**Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project**

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**What is the Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project (GDVLP)?**

The Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project (GDVLP) is a private nonprofit program

sponsored by the Dayton Bar Association and Legal Aid of Western Ohio (LAWO). During 2018, GDVLP provided free civil legal services to persons with limited financial resources in Champaign, Clark, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery and Preble County. Services are provided by lawyers who register with the GDVLP to accept *pro bono* cases.

**MISSION**

The Greater Dayton Volunteer Lawyers Project provides innovative opportunities for attorneys to perform pro bono civil legal services to benefit persons with limited financial resources.

**VISION**

When an attorney or other legal professional desires to fulfill his or her personal or professional calling or duty to contribute service to others, then GDVLP provides an effective bridge between that drive to serve and individuals with limited economic resources, as well as other non-profits with similar missions, needing help for civil legal issues.  In serving as the preferred bridge for attorneys and other legal professionals to provide community and professional service, GDVLP provides them with innovative and rewarding opportunities that optimize their time and unique talents to use their civic influence to assure access to justice.  In doing so, enthusiasm and passion for pro bono service is enhanced.

**GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

* GDVLP recognizes that legal professionals are compassionate, caring and dedicated, appreciating the value of pro bono service to our community, and justice system.
* By facilitating the delivery of high quality pro bono civil legal services, GDVLP addresses the critical issue of assuring equal access to justice.
* GDVLP is innovative, adaptive, collaborative, and efficient.
* GDVLP delivers its services with excellence and professionalism so that every volunteer's time and talent is optimized for the benefit of the volunteer, the client, the community, and the justice system.
* In all of its endeavors and activities, GDVLP promotes justice, fairness, dignity, respect for others, and respect for the rule of law.

**BEGINNINGS OF THE GREATER DAYTON VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT**

In a speech before the Dayton Bar Association in September, 1987, Gary Weston, Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Dayton, set forth in graphic detail the consequences of and frustrations inherent in the denial of access to our legal system. From this beginning, Arvin S. Miller, III, Theodore G. Gudorf, Steven E. Yuhas, and James J. Gilvary came together to create a project that would channel lawyers’ pro bonotime to civil cases in Montgomery County.

Through their time and energy a private nonprofit corporation was created with start-up funding from the American Bar Association, donated office space from the Dayton Bar Association, commitment of first year funding through a sub-contract with the Legal Aid Society of Dayton and, in October, 1988, the hiring of a full time Executive Director to implement the dream.

**WORKING TOGETHER**

LAWO (Legal Aid of Western Ohio) provides primary financial support for the GDVLP and through Legal Aid Line (LAL), which pre-screens most GDVLP clients for financial eligibility and case type.

The Dayton Bar Foundation provides office space and utilities for the GDVLP while the Dayton Bar Association provides access to their equipment and facilities.

The GDVLP refers eligible clients to pro bono attorneys through a variety of activities based on case type, lawyer case preferences, and lawyer availability.

Members of the legal community participate in the operations and activities of the GDVLP in support of the Project’s mission.

Qualified lawyers and firms provide the volunteer force to help meet the need for civil legal services among the economically disadvantaged by registering with the GDVLP.

**GOVERNANCE**

The GDVLP officers for 2018 were:

President: Lindsey C. Posey

Vice President: Jane P. Novick

Secretary: Lynn M. Reynolds

Treasurer: James G. Kordik

Immediate Past President, Susan R. Bridgman

The Board of Trustees also includes the following individuals from our community:

Anthony A. Colussi

Barbara J. Doseck

Judge Barbara Gorman

Scott A. King

Brandon McClain

Judge Michael J. Newman

Professor Denise Platfoot-Lacey

Karin H. VanZant

Marie (Penny) Wolff

**ADVISORY BOARD**

The following individuals help guide the GDVLP by participating in an advisory capacity:

Jenna Beck, Sinclair Community College

Branford Brown, Miami Valley Urban League

Lisa Carter, South Community, Inc.

Vanessa Carter, Nova House

Commissioner Judy Dodge, Montgomery County Commissioners

Jamie Gee, Montgomery County Office of Ex-Offender Reentry

Magistrate Keith Hall, Montgomery County Domestic Relations Court

Hon. Jonathan Hein, Darke County Common Pleas Court

Shannon Isom, YWCA Dayton

Jane Keiffer, Artemis Center

Linda Kramer, Daybreak

Jan Lepore-Jentleson, East End Community Services

Cathy Ponitz, CareSource

Michelle Riley, The Food Bank

Jeff Sorrell, Life Enrichment Center

Rick Wegmann, Goodwill/Easter Seals Miami Valley

D. K. "Rudy" Wehner, Montgomery County Public Defenders' Office

**STAFF**

In 2014, the inaugural Executive Director of the GDVLP, Helenka Marculewicz, retired. Kelly Henrici joined the organization as its Executive Director upon Ms. Marculewicz’s retirement. The transition was well-received by the community and considered a complete success. GDVLP staff also includes three paralegals, who focus on service delivery.

**PROVISION OF SERVICES TO CLIENTS**

In 2018, the GDVLP closed more than 2,000 cases that accounted for over 4,000 billable hours of time. At $175 per hour, that’s greater than $700,000 worth of donated services.

The GDVLP continues to accept uncontested divorces (from all seven counties served). This includes all divorces processed in clinic format, even if there are children involved. The GDVLP now also accepts bankruptcies in clinic format from all seven counties served. The GDVLP continues to focus on clinics to expand the number of individuals served.

With the START program, teams of attorneys and paralegals from Freund, Freeze & Arnold visit the Montgomery County Jail women’s pods every other week to provide advice on issues such as identification, housing, family law, powers of attorney, and employment. This program also includes a quarterly visit to the Montgomery County Women’s Correctional Institution to provide similar advice.

The Juvenile Court Pro Se program is handled by attorneys from Sebaly Shillito & Dyer. We register up to 30 people for each monthly clinic and up to half of them participate. They are provided instruction on completing Juvenile Court Pro Se Forms and limited advice relevant to their case.

The Landlord/Tenant program is handled by Thompson Hine and advice is given to those who have issues with their landlords involving eviction and other matters.

The Learning Resource Center (LRC) is staffed by WilmerHale and provides attendees with instruction on completing forms pro se in criminal record sealing and post-decree domestic relations matters. The LRC assists by Skype individuals in the six rural counties in addition to in-person assistance in Montgomery County.

Through the relationship with Life Essentials, the GDVLP continues to provide attorneys to secure guardianships of the person for the elderly in the community unable to make decisions for themselves.

The GDVLP also hosts a successful debt collection defense initiative to assist those who are being pursued by third party debt collectors, payday lenders, and others who engage in aggressive debt collection tactics.

**SERVICE TO THE LEGAL COMMUNITY**

In 2014, the Supreme Court of Ohio began accepting pro bono work towards continuing legal education (CLE) requirements of attorneys. For every 6 hours of pro bono service provided in a given year, an attorney is eligible to receive 1 hour of CLE.

**RECRUITMENT OF VOLUNTEERS**

Much of the GDVLP’s recruiting in 2018 was done through personal contacts. Volunteers include lawyers, paralegals, University of Dayton School of Law students and others) who perform pro bono work in the Miami Valley.

**WHAT DOES THE GDVLP LOOK LIKE FINANCIALLY?**

Audited financial statements are available upon request.