

Local judges serve pancakes to pro bono attorneys

Legal Aid volunteer breakfast recognizes volunteers, helps clients

Local judges will be serving up more than justice next month.

Judges Linda Teodosio and Katarina Cook of Summit County, Judges Taryn Heath and David Nist of Stark County, and Judge Robert Rusu of Mahoning County will be serving pancakes to local volunteer attorneys as part of Community Legal Aid's first annual Pancakes for Pro Bono volunteer breakfast and HelpLine event.

"We wanted to do something special to recognize all the amazing attorneys who donate their time and talents to helping our clients each year," explained Jennifer van Dulmen, managing attorney for Legal Aid's Volunteer Legal Services Program (VLSP). "This seemed like a fun way to say 'Thank you,' while also spreading the word about the importance and impact of pro bono work."

The pancake breakfast is one of the ways Legal Aid will be celebrating Pro Bono Month, which happens every year in October. *Pro Bono* refers to attorneys who donate their legal expertise in order to provide free assistance to people who can't afford representation.

Legal Aid's VLSP program helps coordinate these efforts for civil cases in Summit and surrounding counties. In 2016 alone, over 200 volunteers took on 1,200 pro bono cases for Legal Aid, earning or saving \$2.2 million in economic benefit to clients.

In addition to the breakfast, attendees will have the opportunity to network with other volunteers, local attorneys, and the judges. They also will get to meet the Legal Aid staff and learn more about VLSP.

The event will also have a client service component for those interested in participating.

"We also wanted to tie in a way for people to volunteer that day, so we'll be hosting a HelpLine event," van Dulmen explained. "People attending certainly don't have to participate – they can just come for the pancakes! But for those who want to give some of their time that day, we'll have lists of pre-screened clients for them to call and offer real-time legal advice. So you can walk out knowing you've made a direct impact on someone's life."

Any and all attorneys are welcome to attend the event, van Dulmen said.

"While this is certainly an opportunity to thank those who have given their time, we really want to encourage any local attorneys to stop by," she explained. "This is meant to be a fun event, so even if you're not a current volunteer, come join us, enjoy some pancakes, and meet a lot of really great people."

RSVP to vlsp@communitylegalaid.org

Dates, locations, and more details available online at www.communitylegalaid.org/pancakes

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