Community Legal Aid

A non-profit law firm serving the legal needs of low-income individuals and families in central northeast Ohio

www.communitylegalaid.org

Virtual 5k to benefit Legal Aid

Community Legal Aid will host its first virtual 5k early next month. The contactless fundraiser will support the nonprofit's legal services, client outreach, and educational programs.

The inaugural Race for Justice will take place the second week in November. Anytime between November 8 and 14, participants can walk, run, bike, or hike to complete a personal 5K in a location of their choosing.

"Every year, we host a dinner and awards banquet, to recognize the work of our staff and volunteers," explained Executive Director Steven McGarrity. "It's our way of bringing the community together to celebrate the fundamental American value of justice."

This year, McGarrity said, "a dinner obviously wasn't an option."

"We wanted to give our community a way to get involved, even in the midst of a pandemic," he said. "A virtual run gives anyone the chance to participate in any way they like, from wherever they are."

Legal Aid offers free legal help to residents in eight northeast Ohio counties: Columbiana, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, and Wayne. The nonprofit law firm receives its funding largely from grants and individual donations.

"We rely on the support of our community in order to serve our clients," McGarrity said.

"Fundraisers like this are a chance to increase how many people we're able to serve each year."

The event is designed not only to raise funds, but also to increase awareness for the need for civil legal aid programs. According to a study by the Legal Services Corporation, more than 80 percent of civil legal needs in the United States go unmet.

"If you are convicted of a crime and can't afford an attorney, our Constitution guarantees you legal representation," McGarrity explained. "But if you're being evicted from your home, or if you need a protection order to keep you and your children safe from an abusive partner or family member, you don't have that same guaranteed right to an attorney."

And that, McGarrity said, is where Legal Aid comes in.

"Our goal is to go beyond the courtroom and really change people's lives," he explained. "By helping someone who is overwhelmed with medical debt file for bankruptcy, we don't just stop the harassing collection calls. We give them peace of mind and a fresh financial start to regain control of their lives."

These are the types of cases Legal Aid hopes the Race for Justice will help support.

So far, the nonprofit has seen a good response from the community, including sponsorship support from nearly 20 organizations and individuals.

"We hope everyone will join us the week of November 8," McGarrity said. "Whether you hop on a treadmill, walk around your neighborhood, or go hiking in one of the metro parks, it's a great cause to support, and a great way to take a stand for justice."

For more information about the event, visit www.communitylegalaid.org/5k.

Sidebar 1:

What: Race for Justice: A virtual 5K for Community Legal Aid

When: Anytime November 8-14

Where: You choose your location

How: Learn more and register at www.communitylegalaid.org/5k.

Sidebar 2:

Legal Aid thanks the following organizations for their sponsorship support:

- Brennan, Manna & Diamond, LLC

- Christina Janice

- Tom and Connie Semple

- DeHoff Development Company

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- Elfvin, Klingshirn, Royer & Torch, LLC

- Critchfield, Critchfield & Johnston

- Ohio Access to Justice Foundation

- Calfee, Halter & Griswold, LLP

- Brouse McDowell

- Allen's PharmaServ

- Kaster, Westman & Wilkins, LLC

- Roderick Linton Belfance LLP

- Stark Honor Court

- Stark & Knoll

- Minuteman Press

- Marie Curry & Brant Lee

- Steven & Vivian McGarrity

- The Duvuvuei Family