



Socially focused law firm Yocum Levine increasing access to justice

Mindy Yocum and Jacob Levine are bringing social enterprise to the legal world. As solo practitioners and members of the Columbus Bar Inc. program, both attorneys saw first-hand the incredible disadvantage that unrepresented and uneducated individuals have within the legal system. In fact, over 5 million Ohioans fall into the access to justice gap – those making too much to qualify for legal aid but not enough to afford the average attorney's fees.



Jacob Levine
Yocum Levine



Mindy Yocum
Yocum Levine

Determined to narrow the gap and increase the number of people that have access to legal assistance, Yocum participated in the social enterprise accelerator, SEA Change, developing an innovative business model that balances a traditional caseload with reduced fee and legal benefits programs that serve individuals, businesses and community agencies. To keep costs low, the firm utilizes contract attorneys, providing them with essential legal experience. The SEA Change judges saw the potential social impact of Yocum's business model and awarded her \$5,000. With the community's support and a demand for her services, Yocum quickly realized that she would need a partner to carry out her vision and Levine, an incredible advocate for the business model, was a perfect fit.

Yocum and Levine's initial focus is on employers and agencies that employ or assist individuals that may have barriers to sustained employment, such as prior convictions, incarceration or homelessness. In short, people who need a second chance. This summer, the pair partnered with Hot Chicken Takeover and The Neighborhood House for their pilot legal benefits programs. By providing brief advice clinics, educational workshops, one on one counseling and focused flat fee services, Yocum and Levine are able to proactively educate a substantial number of individuals on their rights, assist the individuals in taking appropriate action and prevent future legal problems from occurring. These services allow individuals to focus on their families and careers, instead of their legal problems.

Local law firm finds creative fundraising opportunities for Operation Feed

Dinsmore & Shohl LLP's Columbus office won the Law Firm Challenge as part of Mid-Ohio Foodbank's Operation Feed annual campaign. The firm collected nearly \$11,200 and provided the most meals per capita among large law firms participating.

"Dinsmore just completed its eighth Operation Feed campaign which was its largest to-date. Raising 44,702 meals for our hungry neighbors, the firm earned the coveted award for Most Meals Raised Per Capita – Large Firm Category. That means that Dinsmore donated an astonishing 396 meals per associate through their campaign efforts," said Mid-Ohio Foodbank Corporate Engagement Manager Stephenie Robertson. "Dinsmore continues to be a

strong partner for us."

The Columbus office fundraised for three months from May through July, holding events like cook offs, jean days and bake sales. During the last week, the office held a friendly competition among the floors to see which one could raise the most money. Each floor found ways to bring in the funds, including raffles and lunches. The final event, the Duct Tape Challenge, culminated the three-month-long effort. Attorneys and staff donated \$1 for a strip of tape, using it to tape Chuck Ticknor, Columbus' office managing partner, to the wall. It ended up being a big hit, and Ticknor's second floor won the competition.

"We are proud of our continued partnership

with Mid-Ohio Foodbank to help provide meals to needy families in our community. The duct taping took a lot longer than I expected, but everyone had a good time. If taping me to a wall can help some families in need, then I am more than happy to oblige," Ticknor said.

Dinsmore's Columbus office has been holding fundraising events for Operation Feed for eight years, raising nearly \$60,000 for the Mid-Ohio Foodbank. The Columbus office features 71 attorneys with an array of practice areas, including health care, construction, estate administration, commercial finance, employment, real estate, workplace safety and corporate and transactional matters.

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Pro Bono Celebration honors central Ohio legal volunteers; award winners named

On Oct. 25, the Columbus Bar Association and Foundation and Legal Aid Society of Columbus will host their annual Pro Bono Celebration.

2016 award nominees include Christy Prince for Outstanding Pro Bono Service by an Individual, Walter Messenger for the "In the Trenches" Award, Joan Sant for the Pro Bono Support Award, Jyoshu Tsushima for the New Attorney Pro Bono Service Award and Squire Patton Boggs for Outstanding Service by a Law Firm or Corporation.

More information on pro bono opportunities in central Ohio can be found on the Legal Aid Society of Columbus's website, www.columbuslegalaid.org.

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