



Montana Justice Foundation Newsletter

Volume 1, No. 3

Summer 2008

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As the last few days of summer quickly slip away and the natural world prepares its wind down for an inevitable winter slumber, I am happy to say that we here at the Montana Justice Foundation are preparing to heat things up!

Over the past few months, the MJF has weathered a number of challenges brought on by declining IOLTA interest rates and a general economic downturn. The MJF board and staff have put their backs into finding new ways to diversify our funding base and enhance our existing revenue sources in an effort to meet the growing needs of our grantee organizations.

Part of these efforts includes the transfer of IOLTA administration to MJF's offices, a move to an updated IOLTA database, and the hire of an IOLTA operations assistant. These new developments will enable the MJF to glean a more in depth analysis of the information being reported by financial institutions that host IOLTA accounts and strengthen accountability measures to maximize IOLTA revenue.

Additional efforts are being implemented to actively seek the leadership and support of local attorneys and law firms to reach out to local communities, businesses, and government to raise awareness and funding for legal aid and access to justice initiatives. One example of our efforts in this area is our support and participation in the Access to Justice Forum Series, a series of statewide public discussions about civil legal services for the poor, (for details, please see below).

As always, thank you for being a partner in the access to justice cause. It is your support and commitment that enable us to move ever closer to fulfilling our mission of increasing access to justice for all Montanans.

Best Regards,

Amy Sings In The Timber



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MJF Feature Grantee: DOVES



DOVES (Domestic Violence Education & Services) is a private, non-profit crime victim advocate organization located in Polson, Montana. DOVES' mission is to address and prevent domestic and sexual violence in Lake County and on the Flathead Indian Reservation

through community outreach, prevention education and information, and advocacy for victims of violent crime.

DOVES Legal Assistance for Victims program has been greatly enhanced by grants from the Montana Justice Foundation. MJF funding pays for mileage and other related costs for clients seeking services from a Missoula attorney.

MJF funds were used to assist Julie, a victim of domestic violence, in securing the home she and her abusive husband had shared. After enduring more than four years of physical and emotional abuse, Julie came to DOVES for help in obtaining an Order of Protection.

DOVES attorney Brandi Ries helped Julie through the restraining order process. "She was there for me the day of my hearing, and defended me. [I] couldn't have done that without her. That was very hard facing my husband..." After obtaining a protection order, Julie filed for a divorce with DOVES' help.

Shortly after Julie had filed for divorce, her husband died in an auto accident. As a surviving spouse, Julie was entitled to inherit the estate of her estranged husband; however, Julie received intense pressure from her in-laws to sign away her rights to her home. DOVES located an estates attorney in Missoula who was willing to help Julie pro bono.

With the help of the estates attorney, Julie reached settlement with her in-laws and was able to secure her home. The result for her was significant. Without the information, guidance, and assistance provided by DOVES, Julie would have succumbed to pressure to sign away her rights to her home.

"Without DOVES, I wouldn't be here talking to you today. They saved my life. I had nowhere to go to after I left my husband, and they helped me with everything."

DOVES is extremely grateful for Montana Justice Foundation funding, which allows the organization to ensure access to justice for its many

Bank

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clients who would otherwise not have the resources to hire an attorney. For these women to experience the feeling of empowerment that being represented by a good lawyer can provide, this funding is invaluable.



Introducing Kathy Peterson

On October 1, 2008, the administration of the Montana Interest on Lawyers Trust Accounts (IOLTA) program will transfer from the offices of the State Bar of Montana to the Montana Justice Foundation's offices. With that said, we would like to introduce you to

Kathy Peterson.

Kathy is an MJF employee and the new IOLTA program administrator. Kathy was born and raised in Missoula, MT and has spent the past ten years working as an executive administrative assistant for Kaiser Permanente Hospital in Portland, OR. She recently returned to Missoula to be closer to family and introduce her six-year-old daughter, Abigail, to the beauty of growing up in Montana. Welcome Kathy!

Please contact Kathy with any questions regarding the IOLTA program. She can be reached at: 406.523.3920 or at: kpeterson@mtjustice.org.

Access to Justice Forum Series

The Montana access to justice community is sponsoring a series of statewide public discussions about civil legal services for the poor between now and the end of the year.

The primary purpose of the sessions is to bring together community programs and access to justice leaders to discuss the legal, social and ethical issues affecting access to our civil justice system.

Join us to hear from local community program advocates, legal services and pro bono attorneys, legal aid clients, and community members regarding the access to justice gap, unmet legal needs and additional ways we can improve access to justice in Montana.

Co-sponsors of the forums include the Equal Justice Task Force, the Supreme Court Commission on Self-Represented Litigants, the State Bar's Access to Justice Committee, the Montana Justice Foundation, the Supreme Court Self-Help and Pro Bono Programs and the

University of Montana School of Law.

Forum Schedule:

- September 8, 2008 - Great Falls
- October 2, 2008 - Butte
- October 23, 2008 - Bozeman
- November 14, 2008 - Billings
- December 2, 2008 - Helena
- Kalispell dates TBA.

For more information, please contact Patty Fain, Statewide Pro bono Coordinator at: pfain@mt.gov or at: 406.794.7824

Thank You, MJF Donors!

The Montana Justice Foundation Board of Directors gratefully acknowledges the following law firms and individuals for their support of the MJF and the Access to Justice Cause.*

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*Donor recognition reflects contributions made to the MJF Annual Campaign between April 1, 2007 and March 31, 2008. Great effort has been taken to ensure the accuracy of the names listed. Should you find an error or an omission, please accept our apologies and contact MJF at (406) 523-3920.

Thank you for being a partner in the access to justice cause!