



# Just Dealings

THE OHIO LEGAL ASSISTANCE FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER

## *INNOVATIVE MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS REMOVE BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE AND JUSTICE*

*Ohio's legal aid programs are among those leading the country in developing a new service model designed to radically change healthcare for children in low income families. By partnering doctors with lawyers, these programs address the factors that contribute to and exacerbate the health problems of poor children.*

Pediatricians now recognize that lawyers and healthcare professionals working together can often prevent illness and can give sick kids a better shot at recovery because they can address the full continuum of children's needs, including housing, food, education, health care and a safe, stable environment. Documented medical information and medical testimony provide powerful evidence and persuasive advocacy for lawyers representing the interests of children in a wide variety of legal issues, including habitability issues involving mold and lead paint abatement; access to health care and children's SSI; access to food stamps; and education law issues. This model of service delivery, known as the Family Advocacy Program (FAP) model, was first developed in 1993 at Boston Medical Center and has been replicated in 30 other regions of the country.

In Ohio, two legal aid society programs have developed medical-legal projects using the FAP model. Others are in preliminary planning stages. The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland launched the Community

Advocacy Program (CAP) with a Skadden Fellow in 2002 in collaboration with the MetroHealth Medical Center. MetroHealth, a 731-bed safety-net teaching hospital with nine community health centers, provides healthcare to any resident of the City of Cleveland/Cuyahoga County regardless of ability to pay.

The CAP is in the process of expanding with a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, which has awarded MetroHealth a four-year \$500,000 Local Initiative Funding Partners (LIFP) matching grant. Local corporations and foundations have agreed to match the grant amount, achieving a total of \$1.27 million in funds, which will enable CAP to place attorneys in smaller outpatient hospitals located in city neighborhoods throughout Cleveland. In

doing so, CAP intends to reach new populations by working with gerontologists on elder law issues and Spanish-speaking doctors to reach clients in the Hispanic community. Persons reentering society from prisons will also be targeted.



*Mother and daughter (above) have greatly benefitted from Cleveland's MetroHealth Family Advocacy Program.*

# OLAF SPONSORS EQUAL JUSTICE WORKS FELLOWS AND INVESTS IN THE FUTURE OF LEGAL SERVICES

*The Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation regards sponsorship of Equal Justice Works (EJW) fellows a priority in its mission to assure that resources, programs and services exist statewide to serve the unmet civil legal needs of Ohio's poor. This program, along with others, such as AmeriCorps and Skadden, help to recruit talented recent law school graduates interested in public interest law.*

The inability of Ohio's legal services delivery system to attract and retain highly qualified new lawyers is a significant problem that needs to be addressed on a statewide basis. Non-competitive salaries and high law school loan obligations have taken a significant toll on our human capital. Funding EJW fellows is part of the Foundation's strategy to address this problem.

The two-year, competitive fellowships funded by Equal Justice Works leverages financial support from the George Soros Foundation and other entities like the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation. OLAF has historically provided matching funds to any legal aid society in Ohio that successfully secured an EJW fellow. EJW provides financial support to the sponsor program over the two-year project period, and sponsor organizations are required to match this amount over the same two-year period. Fellows also receive loan repayment assistance, training, and other support from Equal Justice Works.

Equal Justice Works (formerly the National Association for Public Interest Law) was founded in 1986 by law students dedicated to working for equal justice on behalf of underserved communities and causes. Today, Equal Justice Works is the national leader in creating summer and postgraduate public interest opportunities for law students and lawyers as well as in urging more public interest programming at law schools. Visit [www.equaljusticeworks.org](http://www.equaljusticeworks.org) to learn more.

The following three pages profile EJW fellows Dianna Parker, Stephanie Moes, and Eve Searls who are 2004 and 2005 EJW fellows working in Ohio. Future editions of Just Dealings will profile 2006 EJW fellows.

## DENIS J. MURPHY FELLOWSHIP

In honor of Denis J. Murphy, who died in 2005, the Foundation is establishing an endowed Denis J. Murphy Fellowship. Denis was a founder of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and its first board president. Institutionally, we owe much to Denis' vision and commitment to the concept of equal access to justice in Ohio and view this fellowship as a fitting legacy for Denis.

OLAF Board President Dave Weiner has initiated a task force to develop guidelines for the Murphy Fellowship program. The Murphy Fellowship will be awarded to an outstanding law school graduate(s) interested in working to further access to justice in Ohio. The Foundation has a unique opportunity to launch this fellowship this year by designating two of the current OLAF-sponsored Equal Justice Works fellows as the first "Denis J. Murphy Fellows." We anticipate that the fellows will begin their work this summer, at which time we intend to host a reception for the Murphy family, friends of Denis, and the new Murphy Fellows. Please visit the OLAF website in the coming months for further information about the Murphy Fellowship and look for a fall edition of Just Dealings for a profile on the two Murphy fellows. Our website ([www.olaf.org](http://www.olaf.org)) also contains a tribute booklet for Denis.

## *EJW Fellow Dianna Parker Is Committed to the Educational Rights of Children and Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Ohio*

# DIANNA PARKER

2005 Equal Justice Works Fellow  
Equal Justice Foundation, Columbus, OH

[www.equaljusticefoundation.org](http://www.equaljusticefoundation.org)

Primary Issue Area: Education

Secondary Issue Area: Children/Youth

*The Ohio State University Michael E. Moritz College of Law, 2005*



EJW Fellow Dianna Parker

### *About the Project*

Dianna Parker works with the Equal Justice Foundation in a statewide project assessing and addressing the educational and legal rights of homeless youth. Partnering with organizations such as the Youth Empowerment Program of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO), this project seeks to enforce the unmet legal needs of homeless youth as set forth under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the No Child Left Behind Act, and the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act. The program is multi-faceted, focusing on widespread outreach, individual enforcement, and policy advocacy. Through Dianna's efforts, homeless youth in Ohio will obtain a clear message that their lives have worth and their rights have meaning.

### *About the Issue*

More than 60,000 children in Ohio will experience homelessness this year, and many of them, particularly unaccompanied homeless youth living in shelters throughout the state, have no realistic picture of their educational entitlements.

### *About the Fellow*

Dianna learned of the pervasive inequities facing homeless youth during law school at the Ohio State University, through her involvement with the Pro Bono Research Group, the Public Interest Law Foundation, the Moritz Community Outreach Project, and Advocates for Children. Dianna graduated with honors from the Moritz College of Law in May 2005 as a Public Service Fellow with Dean's Highest Honors, a Moritz Merit Scholar, a Moritz Leadership Award Recipient, a Clinical Programs-West Outstanding Achievement Award Recipient, and the Ohio State Law Journal Associate Editor and Staff Member. Dianna became involved with EJF during her first summer of law school, when she worked as a law clerk, and has continued to work closely with members of the organization through her extracurricular activities.

### *One Success Story - Of Many...*

Working with a truancy court officer in Northwest Ohio, EJW Fellow Dianna Parker advocated for the rights of a youth who lacked safe and available transportation to his high school. The young man was homeless and living in a motel on a busy highway more than three miles from school. Working with federal, state, and local school officials, Dianna was able to secure transportation by the local district, which has resulted in the youth attending school every day.

## *EJW Fellow Stephanie Moes Helps Stabilize Blighted Cincinnati Neighborhoods One Family and One House at a Time*

# STEPHANIE MOES

2004 Equal Justice Works Fellow  
Legal Aid Society of Greater Cincinnati

[www.lascinti.org](http://www.lascinti.org)

Primary Issue Area: Community Economic Development  
*University of Cincinnati College of Law, 2003*



EJW Fellow Stephanie Moes (*center*) with Matt Strauss of the Price Hill Will neighborhood organization and Emily Snyder of Santa Maria Community Services.

### *About the Project*

Stephanie Moes' work as an Equal Justice Works fellow has focused on stabilizing the Cincinnati neighborhoods of Price Hill and Madisonville through comprehensive legal services. This stabilizing work is the necessary groundwork for large-scale development projects and private market investment that will lead to the revitalization of these communities. Stephanie's neighborhood work has centered on resolving problems of blight for specific properties and neighborhoods and on more systemic policy work to help stabilize neighborhoods throughout Cincinnati. Additionally, she has provided legal advice to three community development corporations working on development projects in Price Hill and Madisonville.

### *About the Issue*

The Price Hill and Madisonville neighborhoods have suffered a twenty-year period of disinvestment and significant decline in the quality of their housing stock. Additionally, these neighborhoods were victims of predatory real estate practices resulting in numerous blighted, abandoned buildings that deterred future investment.

### *About the Fellow*

Stephanie's commitment to the well-being of neighborhoods in Cincinnati stems from her experiences before and during law school as a social worker in the Cincinnati area. As a licensed social worker and a former volunteer guardian ad litem, she has witnessed how the physical conditions of neighborhoods impact the quality of life for the people who live there. During law school at the University of Cincinnati, Stephanie was a Mental Health Law Center Fellow, an Associate Member of the University of Cincinnati Law Review, and a Member of the Order of the Coif. After law school, Stephanie clerked for the Honorable Judge James Gwin in the Northern District of Ohio.

### *One Success Story - Of Many...*

Facing the bankruptcy and abandonment of a multi-unit apartment in the neighborhood of Price Hill in Cincinnati, EJW Fellow Stephanie Moes worked with neighborhood leaders, tenants, and the larger community to resolve these issues. Together, the group successfully convinced various City agencies to address the immediate safety and health needs of the tenants. The group also secured from the current owner various improvements to the exterior appearance of the property and resolved a number of the tenants' safety and repair concerns.

## *EJW Fellow Eve Searls Advocates for the Legal Rights of Children and Their Families*

# EVE SEARLS

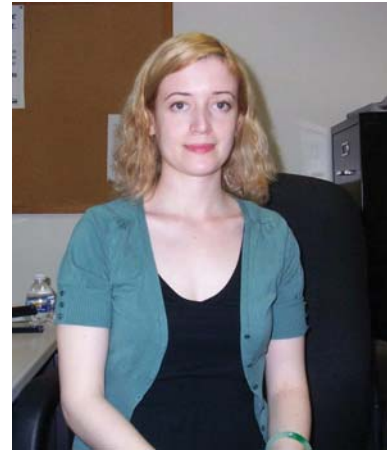
2005 Equal Justice Works Fellow  
The Legal Aid Society of Columbus

[www.columbuslegalaid.org](http://www.columbuslegalaid.org)

Primary Issue Area: Ohio Works First (Welfare)/Food Stamps

Secondary Issue Area: Children with Disabilities

*The Ohio State University Michael E. Moritz College of Law, 2005*



EJW Fellow Eve Searls

### *About the Project*

Eve Searls works for the Children's Health and Education Law Program, a program of The Legal Aid Society of Columbus. The Children's Health and Education Law Program addresses the educational and medical needs of low-income children. Eve provides legal representation and advocacy to children and their families, with a specific focus on the welfare and food stamps issues of her clients. Eve tries to help her clients and their family either apply for food stamps and cash assistance or keep the benefits they are currently receiving.

### *About the Issue*

The Children's Health and Education Law Program assists children and their families before and during their participation in the special education system. Often parents seeking help with their children's educational matters are also in desperate need of assistance with welfare and/or food stamps or are losing benefits because they cannot meet the work requirements for welfare and food stamps. Additionally, frequent appointments with various medical specialists, regular phone calls from their child's school, and repeated suspensions make it difficult for parents of children with significant needs to keep a job and thus their assistance. Eve has focused her efforts on helping these families.

### *About the Fellow*

Eve was pleased to get involved with Legal Aid after her second year of law school by working for its Housing Conditions Project, which helped her learn about the needs of low-income families. During law school, Eve was a member of Ohio State Law Students for Immigration and Refugee Rights and volunteered at Community Refugee and Immigration Services, in addition to the Legal Aid Society of Columbus. Eve graduated in 2005 from the Ohio State Moritz College of Law.

### *One Success Story - Of Many...*

EJW Fellow Eve Searls assisted a mother and her two toddlers born with a blood disorder to retain their Medicaid, food stamps, and welfare benefits so that they would not fall into abject poverty. The mother was having problems at the welfare office for not working (yet she was also 9 months into another high-risk pregnancy) and because of a paperwork technicality. Eve helped the mother keep her benefits and educated her on her rights so that she can be a better self-advocate. The assistance provided her family with access to healthy food, good medical care, money for rent and bills, and access to services for her new baby.

## INNOVATIVE MEDICAL-LEGAL PARTNERSHIPS REMOVE BARRIERS TO HEALTHCARE AND JUSTICE (Continued)

*Continued from page 1*

CAP's goals include: removing legal barriers to healthcare and improving healthcare outcomes by providing direct legal services to low-income patients at three Center for Community Health (CCH) sites; educating multi-disciplinary teams of healthcare providers



*Harry Walker, M.D., Director, MetroHealth Center for Community Health in Cleveland, Ohio.*

and health professional students about their patients' legal rights; developing a reentry clinic at MetroHealth to meet the healthcare needs of formerly incarcerated persons returning to the communities surrounding the CCH sites; and engaging in regional policy development and advocacy to improve health by drawing informed attention to issues identified through trends in patient advocacy.

With additional resources, a pediatric attorney will assume responsibilities at the Broadway and Buckeye CCH sites in the Fall of 2006; a bilingual attorney will join the McCafferty CCH site in the Fall of 2007; an elder law attorney will work at Broadway and Buckeye CCH sites in the Fall of 2008; CAP staff will develop and open a reentry clinic at the Broadway CCH site in the Summer of 2007; law student interns will assist the attorneys and facility staff throughout.

Local funding partners for CAP include Benesch, Friedlander, Coplan & Aronoff, LLP; Eva L. and Joseph M. Bruening Foundation; Calfee, Halter & Griswold, LLP; The Callahan Foundation; The Cleveland Foundation; The George Gund Foundation; RPM International; Saint Luke's Foundation of Cleveland, Ohio; Thompson Hine LLP; and United Black Fund of Greater Cleveland.

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The legal aid organizations in Toledo are replicating the successful CAP model in Cleveland with the Medical/Legal Project (MLP). Advocates for Basic Legal Equality (ABLE) and Legal Aid of Western Ohio (LAWO) are partnering with St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center, Mercy Children's Hospital (MCH) and its affiliate, Medical University of Ohio Department of Pediatrics (MUO). The president of Toledo Children's Hospital recently joined the collaborative, which has representatives from legal, medical, and mental health entities. ABLE has been awarded \$237,220 from the d'Youville Foundation for a two-year period to fund one attorney in the first year and an additional attorney in the second year. ABLE also is assigning two AmeriCorps attorneys to the program. They will assist in orientation and cross-training of healthcare staff and attorneys.

A crucial step in instituting the MLP is providing physicians, residents, interns, nurses, and social workers with the resources, tools, strategies, and support to make it possible for them to screen patients for legal problems and proactively assess social/environmental determinants of their health and welfare. Healthcare providers will receive training regarding advocacy strategies and resources so they and the participating lawyers can be comfortable working collaboratively with each other.

LAWO will begin providing services at the St. Vincent Mercy Family Care Center in late 2006. Every year, the Center provides primary care for 7,000 children and adolescents; 91 percent of those patients receive Medicaid and most are from minority populations. More than 60 percent of the children live with single mothers and 80 percent of the families live in poverty. This comprises the very population that the MLP will target.

Learn more about each of these medical-legal partnerships and their sponsor program by visiting each website:

**The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland:**  
[www.lasclev.org](http://www.lasclev.org)

**Advocates for Basic Legal Equality/  
Legal Aid of Western Ohio:**  
[www.lawolaw.org](http://www.lawolaw.org)

## *REP. OELSLAGER AWARDED 2006 PRESIDENTIAL AWARD*



*State Representative W. Scott Oelslager*

The Honorable W. Scott Oelslager, State Representative from the Canton area, is the recipient of the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation's 2006 Presidential Award for Outstanding Leadership in the Delivery of Pro Bono Legal Services. David C. Weiner, a partner with Squire, Sanders & Dempsey in Cleveland and the Foundation's board president, presented the Award on Wednesday, May 3, 2006 during the Ohio State Bar Association's 2006 Convention in Akron. Presented annually, the Award recognizes law firms, organizations or individuals who have made outstanding contributions through pro bono or volunteer service to improving access to justice for those who cannot afford legal representation. Representative Oelslager championed inclusion of the 2005 legal aid filing fee surcharge increase in the Governor's budget and defended it in the legislature. Without his leadership, we would not have achieved this filing fee increase or the additional resources that will be generated to support Ohio's legal aid delivery system. We are very fortunate to have such a good friend of legal aid services in Representative Oelslager. For these reasons, Representative W. Scott Oelslager is the Foundation's 2006 Presidential Award recipient.

Visit the OLAF website ([www.olaf.org](http://www.olaf.org)) to learn more about the Presidential Award and to view a brochure from this year's presentation.

## *GIPSON: VETERAN LEGAL AID LEADER JOINS OLAF STAFF*

LeAnna Hart Gipson joined the OLAF staff in April as the Assistant Director responsible for managing OLAF's planning and grants process and assisting with day-to-day operations. In addition to her most recent work as the chief program officer with Equal Justice Works, LeAnna directed for 20 years and was general counsel for a nine-county legal aid program headquartered in Rochester, New York and was the state coordinator for state support services in Tennessee, a position she held for seven years. LeAnna has also worked with OLAF as a peer consultant on site assessments since the first assessment in 1997. She brings a unique understanding of the delivery system to her new responsibilities at OLAF. We are fortunate to have attracted such a talented and experienced individual.



*Assistant Director LeAnna Hart Gipson*

**[www.OHIOPROBONO.org](http://www.OHIOPROBONO.org)**

The Foundation has developed a statewide pro bono website in order to provide a one-stop resource for Ohio attorneys who are interested in or who are actively volunteering. The site offers a wide variety of helpful information and substantive links, as well as a searchable online directory of pro bono opportunities in Ohio. Please visit the site to learn more about how you may volunteer.

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