

2020 *Gratitude Report*

*"Thankfulness is the beginning of gratitude.  
Gratitude is the completion of thankfulness."*

— Henri Frederic Amiel

**THE OHIO STATE BAR FOUNDATION – 70 YEARS OF SUCCESS**

Last year, the Ohio State Bar Foundation had one of its most successful years—all because of you. We had record fundraising that allowed the OSBF to grant more than \$1 million to non-profits throughout Ohio. These grants made a remarkable difference in the lives of thousands of Ohioans in an extraordinarily challenging year.

We simply could not have had that kind of impact without you and your support.

So, with deep gratitude, Thank You!

For the past 70 years, the Ohio State Bar Foundation has been at the forefront of working to advance the law, while building a better justice system for all of Ohio.

This Gratitude Report highlights just some of the ways your support has positively supported us in doing just that. Your generosity is helping us help non-profits meet a variety of legal needs across the state.

There is more work to be done, and we are just getting started. With your continuing support, the next 70 years holds tremendous promise in affecting great change throughout Ohio.

*We look forward to that.*



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## GRANTEE HIGHLIGHT

### LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND

Access to Justice: Leveraging Technology to Lower Barriers to Justice

The Legal Aid Society of Cleveland's Access to Justice Project set out to expand access to their services by adding an online intake module to their case management system. The implementation of this intake system provides 24/7 online access to the public, collaborating organizations and Cleveland Legal Aid's brief advice clinics with volunteer attorneys. By establishing three distinct ways in which online intake can be completed – independently online, through a partner organization's referral, and at a Legal Aid clinic, this grant expanded the capacity to provide underserved individuals with legal assistance.

When the coronavirus pandemic caused massive shutdowns and health crises nationally and globally, Cleveland Legal Aid was prepared to continue providing programs and services with no interruption. With 24/7 online intake capabilities, their client community could request help without risking their health and safety. Cleveland Legal Aid closed all four offices to the public on March 16, and all staff transitioned at that time to working from home. Attorneys kept in touch with clients via phone and email, and new clients utilized their new online intake portal to apply for free legal assistance. With this project, the online intake module was in place for months ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic and enabled Legal Aid to remain virtually "open" at clinics in Cuyahoga, Ashtabula, Geauga, Lake, and Lorain County.



"WE ARE SO PROUD OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS WITH THIS GRANT! IT SERVED US WELL AS WE CONTINUED TO KEEP INTAKE OPEN 24/7 ONLINE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC! WITHOUT YOUR INVESTMENT IN OUR ONLINE INTAKE LAST YEAR – THIS WOULD NOT HAVE BEEN POSSIBLE."

*Melanie A. Shakarian, Esq.*  
DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNICATIONS  
THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY OF CLEVELAND

One client helped during COVID-19 was Laurie Williams\*. Laurie lives in private housing with her three sons and applied for Legal Aid's help online. To pay her monthly rent, Laurie uses cash assistance she gets from Ohio Works First, and her son helps cover the rest with his income from working for a food delivery service. Unfortunately, the son's income dipped dramatically due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and the family has been unable to pay rent.

Laurie reached out to Cleveland Legal Aid for help. An attorney helped Laurie apply for three months of rental assistance from EDEN, an agency that is administering funds set aside by the county for emergency rent relief. The attorney coordinated the gathering of necessary documents, helped Laurie complete her application, and spoke with Laurie's landlord, who agreed to accept the late rent and not evict her. Laurie's application was approved, and she was able to cover her rent for March, April, and May 2020.

\*names changed to protect client privacy

## OSBF's STRATEGIC GRANT UPDATE

In 2018, Issue Media Group (IMG) was awarded the OSBF's first strategic grant to improve the civics knowledge of adult Ohioans. IMG created Civics Essential: Ohio, a series and initiative that has included feature stories and quizzes published in *Soapbox Cincinnati* and *FreshWater Cleveland* and community events.

### WHAT'S THE IMPACT SO FAR?\*



\*Data collected from July, 2018 through January, 2021.

## OSBF's 2020 GRANTS CYCLE

In 2020, through fundraising and sound financial practices, the OSBF awarded \$1,024,850 to 26 deserving programs that are impacting communities across the state. To learn more, visit OSBF.org.

**\$1,024,850** **26**

**\$320,002 TO 11 UNIQUE PROJECTS OR PROGRAMS** during the Spring Grants Cycle

**\$444,852 TO 13 UNIQUE PROJECTS OR PROGRAMS** during the Fall Grants Cycle

**\$110,000 TO OHIO STATE BAR ASSOCIATION** for the William K. Weisenberg Fund for Civics Education

**\$99,996 TO ISSUE MEDIA GROUP** to continue OSBF's ongoing strategic grant

**\$50,000 TO RACIAL JUSTICE INITIATIVE GRANT** to promote impact and change for racial justice

## FELLOW PROFILE

KERSTEN SJOBERG, DIRECTOR OF DISABILITY RIGHTS OHIO



When the 2020 Fellows class was initiated, it was the beginning of the pandemic and the class knew they had their work cut out for them. To accomplish the OSBF's mission to better the justice system, they were compelled to help the public and legal community navigate through the devastating effects of COVID-19. Meet Kerstin Sjoberg, one of several members leading her class' work.

Kerstin joined the OSBF because she wanted to deepen her connection to the legal community. Early in her career as a lawyer in private practice, she was very active with the Access to Justice committee of the OSBA and the pro bono committee of her local bar association. These experiences were professional learning and development opportunities for her and part of her path towards a full-time career in public service.

"NOW THAT I HAVE BEEN IN PUBLIC SERVICE FOR MORE THAN A DECADE, I WANTED A CHANCE TO REACH OUTSIDE OF MY OWN NETWORK AND PARTICIPATE IN A STATEWIDE NETWORK OF LAWYERS WHO COME FROM MANY DIFFERENT BACKGROUNDS BUT ALL CARE DEEPLY ABOUT PUBLIC SERVICE AND THEIR COMMUNITIES."

Being an OSBF Fellow is about giving back to the community through projects that increase access to justice and empower Ohioans to know and exercise their rights through education and helpful guides. It's also about working with other legal professionals on a shared goal and learning from each other along the way.

"WHEN YOU WORK TOGETHER WITH A TEAM TO GIVE BACK TO YOUR COMMUNITY, YOU NOT ONLY HELP OTHERS, BUT YOURSELF. YOU MEET LIKE-MINDED LEGAL PROFESSIONALS, YOU LEARN ABOUT OTHER AREAS OF THE LAW, AND YOU BUILD A SENSE OF COMMUNITY BY WORKING ON A JOINT PROJECT FOR THE BENEFIT OF OTHERS."

The class wanted to create helpful tools to alleviate the negative impact of the pandemic. This led to the creation of several quick hit videos on legal rights topics in areas that were impacted significantly by the pandemic, including changes in unemployment compensation and the rights of people with disabilities under restricted visitor policies at hospitals.

*Kersten Sjoberg*

## 2019 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

OSBF's 2019 financial information can be accessed at OSBF.org. The information has been extracted from the audit report performed by John Gerlach & Company, LLP. A complete copy of the audited financial statements is available upon request.

## RITTER CIRCLE

The George W. Ritter Circle honors members of the OSBF Legacy Society and those who include the Foundation in their estate plans. When it comes to fighting for our justice system - there is no quick fix. The progress we make continues to grow year after year and takes consistent dedication, support and hard work. A gift in your will to the Ohio State Bar Foundation will allow you to continue this fight and magnify your impact. To start a conversation about a gift in your will, contact OSBF Director of Development and PR Cynthia Kincaid at 614-487-4477 or CKincaid@OSBF.net.

## BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The OSBF Board of Trustees is an extension of our staff. Their leadership and guidance are critical, and we are grateful for their continuous support and hard work.

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