coleman was awarded the American Bar Association's *Pro Bono Publico* Award on August 4 at the ABA's annual meeting in Chicago.

Coleman, who specializes in conflict resolution as a mediator and arbitrator in her private practice, has a long history of *pro bono* work with Legal Aid and other groups, logging more than 340 hours representing Legal Aid clients and providing advice at Legal Aid's brief advice clinics in the last five years.

She has also been a leader in drawing other attorneys to volunteer with Legal Aid, serving as chair of the ACT 2 Advisory Committee. Legal Aid's ACT 2 program engages retired and late-career attorneys in *pro bono* work. Deborah also serves on Legal Aid's Board of Directors *Pro Bono* Committee.

"I have admired her holistic commitment to volunteering first hand," said Ann McGowan Porath, Managing Attorney for Legal Aid's Volunteer Lawyers Program. "Deborah is one of our 'go-to attorneys' for difficult matters. She does not hesitate to step up to help."

The *Pro Bono Publico* Awards are the top honors given by the ABA Standing Committee on *Pro Bono* and Public Service. Coleman, a Shaker Heights resident, was one of five national recipients of the award, which honors lawyers, law firms, law schools and other institutions in the legal profession that have enhanced the human dignity of others by improving volunteer legal services for the poor, according to the ABA's website.

Are you a late career or retired attorney? Join Deborah Coleman and others in Legal Aid's ACT 2 program: visit www.lasclev.org/ACT2 to learn more.

Medical-legal partnerships with three Cleveland hospital systems expand access to health

Legal Aid has long been a national leader in medical-legal partnerships, giving Cleveland area patients access to health and wellness by addressing the social determinants of health through no-cost legal assistance.

By meeting clients where they receive their health care, Legal Aid can address civil legal issues that impact health, such as barriers to food assistance and other public benefits, barriers to employment or health care, snowballing debt, or housing instability. Legal Aid has been embedded at the **MetroHealth System** for 15 years, and began partnerships with **University Hospitals** and **St. Vincent Charity Medical Center** over the past two years.

St. Vincent patient, “Suzanne Lisle,” faced a number of these barriers. After losing her job and struggling to find employment in her field in the late 2000s, she started drinking heavily to quell her disillusionment. As her dependency on alcohol grew, Suzanne became estranged from her family and friends. Eventually, her drinking led her to multiple arrests — including one for driving while intoxicated.



Jennifer Kinsley, Esq.

Realizing she needed help, Suzanne entered a treatment program at St. Vincent’s Rosary Hall, where she met Legal Aid attorney Jennifer Kinsley through the medical-legal partnership. Kinsley conducted a legal check-up, which uncovered multiple issues Legal Aid could address to help Suzanne stay focused on her treatment program. Legal Aid represented Suzanne in five cases, resolving issues with bankruptcy, food stamps, health care and social security benefits, as well as sealing her criminal records.

At a hearing before the judge, Kinsley presented testimony on Suzanne’s rehabilitation process and her future goals. The judge ruled in Suzanne’s favor, and within two weeks of the hearing, her convictions were removed from electronic databases. Because of the high-quality legal assistance Legal Aid could provide her through the medical-legal partnership with St. Vincent, Suzanne now has the stability and fresh start to recovery to get back to the profession she loves.

Suzanne’s story, and the stories of the hundreds of clients served through Legal Aid’s partnerships with St. Vincent Charity Medical Center, MetroHealth Hospital Systems and University Hospitals, show that a legal check-up can help establish a stronger foundation for improved physical and emotional health.

Impactful Partnerships = Terrific Outcomes

Legal Aid provides an important value added into the social service ecosystem in Northeast Ohio. When Legal Aid can partner with another service provider, the outcomes for our mutual clients are more sustainable and longer-lasting. Together, we help improve the community. Here’s examples of what our partners have to say:

“Because of our partnership with Legal Aid, we’re able to provide better service. We had a recent training that has already helped some of our clients secure civil protection orders [so they can achieve safety]... This is something we can’t do by ourselves as victims’ advocates. The families we help can trust Legal Aid because we trust them. Legal Aid’s attorneys care.”

Kaleigh Turick,
Clinical Supervisor at Signature Health, Inc.
Ashtabula County

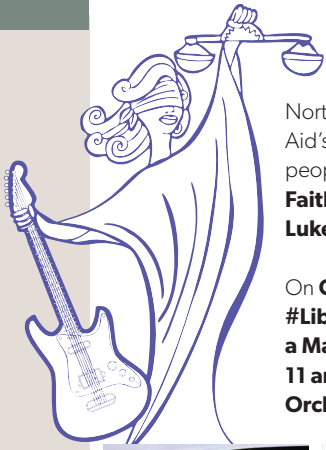


Legal Aid and OhioGuidestone’s WorkForce 360 program had their first full-year partnership in which Legal Aid attorneys provided six trainings to OhioGuidestone clients and two trainings to OhioGuidestone staff career coaches.

“Our partnership with Legal Aid resulted in a lot of “Ah-ha!” moments for me and many of the career coaches. For example, staff training on the legal process of securing a Certificate of Qualification for Employment has opened up job placements for many of the young men and women we coach. The client trainings have been equally impactful: Legal Aid’s equipped these young clients with knowledge of their rights as workers and enabled many to move on to better jobs where they are treated and paid fairly.”

Rebecca Coiner,
Community Liaison at OhioGuidestone
Cuyahoga County





Northeast Ohio attorneys and judges know how to rock for a good cause. Legal Aid's summer fundraiser, **Jam for Justice**, was held on **July 19**. More than 800 people raised \$75,000 while enjoying performances by **DJ Brad Wolfe, Faith & Whiskey, First Offenders, Lost Bob & the Ozone Ramblers, Luke Lindberg & the Hung Jury, Out of Order** and **Six sometimes Seven**.

On **October 22**, Legal Aid board member **Jonathan Leiken** organized **#LibrasforLegalAid** - a group of friends who shared a 10/22 birthday - for **"It's a Matter of Scale"** a benefit for Legal Aid at Nighttown. The event featured **Rule 11 and the Sanctions**, a reading by **Geraldo Rivera**, members of the **Cleveland Orchestra**, skits and other musical acts. More than \$50,000 was raised in one night.



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In the News: Legal Aid Staff and Board Members



The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland has joined other Ohio legal aid organizations to form the **Alliance of Ohio Legal Aids**. Kevin Mulder of Legal Aid of Western Ohio was selected to serve as the Alliance's first Chair.



Legal Aid's Board President **Karen Giffen** is one of 9 women honored with the Inspire Award at Celebrating Women, a September 29 event hosted by **McGregor**. Karen Giffen was nominated and selected by a committee of experienced business professionals for her work as co-founder of Giffen & Kaminski, LLC, a women owned law firm, and for her presidency of Legal Aid's board.



Katie Laskey-Donovan has been selected for the Emerging Leaders 2018-19 cohort of the **CMBA Leadership Academy**. The Leadership Academy is a 10-month program that provides leadership and professional development programming for leaders within the Cleveland legal community.

Paige Nofel has been promoted to a Paralegal II for her leadership, growing responsibility and high quality of work in the housing law practice group.

Agustin Ponce de León has been promoted to Senior Attorney for his expertise in immigration and his leadership on the Litigation Committee, the statewide Immigrant Task Force, and his advocacy to seal juvenile records.

Danielle Gadomski Littleton has been promoted to Senior Attorney for her expertise in education law, foster care youth and leadership in the new medical-legal partnership with University Hospitals.

Melanie Shakarian, Director of Development & Communications, was inducted into the **Society of Benchers at Case Western Reserve University School of Law**. The Society of Benchers was established in 1962 to give recognition to graduates who have distinguished themselves in their professions and their communities and have brought honor to the law school.

Mason Pesek joined Legal Aid as a staff attorney and **Skadden Fellow**. Funding by the law firm of Skadden Arps, he is focused on providing holistic advocacy to low-income workers and their families by establishing workers' rights clinics in neighborhoods where clients live and work.

**LEGAL AID'S
113TH ANNUAL MEETING**
November 19, 2018

Limited Tickets Still Available:
www.lasclev.org/2018Event



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of Cleveland

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WE'RE WORKING TOGETHER TO EXTEND JUSTICE

We've committed ourselves to lead The Campaign for Legal Aid and people from all over Northeast Ohio are stepping up as well. Together, our support provides services to even more people who need civil legal counsel to ensure shelter, safety and economic security. Join us, and let's extend the reach of justice even further. **#ExtendJustice**

ExtendJustice.org



The Campaign for Legal Aid
EXTENDING THE REACH OF JUSTICE