

Local attorneys recognized for pro bono service

Each year, Community Legal Aid honors attorneys who demonstrate a commitment to serve and strengthen our community by their involvement in the Volunteer Legal Services Program. Typically, these attorneys are named during Law Week events held the first week of May. While events have been cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19, Legal Aid would like to recognize and thank the following Volunteers of the Year for their commitment to America's promise of justice for all.

Columbiana County

Attorney Mary Simballa joined Legal Aid's volunteer program in 2016. She has assisted clients with issues related to housing and simple estate planning documents.

Simballa graduated from the University of Akron School of Law and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 2015. She is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association. In addition to her private law practice, Simballa serves as an adjunct professor of business law and ethics at Kent State University.

Mahoning County

Cherie Howard has been a volunteer with Legal Aid since 2013. She regularly serves at the Financial Wellness Workshop helping clients understand their legal options related to debt. Howard also participates in Legal Aid's newly formed Clarence Darrow Clinic in Trumbull County, helping clients facing financial and housing problems.

Howard received her law degree from the University of Akron School of Law and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 1982. She worked at Northeast Ohio Legal Services

(before it became Community Legal Aid) as a senior attorney and managing attorney of the Youngstown office before retiring in 2013. She is a member of the Trumbull County Bar Association.

Medina County

Attorney Herbert Dean joined Legal Aid's volunteer program in June of 2019 assisting clients who need help with a divorce or simple estate planning documents.

Dean graduated from Cleveland Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 2012. He works at the Cleveland Clinic in the Corporate Compliance Office and maintains a solo practice where he advises organizations on their ethics and compliance programs. He is a member of the American Health Lawyers Association, the Health Care Compliance Association, the Ohio State Bar Association, and the Medina County Bar Association.

Portage County

Attorney Richard Lombardi has been with Legal Aid's volunteer program since 1995, assisting clients with a variety of civil legal issues including estate planning and family law.

Lombardi is an Ohio State University College of Law graduate who was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 1971. He has a long-standing legal practice serving Portage and neighboring counties. Lombardi is a member of the Ohio State Bar Association and the Portage County Bar Association.

Stark County

Attorney Nicole Rohr-Metzger has been a volunteer with Legal Aid since January of 2017. She is a strong partner for the bankruptcy program, helping over a dozen clients obtain a fresh financial start through Chapter 7 bankruptcy.

Rohr-Metzger received her law degree at the University of Akron School of Law and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 2004. She is the owner of Thrush & Rohr, LLC in

Canton. Nicole has been a member of the National Association of Consumer Bankruptcy Attorneys, the American Bankruptcy Institute, the Ohio State Bar Association, and the Stark County Bar Association.

Summit County

Attorney Harry McKeen joined Legal Aid's volunteer program in November of 2011. He is also a faithful volunteer for the VALID clinic offered through the University of Akron School of Law, which helps individuals overcome barriers to employment through record sealing and clearing drivers' license suspensions. McKeen was instrumental in helping Legal Aid offer a similar service in Mahoning County in 2019 by mentoring other attorneys and volunteering at the clinic.

McKeen received his law degree from Thomas M. Cooley Law School at Western Michigan University and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 2011. He is a member of the Akron Bar Association and serves on the Judicial Evaluation Commission and Investigative Subcommittee.

Trumbull County

Attorney Michael Buzulencia has participated in Legal Aid's volunteer program for over a decade, assisting clients with a variety of legal issues, especially bankruptcy. Buzulencia has also volunteered his time to lead Legal Aid sponsored training events.

Buzulencia graduated from Cleveland Marshall College of Law at Cleveland State University and was admitted to the Ohio Bar in 1984. His primary focus is civil litigation with an emphasis on financial matters, such as bankruptcy. In addition to having his own private practice, Buzulencia serves as a Chapter 7 Bankruptcy Trustee and is a board member for several local non-profits.

He is a member of the National Association of Bankruptcy Trustees, the Ohio State Bar Association, the Mahoning County Bar Association, and the Trumbull County Bar Association, where he serves on the Executive Committee and the Grievance Committee.

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