

FWK Team Hosts Legal Clinic at Local Library in Partnership with Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project

Thank you to our lawyers for donating their knowledge and time to assist our local community through a law clinic created by our partnership with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project - see the full story by reading below or [click here](#) to view the news story & video. Our Pro Bono initiative for 2017 allows us to partner with various projects like MVLP throughout our local communities and keeps us committed to helping others with their legal needs.

As quoted from The Clarion Ledger:

You may be able to be your own attorney on some cases without someone referring to you as a fool for representing yourself. However, would you know the type cases you may be able to represent yourself on? On Thursday, a group of lawyers from the law firm of Forman Watkins & Kurtz, and some Mississippi College School of Law students, joined with the Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project to provide an answer during a free legal clinic at the Eudora Welty Library in downtown Jackson.

These are the cases individuals might be able to represent themselves:

- Uncontested divorce
- Simple wills
- Uncontested adoption matters
- Guardianship
- Name change
- Conservatorship
- Child support contempt
- Guardianship
- Birth certificate correction
- Expungement of misdemeanor criminal record

Stephanie Lockett of Canton came to the legal clinic to get instructions on the steps to file an uncontested divorce case. About 15 people signed up for the free legal clinic Thursday. Such clinics are conducted throughout the state during the year.

"I'm trying to get help; financially, I can't hire a lawyer," Lockett said. Lockett said if she learns the steps to file her own divorce case, she maybe able to help someone else do the same in the future. Renjah Brimage of Jackson said she did a Google search about free legal help and the clinic Volunteer Lawyers legal clinic showed up, and that was why she was there to take advantage of it. She is in the process of also filing an uncontested divorce case. "I'm on a fixed income," Brimage said. "I think this really did help me out." Gayla Carpenter-Sanders, executive director and general counsel of the Volunteer Lawyers Project, said the goal is to make sure all citizens have access to legal advice or representation. "We think it is important that everyone has the right to have their matters heard regardless of whether or not they can afford to pay an attorney," Carpenter-Sanders said. Courtney Hunt, an attorney with Forman Watkins & Kurtz, said it's a pleasure for her to give back to the community.

Hunt's advice for low-income residents who can't afford an attorney and want to file a case on their own:

- Contact the Volunteer Lawyers Project for advice
- Go to a courthouse and talk to the chancery clerk, court clerk or someone in the offices about the type of case to be filed
- Make sure the right forms are filed in court

The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project, formed in 1982, is a partnership of Mississippi Bar Association and the Legal Services Corporation. The Volunteer Lawyers Project legal clinics are designed to assist self-represented litigants in preparing to go to court. The program is limited to those whose income is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, which is about \$23,540 annually for an individual, or \$48,500 or less for a family of four, based on 2016 poverty guidelines.

In 2016, the Volunteer Lawyers Project helped about 2,300 Mississippi residents.

For information about the Volunteer Lawyers Project or the legal clinics, call 601-882-5001 or visit www.mvlp.org.

Contact Jimmie E. Gates at 601-961-7212 or jgates@gannett.com. Follow him on Facebook and Twitter.