

Legal Aid welcomes fundraiser Smith

New role focuses on growing nonprofit's philanthropic support

The phrases “law firm” and “fundraising” may not come naturally in the same sentence, but that is exactly what Shirley Smith wants people to think about.

“When I read about the work we’re doing or hear the incredible stories of our staff and clients, I know I’m where I’m meant to be at this point in my career,” Smith said, smiling.

As Community Legal Aid’s new individual giving manager, Smith will help the nonprofit build a donor stewardship program and expand the organization’s philanthropic footprint.

“We believe there are a lot of people in our community who care about these issues, about social justice, and if given the opportunity, who would want to support this work,” said Steven McGarrity, Legal Aid’s executive director. “Shirley is exactly the right person to help us give that opportunity to people.”

Smith sees joining Legal Aid as bringing her career full circle. She started in public service after high school, working for her local child support office before getting her bachelor’s degree and pursuing a career in banking. She even toyed at one point with the idea of going back to school to become an attorney.

“I knew early on that I had a call to work with people and help them with their money,” she said. “Fundraising, for me, has been the convergence of finance, relationships, and public service. I have such enthusiasm for the work we do at Legal Aid. It really feels kind of circular to me.”

Smith’s role is new for Legal Aid and comes at a strategic time for the organization.

“We’ve been growing for the past several years, both in size and in community support,” explained McGarrity. “After talking with our Board and local foundation partners, we agreed that the time is right to make a strategic investment in our development work.”

Maria Duvuvuei, communications and development director for Legal Aid, said she is thrilled to have Smith joining their team.

“Shirley is a key player in helping us build a more sustainable future as an organization,” she said. “She’s passionate about philanthropy and about our mission, and it’s great to be working with her to further engage our community.”

Smith has retained her certified fundraising executive (CFRE) designation since 2012 and comes to Legal Aid with an extensive background in fundraising and finance. She has worked with other nonprofits such as Planned Parenthood of Greater Ohio, United Way of Summit County, and United Way of Greater Dayton. Prior to her work in the nonprofit sector, she worked in the banking industry.

Outside her role at Legal Aid, Smith is active in her community, sitting on and leading several local boards, participating in Leadership Akron’s Signature Program, and actively participating in the Association of Fundraising Professionals.

Learn more about Shirley by reading her [bio](#).

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