



The
Legal Aid Society
of Cleveland
Since 1905

For Immediate Release

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Local Attorneys Volunteer to Help the Poor

The Ashtabula County Bar Association and Ashtabula County Legal Aid are busy preparing for their continuing legal education seminar and annual meeting scheduled for December 9, 2004. Last year's meeting was a complete success in that twenty-three attorneys from Ashtabula County volunteered for the pro bono program. This pro bono project is a collaborative effort between Ashtabula County Legal Aid and the Ashtabula County Bar Association. It is aimed at expanding legal services for the poor.

The participating volunteers agreed to provide a variety of civil law matters, including uncontested divorce, eviction, and bankruptcy. The Bar Association and Legal Aid would like to commend the following attorneys for their efforts during this past year: Christopher Altier, Samuel Altier, William Bobulsky, Bret Cimorell, Philip Cordova, H. Valentine Holz, II, Pamela Houston, Nicholas Iarocci, Jerome Lemire, David McCombs, Robert McNair, Michael Meaney, Virginia Miller, Robert Naylor, Gary Pasqualone, Kenneth Piper, Scott Rosenthal, James Sartini, Hobart Shiflet, Thomas Simon, Kyle Smith, Jane Timonere, and Edward Wadding.

“At Legal Aid, we are able to help only some of the people who qualify for our services because of limited resources,” explained Davida Dodson, Attorney In Charge of Ashtabula County Legal, located at 121 East Walnut Street, Jefferson, Ohio. The Ashtabula County Legal Aid office has three full-time attorneys.

When Ashtabula County Legal Aid merged with The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland in 2000, there was no volunteer lawyer program in the county. Two years ago, the volunteer attorney project drew only three attorneys. In 2002, six attorneys represented low-income persons for free. Last year that number more than quadrupled.

The most recent study of legal needs in Ohio found that an estimated 83% of the legal problems experienced by the poor fail to get legal attention.

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All attorneys have an ethical duty to provide access to the Courts. This program enables attorneys to fulfill their obligation and help the poor in our community at the same time. Dodson pointed out that the ability of the poor to get representation may mean the difference between keeping a family together and homelessness. “The need for legal services is one that all lawyers can understand because it may mean the difference between a life of hope and one of hopelessness for the poor.”
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