



"I think I would have given up if there wasn't the light that there was at the time that there was."

This issue of the Crowley Fleck PLLP Pro Bono Newsletter is dedicated to Callie Richey, who reminds us that it is our absolute honor to help others. When Callie became our client, she had just been diagnosed with stage 4 breast cancer, her home life was deteriorating, and she could not risk losing the health insurance she received through her husband. Despite her hardships, Callie was a proactive client and with her help, we were able to secure a favorable dissolution that kept her insured and reunited her with her beloved dogs for the remainder of her short but extraordinary life.



Every summer our law firm invites law students to experience what it is like to work in the legal profession. These law students remind us of the idealism that led many of us to law school in the first place.

I myself was inspired to go to law school by my grandmother. After raising four children as a single mother, she put herself through law school and went on to represent pro bono clients from her own home. When I was ten years old, she received a pro bono award from the State of California and I got to be there for it. From her, I know that above all else, community service is part of the privilege of practicing law.

That commitment to service is part of what drew me to Crowley Fleck in the first place. Cale Crowley always taught young attorneys that every client deserves our very best efforts.

Attorneys throughout our offices are creative and committed in finding multiple ways to make their pro bono work personal and meaningful. No newsletter can adequately address everyone here who has helped provide services to economically disadvantaged people, nonprofits, and our community. This newsletter highlights just a few matters selected from among the many pro bono efforts our attorneys have taken on.

Next year marks the firm's 125th anniversary. As we look at all of the ways the firm is growing, it is important to also note the expansion of our pro bono program. In 2018 alone, our firm provided nearly 8,000 hours of pro bono service. Join our campaign to reach 10,000 hours by 2020.

Benjamin T. Cory

Managing Partner

IN THIS ISSUE:

Updates:	Virtual Reality Project	Dalthorp Clerkship	Mediation Update	Law School Pro Bono Clinic
SPOTLIGHTS:	Asylum Efforts	Elder Law	Guarding K	Veterans Courts

Dalthorp Clerkship Enters its Eighth Summer



Joining us this summer as our eighth Dalthorp clerk is Rob Belle from the University of Montana. The firm created the Dalthorp Public Interest Clerkship in honor and memory of George Carrol Dalthorp in 2012. The clerkship allows one student the opportunity to work exclusively on public interest and pro bono legal matters with the firm's pro bono program.

Rob moved to Montana from Wisconsin to serve in the Justice for Montanans AmeriCorps Program. In that role, he was exposed to a wide variety of legal and human problems, all of which were exacerbated by poverty. We are excited to have Rob join our program for the summer.

VIRTUAL REALITY COMES ALIVE AT CROWLEY FLECK

Billings partner Bruce Fain remembers when the practice of law started at a typewriter. But even for him, the dividing line between reality and virtual reality is getting blurry in some creative ways. With the assistance of virtual reality goggles, Crowley Fleck attorneys can stand in the middle of a courtroom, sit at a witness chair, or peer over a judge's bench to get the feel of a courtroom—all from their own office chair.



Last fall, Billings associate Pamela Garman jumpstarted a firmwide virtual reality project. Using a 360-degree camera, she captured the courtrooms in Yellowstone and Lewis and Clark counties. Floorplans of those courtrooms have been drafted with links to various viewpoints. Recently, we connected a Bozeman attorney to a Helena courtroom she had never seen before. She plans to use the video footage to help prepare her client for a contested hearing.

As a member of American Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division Legal Innovation Team, Pam recognizes this program has the potential to enhance firmwide engagement in pro bono representation. One obstacle to pro bono work is that it often requires attorneys to diverge from their normal practice areas.

Modeling after a program initiated by the Maryland Bar Young Lawyers Division, Pam's next step is to create a series of training videos to simulate a variety of hearings in actual courtrooms. Judges in Yellowstone County have already committed to "acting" for training videos on order of protection, guardianship, adoption, and parenting plan matters. We expect to start rolling those out by early summer.

This program goes beyond providing firm attorneys the opportunity to preview, hear and see courtrooms prior to court appearances. For our local communities, this virtual reality model has the potential to introduce pro se litigants, vulnerable witnesses and victims, and the judiciary itself to the courtroom and standard court proceedings.

For all of us, the times of the typewriter are long gone.

FAMILY LAW MEDIATION PROJECTS

The firm's Family Law Mediation Project was created to help children by helping parents communicate about parenting after a family break up. It is well known that the number one indicator of how children will do after divorce is the level of conflict within their homes.

In 2018, our attorneys conducted 17 mediations in Billings and 4 mediations in Helena, with settlement in 14 of those matters. One might be tempted to call that a "success rate" of 67% but it is more than that. In the words of Art Lusse—cofounder of the Community Dispute Resolution Center, "Any mediation held is a success, because you have helped the parents actually talk and listen to each other."



Our pro bono practice group is targeting 10,000 pro bono hours as part of our "10x20" campaign, meaning 10,000 pro bono hours by 2020.



SPOTLIGHT: GUARDIAN AD LITEM

In 2018, our firm continued to provide substantial pro bono representation as guardians ad litem—court-appointed advocates who investigate what parenting solutions would be in the best interests of the child. When the court asked Crowley Fleck to be guardian ad litem for K after she filed for emancipation as a homeless 16-year-old in 2017, a much more important relationship was forged. K’s guardian became a mentor, advisor, and even a surrogate parent. The relationship evolved as K showed herself to be a strong, motivated kid. When K acquired a place in the Tumbleweed Hopelink transitional home, her guardian helped rescue her personal items from her last temporary living place and moved her. Then when K had Individual Education Plan meetings at school, her guardian attended those, along with school programs and presentations. K showed an inspiring motivation to succeed in life—staying in school, staying employed, getting a car, and still being there for her younger sister—all while still a kid herself. K is now 18 and looking forward to graduation, but she still checks in with her former guardian ad litem, to talk about setbacks and the good things too.

SPOTLIGHT: ELDER LAW



In 2015, an elderly couple found themselves in a dire financial situation, living off the income from a reverse mortgage they took out on their home. When they received a mailer from a realtor purporting to be able to help them protect their assets, they thought their prayers had been answered. The couple signed documents not understanding that they were conveying their property by warranty deed to the realtor. After they received a three-day eviction notice in 2018 for failure to pay rent, they were at a loss to understand what happened to them. With no place to stay, no family, and no money, they had no means to develop a plan more sophisticated than wandering the streets with their horse and a few personal belongings.

Their heart-wrenching story made its way to our Kalispell attorneys who discovered the couple was not entitled to be paid any interest or principle under the terms of the promissory note they were given until 2025—at which point they would be 91 and 95 years old. Firm litigators and transactional attorneys ultimately contributed more than 500 pro bono hours to protect the couple’s interests. For now, the couple remain in their home. A jury trial is currently scheduled for July 2019.

SPOTLIGHT: ASYLUM



Andrew Cziok

Although Crowley Fleck’s pro bono program mostly focuses on our own communities, our work encompasses global issues for people seeking security locally. Currently, attorneys in our Helena office are working on an asylum case for a Rwandan woman whose father disappeared after being detained by government forces during the immediate aftermath of the Rwandan genocide. Years later, when she tried to find out what happened to her father, she was detained and tortured. She fled to the United States and has been waiting five years for an asylum hearing, which will finally be held this fall.

PARTNERING WITH THE LAW SCHOOL

Recognizing we cannot help everyone, our involvement in programs that simplify access to justice remain an important part of our overall responsibility. In 2019, the firm will be working with the Alexander Blewett III School of Law’s Pro Bono Clinic, assisting law school students to research and gather order of protection forms from each of Montana’s counties and then create a centralized databank for easy online access to those forms. They will also be gathering specific community information regarding resources and court accessibility.

THE PRO BONO SERVICE COMMITMENT

In 2018, the firm donated **7910** hours to pro bono matters, plus other work for public interest organizations.

56 partners, **41** associates, **16** of counsel, and **23** legal interns and paralegals provided pro bono services to clients last year alone.

MISSOULA VETERANS COURT



Jeff Kuchel

Veterans treatment courts have existed in Montana since 2011 when Standing Master Brenda Desmond spearheaded a court in Missoula County. These veterans courts strive to increase public safety by serving veterans with serious mental and substance abuse disorders who enter the criminal justice system. An essential component of these treatment courts is the mentorship they offer. Veteran mentors act as peer support to veteran participants and increase participants success.

Veteran and associate Jeff Kuchel has been an active participant in Missoula’s court, offering mentorship and contract review services. His latest task: to establish the mentors themselves as a non-profit organization to be called *Friends of the Veterans’ Court*. Once incorporated, this nonprofit will raise additional funds for the mentorship aspects of the program, including incentives for the participants.

Honor Roll

To meet the program's objective of providing legal assistance to indigent or near indigent members of our communities and the non-profit organizations that assist them, the firm grants billable credit for up to 50 hours of pro bono work per attorney per year. But in 2018 that did not stop some of our attorneys from doing more:



18 attorneys donated more than **50**

9 attorneys donated more than **100**

7 attorneys donated more than **200**

hours of pro bono service in 2018.



Alissa Chambers



Gary Connelley



Morgan Dake

Crowley Fleck PLLP has been quietly making noise since 1996 when it formally established an in-house pro bono program and retained a full-time pro bono attorney, Gary Connelley.

In 2018, Helena partner Alissa Chambers joined the pro bono program as the pro bono coordinator—dedicating a portion of her yearly hours to the program, and in 2019, Morgan Dake joined the law firm as a full-time pro bono associate in Billings.

We are now very excited to be working in collaboration with the firm's attorneys towards improving and expanding our program, with a goal to achieve 10,000 hours of pro bono service firmwide by 2020.

Please contact our pro bono practice group to learn more about our program at probono@crowleyfleck.com.