

Legal Aid celebration draws record crowds

Chief Justice, local firms celebrate 65 years of pursuing justice for all

Greystone Hall was hushed as attorney Dana Goldstein spoke.

“My clients face some terrible situations,” she said, her voice cracking. “And they do it with such grace.”

Goldstein, an attorney with Community Legal Aid, shared these comments during the organization’s Anniversary Celebration last Thursday.

The annual event, which honors staff members, volunteers, and community partner organizations, marked a special occasion as the non-profit law firm celebrated 65 years of existence.

Legal Aid staff and board members, private attorneys, pro bono volunteers, leaders of local firms, and community members were among the nearly 150 individuals who packed inside Greystone Hall’s ballroom to celebrate the organization’s work.

“We work with our neighbors who are most in need – the homeless, victims of violence, children who need extra help in school, those with chronic illnesses, veterans, and seniors,” McGarrity explained to the packed room.

“By helping them navigate a complex legal system, we give them a voice.”

Goldstein is one of approximately 50 advocates who work with low-income individuals and families throughout central northeast Ohio. She and her colleagues provide access to free legal advice and representation to those who can’t afford to hire a private attorney.

“You are the lifeline for these eight counties,” Ohio Supreme Court Chief Justice Maureen O’Connor, the event’s featured guest speaker, stated. O’Connor explained that those who come to Legal Aid often do so as a last resort.

This year’s event had several special recognitions:

- Board member John Solomon, who recently lost a battle with cancer, was given a memorial award, accepted by his wife, Agneta. Solomon was an attorney with Vorys law firm in Akron, a life-long philanthropist, and an avid volunteer and supporter with Legal Aid.
- Akron Children’s Hospital was given the Community Partner Award for their work in establishing Legal Aid’s medical-legal partnership. Through this partnership, the hospital’s patients can be referred to an attorney for help with legal issues impacting their health, such as mold in apartment buildings.
- Nancy Yakubek was given the Pro Bono Award for 28 years’ volunteering with the Volunteer Legal Services Program as a pro bono attorney.
- Alicia Williamson was given the Staff Support Award for more than 20 years’ working with victims of domestic violence.
- Dana Goldstein was given the Staff Attorney Award for her many years’ with Legal Aid, specifically honoring her work as the organization’s taxpayer attorney.

In addition, the non-profit itself was honored with special proclamations from Governor John Kasich’s Office, Congressman Jim Renacci’s Office, Representative Emilia Sykes’ Office, and County Executive Ilene Shapiro’s Office. These special recognitions were all in honor of Legal Aid’s 65 years of service to the community.

Attendees had the chance to bid on silent auction items, purchase wine pull tickets, and give other donations to the organization's many outreach programs.

"Your presence tonight speaks volumes about your level of commitment to helping those in need," McGarrity told attendees.

Those who were unable to attend the event but still wish to contribute to Legal Aid's 65th Anniversary Fund can do so online at www.communitylegalaid.org/donate.

To see photos from the event, [check out the album on our Facebook page](#).

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