# **Report to the Community**













Together, we do the community justice.

### From the president...

As president of the ABLE and LAWO boards of trustees, I have watched our law firms grow tremendously over the past five years. LAWO and ABLE have embraced change in ways that have altered the face of legal aid across the region. Most importantly, they have combined the use of highly qualified professionals and the latest technology to meet their mission of helping low-income residents of northwest and west central Ohio achieve self reliance, equal justice and economic opportunity.

In particular, 2004 was a year of tremendous growth. Asked to expand our services to 15 additional counties in western Ohio, ABLE and LAWO went through a transition that challenged and energized our approach to solving longstanding problems that face most of our clients - before they become crises. We established additional offices in Dayton, Lima, and Springfield, and we expanded Legal Aid Line, our telephone intake and brief service system, to reach all 30 counties in the new service area. At the end of 2004, we brought on two additional counties, Ashland and Richland, and established an office in Mansfield. In addition, we launched a website and on-line application process to provide additional access for clients.

Not only did we grow and expand our service area, we doubled the size of our staff – bringing

together professionals with a wide array of backgrounds, life experiences, and perspectives. Throughout their history, LAWO and ABLE have employed many of the best public interest lawyers in the country. They, along with the myriad of other professionals it takes to run a successful law firm, possess a vibrant sense of public values and purpose.

Combined, all of these have worked to provide equal access to justice for those who have no place else to turn. I would, however, be remiss if I didn't take this opportunity to tell you that without the financial support of our donors, many of the people we have served over the past five years would not have received the help they needed. Your trust in our ability to provide high quality legal work has paid off for the people who matter to us most – low-income people seeking equal justice.

We appreciate your support, your trust, and your partnership.

William J. Bingle

President

ABLE and LAWO Boards of Trustees



### **Honoring our supporters**

Equal access to justice for all is the mainstay of the work at ABLE and LAWO. Together, these nonprofit law firms continue to improve service delivery, increase the numbers of clients whom they help, promote systemic change that will affect large numbers of low-income people, and search for additional ways to support these critical services – including individual contributions and government and private grant funding.

We support legal aid because we believe it is our responsibility as attorneys to assist with the work and mission of securing access to justice for all. Your support of the Campaigns for Equal Justice underscores both your understanding of these important services to the community and your generosity of spirit.

We hope you will take great pride in being listed as one of those who financially support the efforts of legal aid. LAWO and ABLE are truly fortunate to have so many supporters past and present who give their time, talents, and resources to enrich our efforts. Together, we do the community justice!

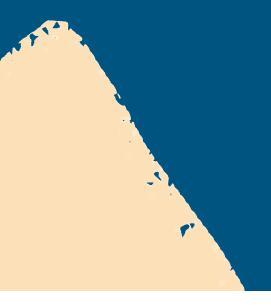
Thank you.

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### **About ABLE and LAWO**

Our mission is to improve the lives of low-income people in northwest and west central Ohio by helping them obtain and maintain the basic necessities of life – housing, safety, health care, and food – in addition to enhancing family stability and security. We do this by working to resolve a full range of legal problems, including domestic violence, immigration, civil rights, employment, consumer, and family issues, as well as housing and public benefits matters.

Our work involves children, seniors, persons with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, immigrants, uninsured families and individuals, families facing eviction, persons moving from welfare to work, homeless children and families, persons with mental illness, residents of nursing homes, and migrant farmworkers. Our clients live with poverty, language and cultural barriers, low education levels, or limited access to social services.

In addition to providing legal assistance for individual clients, we represent groups of clients with systemic legal problems when it is the most efficient and cost-effective way to address those issues. We provide community legal education and training that benefits thousands of poor people, including providing pro se materials and guidance for those not facing emergency situations.

### Together, we do the community justice.

LAWO and ABLE employ a team of highly committed and experienced attorneys, paralegals, and support personnel. We maintain a strong record of partnering with other non-profit organizations and public service agencies that share our mission. Together with members of the legal community, the private sector, churches, government agencies, elected officials, and caring individuals, we are able to provide the critical services needed by our clients.

Although the demand for legal services continues to out-pace the available resources, ABLE and LAWO, along with pro bono legal services programs and area bar associations, and a number of private and public funding sources, are working to meet the increasing demand.

### **Legal Aid Line**

Legal Aid Line of Western Ohio, the intake and advice system created to provide more people with streamlined access to legal services, continues to expand its capacity with improved technology. This state-of-the-art system serves as a critical point of access for clients who need free legal help, including advice, brief legal service and, where applicable, a referral for further representation. Client referrals also are made to a number of community social service agencies, area pro bono programs, or private attorneys.

In 2004, we launched an on-line intake application that allows people to apply for services 24-hours a day, seven days per week. The system can be accessed through the internet at **www.legalaidline.org** from any public computer, a social worker's office, or a home-based personal computer. To date, we have received an average of 40 to 50 web applications per day.

### Responding to change

January 2004 was a new beginning for legal aid in northwest and west central Ohio, starting with a name change for Legal Services of Northwest Ohio (LSNO) to Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO) in order to better reflect the new service area. ABLE and LAWO finalized the consolidation of services that began in late 2003 with the Legal Aid Society of Dayton (LASD) and Western Ohio Legal Services Association (WOLSA).

The consolidation of services meant expanding operations, including Legal Aid Line, to an additional 15 counties, resulting in a service area covering 30 counties. We secured an additional \$370,000 grant from the Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation and a one-time grant from the Ohio Supreme Court to assist with transition costs, ensuring that no decrease in services to clients would result from the consolidation. We hired an additional 43 employees and the boards of trustees expanded to 30 representatives of the enhanced service area. Long-term, the results of the consolidation have shown an increase in service capacity and efficiency, along with more effective use of funding.

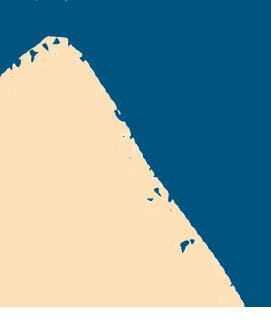
We established three new offices to serve the low-income residents of northwest and west central Ohio. In 2004, ABLE and LAWO operated nine offices located in Dayton, Defiance, Fremont, Lima, Sandusky, Springfield and Toledo. Together, the law firms provided services to residents of Allen, Auglaize, Champaign, Clark, Crawford, Darke, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Greene, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Logan, Lucas, Mercer, Miami, Montgomery, Ottawa, Paulding, Preble, Putnam, Sandusky, Seneca, Shelby, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, and Wyandot counties.

At the end of 2004, LAWO and ABLE began the process of working with Community Legal Services (CLAS) to transfer the delivery of civil legal services in Ashland and Richland Counties. On January 1, 2005, LAWO opened an office in Mansfield, Ohio, increasing its service area to 32 counties. ABLE serves 32 counties from its offices in Toledo and Dayton.

### 2004 Significant Accomplishments

- Completed consolidation of additional 15 counties in southern portion of service area and two counties in western portion of service area with staffing and establishment of new offices in Dayton, Lima, Mansfield, and Springfield.
- Worked with community leaders to establish and secure \$1.3 million in funding from the U.S. Department of Justice for the Family Justice Center in a six county area surrounding Defiance. The Center will provide comprehensive and coordinated services to individuals and families experiencing domestic violence.
- Increased program revenue by approximately \$595,561 between 2004 and 2005.

- Established new Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project through the Ohio Community Service Council AmeriCorps Program. The Project works to prevent homelessness and promotes affordable housing opportunities for low-income people. At full staff, we will have 18 AmeriCorps members, mostly attorneys, working on this Project.
- Completed implementation of Phase One of *ClientsWIN*, an interactive web-based application process for clients (www.legalaidline.org).
- Increased contributions to ABLE and LAWO from the private bar through expanded fundraising campaigns in Dayton and Toledo.
- Established new AmeriCorps Pro Bono Legal Corps Project in conjunction with Equal Justice Works. The Project promotes volunteer opportunities for attorneys and law students.
- Completed comprehensive strategic planning process and established Board-Staff Planning Committee to oversee implementation. Plan emphasizes increased collaboration and increased emphasis on holistic approach in service delivery.
- Completed independent survey of Legal Aid Line users that showed a high level of client satisfaction.
- Established a committee to assess and review ABLE and LAWO's progress in the area of diversity. The Committee has decided to focus on the areas of recruitment, retention and promotion, and organizational culture.
- Created opportunities for better internal and external communication for staff and clients through expanded use of a website and video-conferencing.



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# Surviving domestic violence

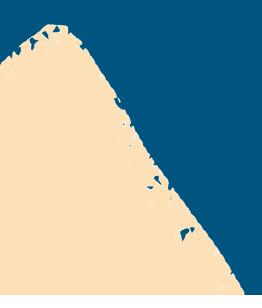
### Lisa's story

isa\* and her young son and daughter were in a domestic violence shelter, secure for the moment but in need of legal help to get protection from her abusive husband. The shelter staff put her in touch with an ABLE Legal Aid Line attorney who helped her obtain a temporary protection order.



Once Lisa and her children were out of immediate danger, the Legal Aid Line staff referred her to the nearest LAWO office for representation at a court hearing. Lisa was awarded ongoing protection from her abusive husband, custody of her children, child support, and exclusive use of her home.

<sup>\*</sup>Client names have been changed for confidentiality.



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# Defending tenants rights

### **Bob's story**

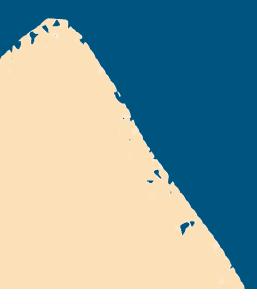
ob\* knew he could not tolerate the condition of his building's elevators another day. Most often the system sat idle waiting for repair. And, for more than a year, the managers of the subsidized apartment building had ignored repeated requests from residents for regular maintenance of the units.



Bob asked ABLE to advise his tenants' association of their legal rights and address the problem with the elevators that served the eight-story complex. The attorney provided information on the rent escrow process and ways to have the conditions corrected.

After several meetings among the association, building management and city officials, the building's owners agreed to overhaul the elevator system and complete long overdue renovations.

<sup>\*</sup>Client names have been changed for confidentiality.





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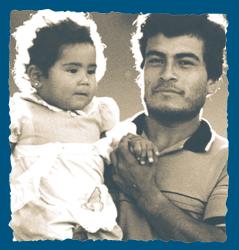
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# Advocating for migrant farmworkers

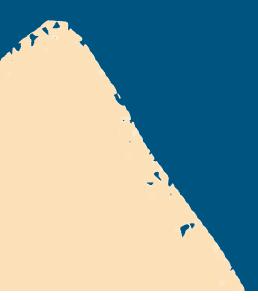
### Estaban's story

ased on a promise of new work from a local grower, Estaban\* traveled to Ohio with his wife and five children. When he arrived in the unfamiliar rural town, he was informed that work would not start for another week. Five weeks passed, and he began to worry that he would not be able to feed his family or pay rent due at the camp. Estaban called the local LAWO office for help.



A migrant farmworker advocate helped Estaban resolve his case for the full amount he would have earned had work began when originally promised. The settlement also allowed his family to remain in the camp rent-free and provided a guarantee of work at the camp as soon as it became available.

<sup>\*</sup>Client names have been changed for confidentiality.



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continued...

# Accessing public benefits

### **Dottie's story**

ottie\* has been coping with extreme panic disorder and depression for a number of years. Her symptoms have become so significant that working outside the home is no longer feasible. To make matters worse, when Dottie applied for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) she was denied.



Dottie felt she had nowhere to turn, until a friend told her about ABLE's Mental Health Consumer Advocacy program. The program referred Dottie to an LAWO paralegal specializing in government benefits. The LAWO advocate represented her at the appeal hearing, where she successfully secured for Dottie a lump sum payment of \$20,000 and ongoing monthly benefits of \$579. Because of LAWO's help, Dottie can pay down her debt and save toward the purchase of a permanent home.

<sup>\*</sup>Client names have been changed for confidentiality.

### Friend (under \$100)

continued... Rene M. LaForte Jennifer Maffett **Shannon Martin** Jeffrey C. Metzcar Allison D. Michael Murr Compton Claypoole & Macbeth Victoria L. Nilles P. Christian Nordstrom R. Lynn Nothstine Wayne P. Novick Timothy N. O'Connell George B. Patricoff Jeffrey M. Patzer Michelle D. Phipps Patricia A. Pickrel David W. Reid Edwin L. Ryan Jr. John M. Scott, Jr. Jeffrey B. Shulman Jill Sink Robert N. Snyder Scott T. Stirling Nolan C. Thomas Chris Van Schaik Katrina L. Wahl Heather Duffey Welbaum Robert B. Weltner Laura L. Wilson Reuben Wolk Johnna M. Yim

### 2004 Access to Justice Awards Dinner

The purpose of the Access to Justice Awards Dinner is to raise critical funds for legal services for the poor, while recognizing individuals, law firms, and organizations for their extraordinary service in the public interest. All proceeds from the event benefit ABLE, LAWO, and the Toledo Bar Association Pro Bono Legal Services Program.

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### **Special Thanks**

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### **Volunteers**

Individual volunteers can make a big difference in the lives of those needing civil legal assistance. The following individuals have generously contributed their time and talent to assist ABLE and LAWO in its mission of providing equal access to justice for all. Time and caring are gifts that often mean more than money. The following individuals have volunteered as attorneys, legal interns, paralegals, and in other professional service areas.

### **ABLE Volunteers**

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# Securing safe housing

### **Shelly's story**

helly\* moved to Toledo to help her sister, nieces and nephew through a difficult time. When the living arrangements did not work out as planned, however, Shelly found herself homeless. As a participant in the federal government's housing choice voucher program (Section 8), she was required to find another apartment that met the program's standards for health and safety. After a long search, the local public housing agency approved an apartment complex where the owner

agreed to accept Shelly's subsidy as payment in full for monthly rental of the housing unit.

Later, the landlord began to demand extra payments from Shelly, claiming the housing agency required them under Section 8. Having not been alerted to a need for extra payments, she inquired at the housing agency and, at the same time, reported the back door of her unit did not lock and that she had been burglarized. Suspecting fraud, the public housing agency terminated both the landlord and Shelly from the voucher program. The agency immediately stopped making rent payments on Shelly's behalf, and Shelly's landlord evicted her. That's when she turned to an LAWO attorney for representation at the housing agency's administrative hearing and at the eviction proceedings. LAWO succeeded in having her voucher reinstated and the eviction dismissed.

Today, Shelly is comfortable in another apartment

Today, Shelly is comfortable in another apartment and enjoys renewed independence working full time at a local social service agency.

<sup>\*</sup>Client names have been changed for confidentiality.

### **Pro Bono Attorneys**

One of the most important benefits of doing pro bono work is the direct contribution to the principle of justice for all. Last year, the following legal professionals in northwest and west central Ohio willingly and graciously gave their time and expertise to those who could not otherwise afford an attorney. ABLE and LAWO applaud these men and women who give back to the community so generously.

Karen R. Adams Deborah J. Adler Tony Alexander Charles F. Allbery Jeffrev L. Amick Alan G. Anderson James S. Armstrong Matthew R. Arntz Kevin W. Attkisson Evelvn Bachman Thomas Baggott David R. Bart Jane E. Beach Scott Beals Phillip L. Beard John F. Bennett Elaine S. Bernstein Thomas Berry Daniel H. Binegar R. Scott Blackburn John D. Bodin Jerome B. Bohman Michael R. Booher Michael R. Botros Richard A. Boucher Dwight D. Brannon Paul M. Branson Randall Breaden **Donald Brezine** Richard C. Brooks Garth Brown Matthew D. Bruder Michael Buckwalter Michael J. Burdge Ronald L. Burdge Lawrence T. Burick John R. Butz The Hon, Anthony Capizzi Richard L. Carr, Jr. Mary Beth Caudill John C. Chambers Susan Chema Richard A. Ciambrone J. Timothy Cline John E. Clough Thomas R. Cochran Brooks A. Compton W Michael Conway Janet K. Cooper **Brent Copeland** 

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### **Pro Bono Attorneys**

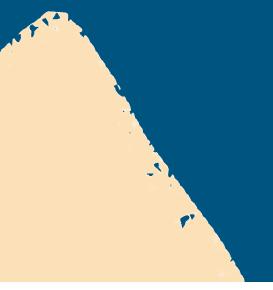
continued... Ellen C. Weprin Joseph Wessendarp Thomas P. Whelley Merle F. Wilberding J. Allen Wilmes John Winklejohn Paul Winterhalter Jeffrey A. Winwood Reuben Wolk Tamela Womack Mimi S. Yoon Timothy Young Steven E. Yuhas Anthony J. Zaharieff Phillip A. Zukowsky

### **Partners in Equal Access to Justice**

Legal aid has maintained long standing partnerships with pro bono legal services programs, including the Dayton/Miami Valley Volunteer Lawyer's Project (VLP) and the Toledo Bar Association Pro Bono Legal Services Program. Both programs are designed to provide opportunities for attorneys to volunteer their services to low-income people.

In addition to providing direct services on cases, volunteer lawyers also participate in outreach programs, make community education presentations, and co-counsel with other volunteers and staff attorneys. Legal Aid of Western Ohio, Inc. (LAWO) provides major financial support for both the Pro Bono Legal Services Program and the Volunteer Lawyers Project. In addition, ABLE and LAWO collaborate with these two programs on fundraising programs, community legal education programs, and volunteer lawyer recruitment.

Together, we do the community justice.



### We can't do it without you.

ABLE and LAWO receive public and private funding. Below are the names of the funders and the programs they support:

### **Ohio Community Service Council**

AmeriCorps Homelessness Prevention and Housing Opportunity Project

### **Ohio District 5 Area Agency on Aging**

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Huron, Seneca, Wyandot, and Crawford Counties

### **PSA 3 Agency on Aging**

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Allen, Auglaize, Hancock, Hardin, Putnam, Mercer, and Van Wert Counties

### Area Agency on Aging, PSA 2

Legal assistance to senior citizens in Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Logan, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, and Shelby Counties

### **Area Office on Aging of Northwestern Ohio**

Legal assistance to senior citizens in ten counties of LAWO's service area. Ombudsman Program advocating for residents of nursing homes, adult care facilities, and consumers receiving in-home care services

# City of Toledo Department of Economic and Community Development

Federal Community Development Block Grant funds supporting legal assistance in housing and other matters for low-income City of Toledo residents

### The Community Technology Fund of Ohio

Creation of an Urgent Response System to provide increased access to legal services to rural counties

### **The Dayton Foundation**

Senior Outreach Project for legal presentations to seniors in Montgomery and Greene Counties

### **Equal Justice Works**

AmeriCorps Pro Bono Legal Corps Project

# **Greene County Department of Job and Family Services**

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance

### **Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation**

Support of ABLE and LAWO area-wide services, Legal Aid Line, and the migrant program

### **Internal Revenue Service**

Low Income Taxpayer Clinic to assist people with controversies on federal income tax matters

### **Legal Services Corporation**

Support of LAWO area-wide services

### **Lucas County Mental Health Board**

Advocacy on behalf of consumers within the mental health system, including outreach visits to area mental health agencies and community groups

# Lucas County Department of Jobs and Family Services

Program to remove legal barriers to employment and self-sufficiency

# Miami County Department of Job and Family Services

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance

### **Miami County Foundation**

Continuing Legal Education (CLE) presentations in Miami County

### **Maumee Valley Presbytery**

Legal assistance to migrant workers

## Montgomery County Department of Job and Family Services

Legal assistance to residents eligible for County assistance

### **Montgomery County Juvenile Court**

Legal assistance to residents who needed legal help with issues before the Juvenile Court

### **Paul Newman**

Legal assistance to victims of domestic violence

### **Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services**

Legal assistance to victims of domestic violence in 14 northern rural counties

### **Social Security Administration**

Benefits planning and information on Social Security Work Incentives

### **Toledo Legal Aid Society**

Legal assistance in domestic relations issues in Lucas County

### **United States Department of Justice**

Legal Assistance to Victims Project – legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and support of collaborative relationships with shelters and victim assistance agencies

### **United Way of Defiance County**

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Defiance County

### **United Way of Fulton County**

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Fulton County

### **United Way of the Greater Dayton Area**

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Montgomery, Greene, and Preble Counties through programs that assist families and the disabled and elderly, and provide education on legal rights and responsibilities to youth

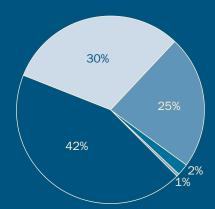
### **United Way of Greater Toledo**

Legal assistance to low-income residents of Lucas, Wood, and Ottawa Counties

### **2004 Combined Record of Service**

- 17,005 closed cases
- · 43,292 individuals benefited across 30 Ohio counties
- \$4,202,971\* paid in monthly benefits
- \$4,627,339\* paid in lump sum awards

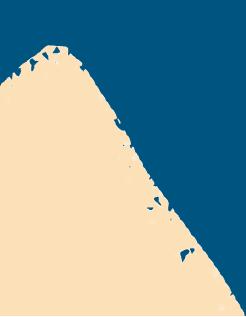
\* obtained benefits and awards in areas of child support, spousal support, unemployment compensation, supplemental security income, debt write-off, disability assistance, food stamps, and damages.



### **Support & Revenue**

☐ Ohio Legal Assistance Foundation (OLAF)	\$3,404,753
■ Legal Services Corporation (LSC)	\$2,428,587
Other grants and contracts	\$2,023,614
Fundraising and special event	\$137,230
■ Miscellaneous interest and other income	\$34,809
Total	\$8,028,993

7.5% 15.5% 4% 2%



### **Expenses**

☐ Compensation and benefits	\$5,527,964
Contract services	\$594,669
Operating costs	\$1,213,676
Travel, Support, and Training	\$322,347
■ Miscellaneous	\$146,795

Total ......\$7,805,451

### **Mary Anne Burns** Attorney, Lucas County Board of Mental Retardation Toledo, Ohio **April Crawford**

Defiance, Ohio

& Kendrick

Toledo, Ohio

**Melissa Peper Firestone** Attorney, Peper Law Firm Napoleon, Ohio

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**Terry Hart** Attorney Urbana, Ohio **Leola Haynes** 

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