

MONTANA EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT

Hon. Holly Brown
Department 1

Hon. Mike Salvagni
Department 2

Hon. John Brown
Department 3

TO: Gallatin County Attorneys
DATE: October 8, 2013
RE: Gallatin Legal Assistance Clinic

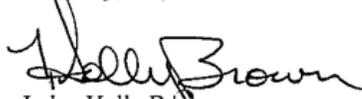
Many of our neighbors are without financial resources to obtain an attorney and, of necessity, are forced to seek resolution on their own through a complicated judicial system. It is challenging for them to understand the terminology and the process and they often don't comprehend that there are laws and rules that must be followed to obtain their desired outcome. This can be compounded by the emotional component of their circumstance. On a regular basis we see individuals who are overwhelmed when they come to Court. Although they have been provided the documents to represent themselves, either on-line or through the Gallatin County Self-Help Law Center, they have no place to turn to ask for legal advice. This can result in filing the wrong forms, incomplete documents or skipping required steps altogether. The consequence is compounded stress for the pro se litigants and delayed resolution.

In the past our only resource was to call upon you individually to represent someone on a pro bono basis. We thank each of you who has stepped up to this call and given your professional time and talents to these individuals. Because the vast majority of these cases were family law matters, family law practitioners were requested to provide pro bono assistance disproportionately to the attorneys practicing in Gallatin County.

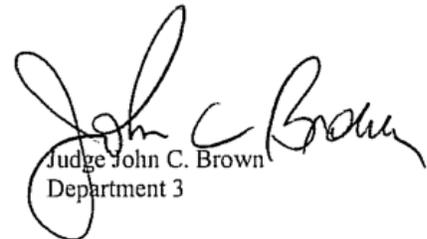
A working group of the Gallatin County Bar, in response to the recognized need, has researched the issues and devised a plan to provide legal advice to those in our community with family law issues. The working group has proposed a pilot Gallatin Legal Assistance Clinic. The monthly clinic will provide legal advice to low-income individuals and will afford pro bono opportunities to Gallatin County attorneys on a limited scope basis.

We endorse the pilot Gallatin Legal Assistance Clinics and applaud everyone who has participated with the working group that has formulated the clinic solution. We encourage you to join with your colleagues to assist low income individuals navigate the legal process, and ultimately aid our Court with the expediency of justice. The clinic model has been successful in other areas of Montana. The long-term success of the Gallatin Legal Assistance Clinics will be a great source of pride for the Gallatin County Bar Association and for the Eighteenth Judicial District.

Sincerely,


Judge Holly Brown
Department 1


Judge Mike Salvagni
Department 2


Judge John C. Brown
Department 3