

*In This Issue*

This issue features the Chillicothe office of Southeastern Ohio Legal Services (SEOLS). The office is located at 11 East Second Street in Chillicothe, Ohio.

- SEOLS Chillicothe clients
- pro bono clinics in Pike and Pickaway Counties
- SEOLS Chillicothe staff

*Where to Find Legal Help*

Each SEOLS office has a service area which includes two to five counties.

Address and phone information for the SEOLS offices, and the counties they serve, are located below.

The staff of SEOLS not only work in the office, but also:

- make visits to senior centers in areas of Ohio where SEOLS has received grants to help senior citizens;
- host open clinics for legal help (see [page 3](#)); and
- keep information on the SEOLS website: [seols.org](http://seols.org)



and the statewide Ohio Legal Services website:

[www.ohiolegalservices.org](http://www.ohiolegalservices.org)



**United Way Tax Clinic Partnership**

*by James M. Daniels, Director*

Poor families in our community are often one setback away from disaster. A blown head gasket with no money to fix can lead to missed work, a lost job, unpaid rent and utilities, an angry landlord, no money for security deposit/first month rent to move, and stressed children suffering in school, falling behind or acting out. For lack of a few dollars, a struggling family spirals downward and significant community resources are needed to deal with the aftermath. Stories like this are repeated too often.

In 2007, representatives from United Way, SEOLS, Ross County DJFS, Community Action, IRS and the County Auditor and Treasurer worked together to help low-income people file their taxes and get full refunds. Volunteers, including SEOLS attorneys, were recruited, trained, and—using computers at different agency locations, including the SEOLS office—prepared 480 returns in 2008. SEOLS staff attorney Luke Feeney, active in the project’s success, obtained an AmeriCorps volunteer to help and then an IRS grant to hire a project director. Within a few weeks, refunds from electronically filed returns were deposited into the accounts of struggling households. In 2012, 951 returns prepared by 25 volunteers put \$1.6 million into the pockets of Ross County’s low-income families and community.

Yes, legal aid attorneys litigate. Our Chillicothe office advocates for low-income people and seniors in county, municipal, juvenile, probate, and common pleas courts, and in welfare department and public housing authority administrative hearings in five counties. They also represent clients in two appellate districts, the federal court in Columbus, and Social Security Administration hearings.

But SEOLS attorneys do more than litigate to help individuals and families struggling against the effects of poverty. Their work with other community partners and their dedicated advocacy on behalf of their clients helps families connect to vital resources, and helps to alleviate poverty through systemic change.

If you or someone you know needs our help, give us a call to see if we can help. If you are a social service agency with clients who need an attorney or legal information, give us a call. If you see systemic problems hurting low-income folks, give us a call. If you are involved in the community and want to work together to create or improve services or would like to volunteer or help us raise much-needed funds, give us a call.

**SEOLS serves 30 counties in southeast Ohio:**

**Athens, Gallia, Meigs, Vinton**  
964 East State Street  
Athens, OH 45701  
740.594.3558, 800.686.3669

**Fayette, Jackson, Pickaway, Pike, Ross**  
11 East Second Street  
Chillicothe, OH 45601  
740.773.0012, 800.686.3668

**Fairfield, Hocking**  
123 South Broad Street, Suite 234  
Lancaster, OH 43130  
740.653.7705, 888.835.5902

**Monroe, Morgan, Noble, Washington**  
427 Second Street  
Marietta, OH 45750  
740.374.2629, 800.837.2630

**Knox, Licking**  
15 West Locust Street, Suite A  
Newark, OH 43055  
740.345.0850, 888.831.9412

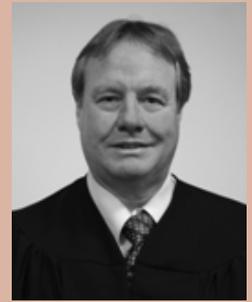
**Carroll, Coshocton, Holmes, Tuscarawas**  
332 West High Avenue  
New Philadelphia, OH 44663  
330.339.3998, 800.686.3670

**Adams, Lawrence, Scioto**  
800 Gallia Street, Suite 700  
Portsmouth, OH 45662  
740.354.7463, 800.837.2508

**Belmont, Harrison, Jefferson**  
100 North Third Street  
Steubenville, OH 43952  
740.283.4781, 800.837.4781

**Guernsey, Muskingum, Perry**  
422 Main Street, Fourth Floor  
Zanesville, OH 43702  
740.454.1223, 800.686.3671

In 2009, Pike County Juvenile Court Judge Jerome Catanzaro was overwhelmed with pro se filings that he could not adjudicate. “Ninety-nine percent of these attempted pleadings didn’t comply with the Civil Rules,” says Judge Catanzaro. “I had to dismiss the cases.” Rather than leave pro se litigants with no recourse for their custody and child support issues, the judge created his own pro se forms, which he shared with SEOLS Chillicothe office managing attorney Dave Taylor. After making the forms available to SEOLS clients online, the two collaborated to create the Pike County Juvenile Court Clinic.



*Judge Jerome Catanzaro*

In August 2009, the first Pike County clinic was held. Judge Catanzaro estimates 50 to 60 people showed up at the first clinic, which lasted most of the day. Thirty-five separate custody and child support cases came out of the first clinic. Twenty-nine people were given pro se forms and 26 of them completed and filed their forms that day. Eight of those cases—in which all parties were present and in agreement—were heard by the judge that day.

While the first clinic was very busy and a bit chaotic, the subsequent bimonthly clinics have run much more smoothly. The judge, his staff, SEOLS attorneys, CSEA caseworkers and the pro bono attorneys have it “down to a routine” now, according to Catanzaro. “Everybody’s happy with it,” he says. “You can walk into a public agency at 9 o’clock and walk out at 10:30. The judge has heard your case and made a decision. What normally would take at least three months is done in less than three hours.”

Judge Jan Long of the Pickaway County Juvenile Court faced similar problems with pro se litigants filing the wrong paperwork. After discussing these issues with SEOLS staff, Judge Long also opened his courtroom to a bimonthly pro se clinic. For the past year and a half, Judge Long has hosted a clinic that helps families in Pickaway County that cannot afford an attorney get help in solving their legal problems.



*Judge Jan Long*

The first Pickaway County clinic was held in mid-2011. At the clinic, SEOLS attorneys and volunteer private attorneys help low-income citizens complete the paperwork to address custody and visitation problems. Like in Pike County, if all of the parties are present and in agreement, Judge Long will often hear the case that day. This saves time and money for everyone involved, according to the judge.

Judge Long says the clinic is good for everyone involved especially pro se litigants. It “takes away the mystery of what they need to do to solve their family’s legal problems.” It also makes things run smoother for the Court: the clerks are not asked to provide legal advice and the Judge does not have to dismiss cases because paperwork was not filled out correctly.

“The clinic is a win for SEOLS because they get to help people. It’s a win for the court because we’re not rejecting pro se filings. It’s a win for the CSEA because it reduces arrearages, and it’s a win for pro se filers because they get what they want,” says Judge Catanzaro. SEOLS staffers agree. SEOLS attorney Jim Buchanan says the clinic is a good addition to the services SEOLS provides because it helps both SEOLS and the public.

Judge Catanzaro retired in 2012. Judge Neal Rosenberger, who took the bench in November 2012, plans to continue the Pike County Juvenile Clinic on a bimonthly basis. SEOLS pro se clinics are scheduled in January 2013 in both the Pickaway and Pike County Juvenile Courts.

Any local private attorneys interested in volunteering at either Pro Se Clinic can contact the Chillicothe office of SEOLS at 740-773-0012.

## Continuing Legal Education Changes Adopted

Commission on Continuing Legal Education  
Supreme Court of Ohio  
65 South Front Street, 5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Columbus, Ohio 43215-3431  
**Phone:** 614.387.9325  
**Fax:** 614.387.9329  
**E-mail:** CCLE



**Secretary:**  
Susan B. Christoff, Esq.

The Ohio Supreme Court has adopted continuing legal education (CLE) changes that will double the number of online credit hours attorneys could earn, allow attorneys to earn a portion of their CLE hours by engaging in approved pro bono activities, and eliminate the requirement to file final reporting transcripts. The changes will go into effect on January 1, 2014. As for pro bono credit, attorneys could receive one hour of CLE credit for every six hours of pro bono service up to a maximum of six credit hours for service performed during a biennial compliance period. To be eligible for such credit, the attorney’s pro bono service must be verified by a bar association or other organization recognized by the commission as providing pro bono programs and services in Ohio, such as a legal aid organization.

[http://www.courtnewsOhio.gov/happening/2012/ruleAmend\\_112612.asp#.ULO5vGfA1n8](http://www.courtnewsOhio.gov/happening/2012/ruleAmend_112612.asp#.ULO5vGfA1n8)

## Ask an Attorney • Upcoming Open Clinics:

**Athens County** – 3 pm, 800-686-3669

1/17/13, 2/21/13, 3/21/13 ACDJFS, Chauncey

**Belmont County** – sign up at 5:30 pm/clinic at 6 pm-8 pm

1/9/13, 3/13/13 Webster Hall, Martins Ferry

**Fairfield County** – clinic at 5 pm-7 pm

4th Tuesday each month but December, The Rising House, Lancaster

**Gallia County Seniors** – morning—county residents 60 or older, 740-446-7000 for appointment

1/24/13, 3/21/13 Gallia County Senior Center

**Hocking County** – 5:30 pm-7:30 pm, 888-835-5902

2nd Tuesday January, March, May, July, September and November Trinity United Methodist Church, Logan

**Knox County** – sign up at 5:30 pm/clinic at 6 pm-8 pm

1/14/13, 4/15/13 Mulberry Street United Methodist Church, Mount Vernon

**Licking County** – sign up at 5:30 pm/clinic at 6 pm-8 pm

1/16/13 Holy Trinity Lutheran Church

2/20/13 Pilgrim Lutheran Church

3/20/13 Hebron Christian Church

4/17/13 First Presbyterian Church

**Meigs County** – 2 pm, 800-686-3669

2/12/13, 5/23/13 Meigs County Public Library, Pomeroy

**Morgan County** – 2-4 pm, 800-837-2630 for appointment

1/15/13, 2/5/13, 2/19/13, 3/5/13, 3/19/13 Community Action, Malta

**Muskingum County** – sign up at 5 pm/clinic at 6 pm-8 pm, 800-686-3671

Second Thursday each month but December, Domestic Relations Court, Zanesville

**Perry County** – 4 pm, 800-686-3671

First Tuesday each month, Perry County Courthouse, New Lexington

**Vinton County** – 10 am, 800-686-3669

1/24/13, 4/25/13 Wescoat Memorial Library, McArthur

**Vinton County Seniors** – morning—county residents 60 or older, 740-596-4706

2/14/13 Vinton County Senior Center, by appointment

**Washington County** – 6 pm-8 pm

1/16/13, 2/20/13, 3/20/13 St Luke's Episcopal Church, Marietta

Southeastern Ohio Legal Services® is a division of the Ohio State Legal Services Association®

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## People We Serve

### Help for a Mother and Her Children: A Chillicothe Success Story

Melanie Slaughter lives with her daughters, eight-year-old Kayla and five-year-old Gracie, in Ross County. Melanie has always worked hard to make a good life for herself and her daughters. She has been to college and earned a Bachelor's degree in Photography.

Things were going well until July 2008, when Melanie was diagnosed with Hodgkin's disease. After six months of chemotherapy and 20 radiation treatments, the cancer went into remission.

It came back in 2009 and Melanie had a bone marrow transplant. The transplant was successful, but the extensive chemotherapy and the radiation treatments caused neuropathy in her feet and legs, and damaged her lungs.

Melanie applied for and received disability. She went to vocational rehabilitation to be trained for work that she could do even with her limitations. Melanie volunteered for the Food Assistance Employment and Training (FAET) program which, because she was enrolled in vocational rehabilitation, counted her school hours toward eligibility for food stamps. She also received the subsidized child care needed to be able to go to school and work.

In 2012, Melanie received a letter from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services stating that she was not eligible for child care subsidies because she has a bachelor's degree and that she may have to pay back any funds she had received for child care.

Melanie didn't know what to do, but she remembered going to the legal aid office in Chillicothe when she was diagnosed with cancer. The attorneys there helped her complete a will. Melanie wanted to make sure that her daughters were cared for if anything happened to her. She called the Chillicothe office and talked with paralegal Patrina Queen about the child care subsidy issue.

Patrina listened, took notes, researched the law, and found out that, because Melanie had volunteered for the FAET program, her school hours through vocational rehabilitation could be used to determine eligibility for child care subsidy and that the bachelor's degree could not be counted against Melanie because she was on disability. Melanie said, "I would have had to drop out of school if I hadn't found Patrina. She took care of the problem very quickly. She's been wonderful."

This is just one success story from the Chillicothe office. Every day the advocates are helping people with civil legal issues that impact their lives and the lives of their families—that can mean the difference between economic stability and poverty.



Melanie Slaughter and her daughters Kayla and Gracie

**Profile: Jim Buchanan, Senior Attorney**

Attorney Jim Buchanan has worked in the SEOLS Chillicothe office for 25 years, but his advocacy for low-income Ohioans dates back much farther. While a student at Kent State University, he witnessed the 1970 shooting of war protestors by the Ohio National Guard. "After that day, my whole life outlook changed," he says. Jim felt compelled to do something to better his community and began working to start an off-campus student housing group and get a housing code for the City of Kent.

As a law student at the University of Cincinnati, Jim continued his housing advocacy efforts by starting the Tenant Information Project. In his three years of law school, the Project provided legal information and advice to 2,500 private housing renters in the Cincinnati area. Many Legal Aid advocates throughout the state got their start working for the Project, which continues its work today.

Jim began his legal career with the now-defunct Central Ohio Legal Aid in Lancaster. He then went to work as a private attorney in Cleveland. But, having grown up in a low-income family, he soon realized that his own family members couldn't afford to hire him. He decided to return to Legal Aid and ultimately joined SEOLS in 1987. "These are my people," Buchanan says of his clients. "Everything we do here is where my roots are."

Buchanan literally wrote the book on mobile home law in Ohio. *Ohio Manufactured/Mobile Home Law* was first published in 1995, and most recently updated in December 2012. However, it is the cases that stand out for Jim, among them a federal class action lawsuit filed against Metropolitan Housing. The suit challenged the failure of housing authorities to provide earned income disregards to tenants who had received government job training after unemployment. On the day the suit was filed, HUD issued a



SEOLS Chillicothe casehandler staff (left to right): seated: Melissa Benson, Patrina Queen; standing: Dave Taylor, Luke Feeney, Josh Goodwin, Michael Gibbons-Camp, Jim Buchanan

directive to all housing authorities around the country mandating that they follow the income disregard regulation. As a result, thousands of families across the county had their rent reduced, including 65 families in Chillicothe.

The class action lawsuit was an important tool for effective advocacy, according to Jim. During the Reagan administration, a number of restrictions were placed on Legal Aid Societies, including a prohibition against class action lawsuits. While some of the restrictions have eased in recent years, class action lawsuits are still prohibited.

But the biggest challenge Buchanan faces as a Legal Aid attorney is not these restrictions. The general public's attitude about poor people is difficult to overcome. "There is an awful lot of prejudice against our clients," he says. "But the answer is in the work we do." After 25 years of service at SEOLS, Jim continues to provide those answers every day.

**... meet more of our staff ...**

Melissa Benson joined SEOLS in January 2006 as a staff attorney after graduating from Case Western Reserve University's Backus School of Law in 2005. Her practice focuses on consumer protection, and she is one of two foreclosure defense specialists at SEOLS. Melissa served on the Pickaway County Community Action Board for six years and was Board President in 2011.

Jessica Colegrove started working for SEOLS as a legal secretary in December 2007, after seven years as a stay-at-home mom. She received an Associate Degree from Ohio University-Chillicothe and was a secretary for 14 years before joining SEOLS. Jessica grew up in Pike County, but currently resides in Ross County with her husband and son.

Luke Feeney joined SEOLS as a staff attorney in December 2006 after working in private practice. He graduated from Case Western Reserve University's Backus School of Law in 2005. He lives in Chillicothe with his wife Stacy, their dog and two cats.

**Yes! I want to help SEOLS advocate for equal access to justice and human dignity.**

The hourly cost of placing and supporting an attorney in one of our offices is about \$90 per hour. More people need our services than ever before.

You can help us serve more people by making a voluntary, tax deductible contribution. Contributions may be in the form of money and/or time volunteered. You may use this coupon or visit <http://seols.org> and click the PayPal donation link.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_

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\_\_\_\_\_

Contribution enclosed:

\$90 (one hour)     \$180 (two hours)     Other: \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Optional:

I would like to designate my contribution (e.g., in memoriam, domestic violence, senior citizens, ...):

\_\_\_\_\_

**If you would like information about volunteer opportunities at Southeastern Ohio Legal Services, please list your email address:**

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≡ Contributions are tax deductible. ≡

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555 Buttles Avenue  
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**Thank you!**

