

In The Spotlight with: Tim Lutz, Medina County Chief Public Defender

By Kate Feeks

Tim Lutz, Medina County Chief Public Defender, sits down with Mr. John Celebrezze on his show, *Law Talk*, to explain the responsibilities of his job.

Mr. Lutz lives in Cleveland with his wife Susan and two adult sons. After graduating from Lake Catholic High School in Cleveland, Mr. Lutz received his undergraduate degree from The University of Akron in Political Science and Criminal Justice in 1983. In 1989, he graduated from The University of Akron School of Law. While maintaining his law license, Mr. Lutz made the decision to become a home maker to his two sons. In 2002, he began working for Summit County Legal Defenders Office which then led him to the position that he holds today as Medina's Chief Public Defender.

Employed by the government, a public defender is required to represent those who are charged with certain crimes and are unable to afford an attorney. Public defenders are employed at the local, state and federal government levels. Public defenders are sometimes used in certain parts of the country as part-time employees, allowing them to work in a private law practice.

Mr. Lutz is a criminal trial lawyer responsible for his own client base that covers indigent/criminal cases in Medina, Wadsworth and Brunswick. He begins each day much like all trial attorneys reporting to court for motion, plea and sentence hearings, bench trials and jury trials. "We are trial attorneys and we pride ourselves on taking things to trial" explained Lutz. In his position he is also responsible for the administrative side of the job too, which includes; balancing the budget, human resources and public relations. "My job encompasses a variety of different details" noted Lutz.

The Medina County Public Defender's Office will see approximately 500 clients per attorney per year, but not everyone is eligible for a public defender. Many are not aware that there are certain qualifications that are required to be able to use these services. A defendant may qualify to be represented by a public defender if charged with a crime that carries potential jail time, as well as providing proof of a certain income bracket.

Once a request to be represented by a public defender is made, the defendant must fill out the required paperwork which is based on each individual's income. Everyone is entitled to an attorney, but to be represented by a public defender a person must sign an affidavit regarding their income. Those that do not qualify must find private counsel or represent themselves.

"Many people can't afford a private attorney to make sure everything in their case is done right ... It is important for everyone to realize that anybody is entitled to an attorney and if you don't have enough money, one is going to be provided ... As public defenders we are there to help these people with their cases. Everyone deserves to have things done right ... and we are there to help" says Lutz.

It was the time spent at home with his children that gave him the patience and experience that prepared him for his position today. To be accomplished in a job Lutz feels it means giving your 100% best each day. “ ... we might be the last person fighting for them. I think everyone is redeemable and has redeemable qualifications. My goal is to keep these people going and I want them to know I was there giving my best for them the whole time” Lutz said.