

A case for social impact



By Steven McGarrity
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As lawyers, our profession is all about the impact of our work for our clients - whether it be the outcome of a case or simply what they gain from the experience of seeking justice.

For those of us in the nonprofit law sector, social impact is at the core of what we do - the sense that our work has a broader effect than one client, one outcome, one case. And no matter what form it takes, our goal remains constant and clear: to make a difference for our community and those who call it home.

As we enter a new era and launch a visionary three-year strategic plan, we're looking at social impact from a different lens - not ours, but of our clients. We're taking a long, hard look at the areas of need identified in our recent community assessment and aligning our work accordingly. We're exploring ways to enhance community partnerships and education efforts that lead us toward meeting our advocacy goals and identifying litigation and policy opportunities that can empower our clients to stand firmly on their feet.

Transforming lives and, in effect, transforming our community is what it's all about. We believe the way to do this is through a couple of key strategies:

- Taking our service to the people. While we connect with many clients through our HelpLine, we don't wait for people to knock on our door. We go to them and will continue to do so - at law clinics, resource fairs, and partner organizations like battered women's shelters, the Taft Promise Neighborhood, and Akron Children's Hospital.

- Collaborating with like-minded organizations. We know from decades of work that it truly takes a village. By partnering with groups like the LeBron James Family Foundation and Akron Public Schools, we can make sure that the people we're helping receive all the support they need – food, clothing, medical care, veterans' and disability services and others – making our impact on their lives and our community even greater.

Over the course of this year, we'll be sharing more details about what we've identified as key impact areas for those living in poverty in our community. But our goal is to get beyond a grassroots discussion about these topics, to move the needle on these issues in the community and maximize our social impact.

Far too often, people don't realize there are legal solutions to the issues that are impacting their lives. And for those living in poverty, those solutions can be life changing. In the coming years, we will bring those solutions to our neighbors in need -- by engaging in the strategies identified above, and by continuing to stand by and listen to our clients.

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