

# ED Update: Legal Aid's turning 65! Celebrate with us!

Next month, we're hosting our annual anniversary celebration to mark our 65th year as a legal aid organization. I hope you all will join us for this fun and momentous event.

We will be recognizing several individuals and groups for their contributions, including:

- Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, Welcome Speaker
- Akron Children's Hospital, honored with Community Partner Award
- Attorney Nancy Yakubek, honored with Pro Bono Award
- Paralegal Alicia Williamson, honored with Staff Support Award
- Attorney Dana Goldstein, honored with Staff Attorney Award

In light of this milestone year, I'd like to share a little about the history of legal aid, both in the country, and in our organization.

Civil legal aid originated as a concept in the United States in the 1870s, when the first legal assistance program was founded in New York. Nearly a century later, our federal government established the Office of Economic Opportunity's Legal Services group in 1965. Eventually, this morphed into the establishment of what is now today the independent Legal Services Corporation.

Over 260 legal aid programs were established across the country. Programs and funding increased as LSC began conducting studies on the needs of the poor. Eventually, the group recommended to Congress a funding model that would provide one legal aid attorney for every 10,000 poor people.

Throughout the 1980s, LSC saw exponential growth and expanded programs. But as the country moved toward economic stagnation and eventual recession, legal aid funding took hits along with everyone else. By the early 2000s, loss in multiple avenues of funding caused by the global economic crisis had forced restructurings and consolidations. Ohio shrunk to just six legal assistance programs, with Community Legal Aid being the third largest among them.

The private bar has been a long-time proponent of legal assistance to the poor. The group created a standing committee on legal aid in the early 1920s, and their endorsement helped bolster the establishment of the OEO Legal Services. To this day, the American Bar Association continues to support LSC and the work of legal aid organizations across the country.

Our relationships with private attorneys in the counties we serve has been no different. We appreciate strong support from over 200 active volunteers each year, who handle over 1,200 cases and earn or save more than \$2.2 million in economic benefit for our clients.

Private attorneys also are among our most staunch supporters financially, making up a majority of our independent donors each year. These individuals collectively contribute tens of thousands of dollars to support programs that serve the working poor in the eight counties we cover.

### **Join us for our Anniversary Celebration**


Thursday, September 28, 2017

5:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Greystone Hall (103 South High Street, Akron OH 44313)

Tickets are \$100 and include drinks and heavy hors d'oeuvres

RSVP online at [www.communitylegalaid.org/65years](http://www.communitylegalaid.org/65years) or to [jconnolly@communitylegalaid.org](mailto:jconnolly@communitylegalaid.org)

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Executive Director, Community Legal Aid

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