

PRESS RELEASE

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Office of the Chief Judge
Madison County Courthouse
Edwardsville, IL 62025

Available for immediate release:

Pro Bono Committee Provides Additional Programs

The Third Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee continues to provide free legal appointments to Madison County residents of limited means, who do not have attorneys, in the Law Library at the Edwardsville Courthouse. The committee announces it is adding additional programs to train attorneys to assist members of the community.

Attorneys who provided free legal appointments to the public from April through June 2014 are: Brad Allen, Robert Bas, Andrew Carruthers, Jack Cranley, Jack Daugherty, James Drazen, Janel Freeman, Julie Harper, Teri Havron, Jennifer Hightower, Chris Kovach, Julie Matoesian, Ryan Robertson, Maureen Schuette, Joan Spiegel, Chris Threlkeld, Julie Tracy, Kyle Whiteside, and Joseph Whyte.

A number of lawyers also volunteered a day to train others on family law issues as part of a new pro bono mediation and guardian ad litem program. The Third Circuit Pro Bono Committee signed up 48 lawyers and mediators who have agreed to be available to the family division judges to be appointed on a rotating basis in some child custody and visitation disputes. The Pro Bono committee will provide continuing education for the attorneys in this program.

The first seminar was held in the County Board Room of the Madison County Administration Building. Attorneys Gail Donnelly Bader, Michael Meehan, and Andrea Witcek explained the current law on custody and visitation. Margarette Trushel, Executive Director of Oasis Women's Center in Alton, updated the attorneys on domestic violence and its impact in family cases and on mediation. Katherine Claudson, Executive Director of the Children First Foundation described the Visitation Exchange Center programs held at the Madison County Kids' Corner at the County's Wood River facility. Three attorney mediators, Erin Reilly, Maureen Schuette and Amy Sholar, held a

panel discussion on the best practices for family court mediators. Finally, Judge Janet Heflin, Presiding Judge of Family Division, and attorney Rick Steiger discussed the reports made by guardians ad litem and their uses in custody cases.

“The attorneys who donated their time for the free legal appointments and those who donated their time and knowledge to train other attorneys for these programs are a valuable resource to the community and to the court system and deserve recognition,” stated Circuit Judge Barb Crowder, who chairs the Third Circuit Pro Bono Committee. The committee intends to host monthly legal education updates in hourly sessions to keep the pro bono attorneys current on the law and to thank them for their efforts to help the many individuals who are unable to afford legal representation.

The Third Judicial Circuit Pro Bono Committee reminds members of the public that free legal appointments to low income members of the public who do not have attorneys are available by appointment on any legal subject except criminal law, including but not limited to subjects such as family law or areas such as debt collection, landlord tenant, small claims, or any other civil area of law. The free appointments are held the second and fourth Tuesday of each month. The appointments are for those of limited incomes who do not have attorneys and qualifying information will need to be provided. To make an appointment or to volunteer, call 618-296-5921 or e-mail Betsy Mahoney at bemahoney@co.madison.il.us.