

## Free legal clinic set for Sept. 16 in Greenville

September 10, 2015

The Washington County Chancery Court has scheduled a free legal clinic on Sept. 16 in Greenville to assist low income people with family law matters including no fault divorces, child support, visitation, name changes and other simple civil legal matters.

The clinic will be held 8:30 a.m. to noon at the Washington County Courthouse in Greenville. Chancery Judge Marie Wilson will conduct a continuing legal education program for the volunteer lawyers from 9 to 10 a.m. Judge Wilson will take the bench to begin hearing pro se cases at 10 a.m. Proceedings are expected to conclude by noon.

Volunteer lawyers will be available to assist self-represented litigants in correcting paperwork associated with the legal proceedings. Volunteer attorneys may explain the proceedings, provide general information and answer questions. The attorneys are not obligated to accompany clinic participants to court and file documents for them. The expectation is that individuals will be able to represent themselves in court.

Self-represented litigants often struggle to meet all of the requirements for properly drafted legal documents. If they come to court for a hearing and their documents don't meet the court's requirements, their hearing has to be rescheduled.

"Their paperwork is what keeps them coming back," Judge Wilson said. "The attorneys can straighten out whatever the problem may be."

The Mississippi Volunteer Lawyers Project and the Mississippi Center for Justice provide some of the legal assistance. Law students from the University of Mississippi School of Law Pro Bono Initiative assist volunteer attorneys. The program gives the students hands-on legal experience.

Judge Wilson started the pro se day program in 2010. "It gives them access" to the court system, she said. "It keeps my docket from getting bogged down with pro se litigants."

There were so many people seeking help that she began scheduling the event quarterly. The December pro se docket is already full. The next available pro se day will be in March 2016. About 25 people can be accommodated during each pro se day.

Eligibility for the Sept. 16 clinic is limited to Washington County residents.

Free family law clinics are scheduled in other locations throughout the fall. Dates and locations are:

- Sept. 23, noon to 4 p.m., University of Mississippi School of Law, Oxford;
- Sept. 29, 4 to 7 p.m., Union County Courthouse, New Albany;
- Oct. 6, 4 to 7 p.m., DeSoto County Chancery Court, Hernando;
- Oct. 8, 4 to 7 p.m., Pontotoc County Courthouse, Pontotoc;
- Oct. 20, 4 to 8 p.m., Lee County Justice Center, Tupelo;
- Oct. 26, 4 to 8 p.m., Prentiss County Courthouse, Booneville;
- Nov. 12, 4 to 7 p.m., Tishomingo County Courthouse; Iuka;
- Nov. 30, 4 to 7 p.m., Monroe County Courthouse, Aberdeen;
- Dec. 16, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., Washington County Chancery Court, Greenville.

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