

Free clinic offers help to those in Ohio with criminal records

Goodyear, Legal Aid team up to bring free legal advice

James Wallace was looking for a better life for himself and his young kids when he decided to seal his criminal record. He wanted to pursue a career in the criminal justice field and help young men like himself get a fresh start.

“I really wanted to have a better life for me and my kids,” he said.

Before sealing his record, Wallace was one of an estimated 994,000 Ohioans with a criminal record of some kind, [according to research conducted by Policy Matters Ohio](#).

It’s a widespread problem that impacts not only individuals and families, but also businesses and community economic growth, said Steven McGarrity, executive director of Community Legal Aid of central northeast Ohio.

“In order to attract businesses to our community, we have to have a workforce,” he explained. “When people have a criminal background, even if all their transgressions are in the past, and even if they are capable of performing the jobs, their hands are often tied with what kind of work they can do. It ends up stagnating growth for the community as a whole.”

The issue has been further complicated by the Covid-19 pandemic, McGarrity said. The business shut-downs and layoffs earlier this year only increased the number of people out of work.

That was the driving force behind a collaboration between Community Legal Aid and Goodyear. The two organizations are teaming up to offer a free online clinic for those looking to get a fresh start by sealing their criminal record.

“Goodyear is pleased to help with this important effort and proud to collaborate with Community Legal Aid of central northeast Ohio,” said David Phillips, Goodyear’s

General Counsel. “Giving back to the communities where we operate is near and dear to the hearts of our associates, and this project is a unique opportunity to leverage our Law Department’s skills and talent to support the citizens and workforce of Akron and the surrounding communities in a virtual environment.”

While Community Legal Aid has hosted these types of clinics in the past, having Goodyear associates as volunteers will have a much greater impact, McGarrity said.

“Having Goodyear collaborate with us gives our clients access to such a wealth of expertise,” he shared. “We’ll be able to reach so many more people, thanks to their employees generously donating their time.”

The clinic will be held Sept. 30th, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m., via Zoom, to accommodate for safe practices during the pandemic. Anyone interested in learning more or registering can call Community Legal Aid at (800) 998-9454 or visit www.communitylegalaid.org/events.

Sidebar:

FREE record sealing clinic

Online/Zoom

Sept. 30th

5:00-7:00 p.m.

Register: (800) 998-9454

Learn more: www.communitylegalaid.org/events

Last updated on September 28, 2020.

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