



### Crowley Fleck Pro Bono Program Celebrates 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Crowley Fleck pro bono program. The firm’s commitment to pro bono legal service dates to the firm’s founding in 1895. In 1952, as president-elect of the ABA, firm partner William J. Jameson organized the Northwest Regional Meeting of the ABA in Yellowstone Park, prominently featuring pro bono publico programs directed toward the ABA membership. In 1995, the ABA adopted a resolution making “the expansion of pro bono legal services by practicing lawyers a critical priority.” The firm answered the ABA’s call. It established its pro bono program in 1996 and hired Gary Connelley. The partnership charged Gary not just to provide pro bono legal services but to expand the firm’s pro bono service by mentoring firm lawyers in demanding areas of practice, including child abuse and neglect, indigent domestic relations, adoptions, low income housing, public benefits, and elder law. Since that time, Gary has mentored more firm lawyers than anyone in the firm’s history. And most of us would tell you that our most satisfying professional service was handling a pro bono matter under Gary’s mentorship.

Collectively, the firm has contributed many tens of thousands of hours for the public good under Gary’s tutelage. Over the course of the last three years the firm expanded its pro bono program to include the formation of a dedicated pro bono practice group under the co-leadership of Gary and Alissa Chambers (a partner in the firm’s Helena office) and with representatives in each of the firm’s eleven offices across Montana, Wyoming and North Dakota. In 2019, the firm broadened its pro bono services by hiring Morgan Dake as an additional full-time pro bono attorney within the program. Through the expansion of the program, the firm has not only solidified the vision and goals for the first 25 years of the Crowley Fleck pro bono program, but has also ensured that the firm’s commitment to and Gary’s vision of pro bono legal services will continue for years to come.

--Benjamin T. Cory, Managing Partner

### Report Card

The past year was one of upheaval and tragedy. Despite the challenges and dark times, we saw that the spirit of *pro bono publico* – for the public good – burned brightly.

In 2020, at least 159 attorneys, paralegals, and interns worked on 260 cases, 103 of which were opened in 2020. Many of these matters involved organizations and vulnerable mothers, children, and families. We know that the volunteer efforts of our attorneys and pro bono staff have been impactful throughout the regional footprint we serve, with a total of 8,760.6 hours in 2020.

#### HOURS BY OFFICE

<b>Billings</b>	2282	<b>Helena</b>	732.1
<b>Bismarck</b>	457.2	<b>Kalispell</b>	180.4
<b>Bozeman</b>	483.6	<b>Missoula</b>	546.4
<b>Butte</b>	1.2	<b>Sheridan</b>	231.1
<b>Casper</b>	20.6	<b>Williston</b>	228
<b>Cheyenne</b>	65.4	<b>Program</b>	3532

Firmwide, 75% of attorneys contributed time. That number was slightly higher—85%—for associates. Our Sheridan office had 100% participation. Contributions ranged from a few hours of pro bono legal research to hundreds of hours of direct representation in contested matters.

The great jurist Learned Hand once declared, “If we are to keep our democracy, there must be one commandment: Thou shalt not ration justice.” With a common commitment to the public good, the firm’s pro bono efforts ensure justice is not rationed.

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## Dalthorp Clerkship: 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Each summer, Crowley Fleck's Dalthorp clerkship offers one law student the opportunity to work in our pro bono program. As the clerkship enters its 10<sup>th</sup> year, I am reminded of the phenomenal experience I had as the clerkship's second intern. I got hands-on experience working with clients, attending court, and managing cases. Ultimately, it was that experience that brought me to the firm.

The cases I worked on that summer have been some of my most memorable—they shaped my view of the firm and taught me the importance of taking on pro bono cases whenever possible. In one case, I was able to help a woman understand parenting plan documents and file a response in court. She was illiterate, living in a shelter, and would not have been able to understand the proceedings without someone to walk her through the process.

The clerkship provides interns direct court experience and, more importantly, exposes them to the scope of poverty law issues impacting our communities. The Dalthorp clerkship has a ripple effect on our community as it simultaneously trains new lawyers to be advocates and reaffirms Crowley Fleck's dedication to helping the communities we serve.

--Pamela Garman

Pam is a partner in our Billings office.



Joining us this summer as our tenth Dalthorp clerk is Kaia Keefe-Oates from the University of Montana. Kaia has called Missoula home for the last decade. She began working for non-profits as a college student, continued in the non-profit sector after graduation, and now volunteers for non-profits as a law student. As a lawyer, Kaia hopes to continue to work public sector advocating for mothers and children.

## Building your practice through pro bono



Becoming a newly minted attorney at the age of forty-one left me with an overwhelming sense of urgency to develop real world

lawyering skills to close the obvious experience gap between myself and those colleagues having an equal number of gray hairs. Taking on pro bono work seemed to present a proactive opportunity to work towards this goal. It was with this intention that I accepted work from Montana Legal Services in the fall of my rookie year at Crowley Fleck. Little did I know at the time, the case work I took on would offer far more valuable insights into the legal profession than just the practical skills I was aiming to gain.

It is important to note, however, that my original intention was also accomplished. Representing my pro bono clients placed me directly in the

driver seat. I gained critical experience with regards to general case management, and client and opposing counsel contact and correspondence. I planned for and prepared court filings to meet deadlines. I prepared for hearings and mediations. I developed practical skills too numerous to mention.

Many of these opportunities did not present themselves in my other cases until many months further down the road. Some, such as appearing in court and cross examining an opposing party under oath, have yet to present themselves again. For the practical experience alone, I encourage young associates to seek out pro bono work. It presents a high probability of developing legal skills that may seem months or even years down the road in their current trajectory.

Beyond the practical value that pro bono work had in my professional

development, representing pro bono clients also provided an extraordinary opportunity to view and understand our legal system from the unique perspective of the less fortunate. Those that are often under served, forgotten, or just plain run over by our judicial system because they do not have access to competent legal representation.

This understanding highlighted the critical importance pro bono work plays in the proper functioning of our legal system. It reinforced why continued commitment to taking on pro bono matters remains important as I move beyond the freshman jitters. In the end, nothing can overshadow the sincere and heartfelt gratitude my pro bono client has for Crowley Fleck's commitment to providing pro bono legal services for those in need.

--Peter Taylor

Peter is an associate in our Bozeman office.



## SPOTLIGHT: YWCA Housing Unit Lease

Heidi Goettel worked with Jen Gursky, the executive director of YWCA of Helena, on a pro bono basis to analyze and review the complicated regulatory regime governing the YWCA residential housing unit leases. Heidi analyzed the relevant regulations and engaged in facilitative negotiation with county, state, and federal regulators. Through those efforts, Heidi was able to assist YWCA to secure permission from the regulators to amend their leases in such a way as to increase their capacity to house domestic violence survivors and their children by 50%. It also allowed YWCA to maintain flexibility and seek additional opportunities for funding. For more information on the services that YWCA offers, including domestic violence services, see <https://www.ywcahelena.org/services>.



## SPOTLIGHT: Litigation Helps Senior

Jared Le Fevre took on the representation of an 86-year old woman whose vehicle was struck by an inattentive commercial truck driver who was driving without a license. Our client did not have money to fix her car, was unable to reach the responsible insurance company, and was essentially stranded. After the insurance company failed to respond to a demand letter, Jared, a tax lawyer, filed a lawsuit for damages. The matter settled favorably for our client, in no short order thanks to paralegal Tamara Melia-Woodward (a regular pro bono ally) who tracked down the defendant out of state and had him served with the lawsuit.



## SPOTLIGHT: Protection for Children

Jacob Rebo and Morgan Dake represented a young mother caught in a parenting dispute with an abusive ex-partner who was the father of her child. When the father was released from prison early, he pursued parenting of the child, who was a witness to the abuse. The firm was successful in obtaining a long-term order of protection for our client. The judge also permanently limited the father’s parenting time to supervised visits through a parenting agency.

## UPDATE: *Suda and Hernandez v. U.S. Customs and Border Protection*

Last year, two women were illegally detained in Havre, Montana by a border patrol agent for speaking Spanish. Kalispell partner Danielle Coffman joined four ACLU attorneys to bring suit, citing a violation of the Fourth Amendment because there was no legitimate reason to seize them, and a violation of equal protection because they were racially profiled for speaking Spanish. The case, brought before the U.S. District Court in Great Falls, was settled favorably for the clients this year. The firm is proud of Danielle’s willingness to take on this fight. As a longtime member of the ACLU, she has proven her commitment to ensuring that the ACLU benefits all Americans.



## Family Law Mediation Project

Crowley Fleck’s pro bono family law mediation project was created to help children by helping parents communicate about parenting after a family break up. In 2020, our mediators handled 20 family law mediations.

Mary Ann Morehead, who worked as Crowley Flecks’s legal nurse consultant before retirement, did her first mediation with our pro bono family law mediation project on April 1, 2016. She continues to volunteer with the project and by February 10, 2021, she conducted 54 mediations. If you ask Mary Ann, she will tell you that she continues to do mediations because she wholeheartedly believes that the population of children that we serve in the pro bono mediation project are better off with a parenting plan than without. It is the children who are adversely affected by the “love” of their parents whose conflict over parenting places them at tremendously greater risk for a multitude of problems. When we, as mediators, are able to facilitate discussion between the parents that results in a parenting plan, at least in theory, the parental conflict is mitigated; thus, improving outcomes for the children. And Mary Ann will tell you that “life simply doesn’t get any better than making life better for a child.”



## Impactful Intakes

In 2020, pro bono program legal assistant Liisa Johnson—with the help of others—screened more than 400 requests for pro bono assistance. We are proud of her contribution to the firm and to our communities. Liisa never leaves a caller feeling unheard and works hard to refer people to the best community resources. We are appreciative of her patient ear and are not able to say it any better than a recent caller who told her, “Thank you. You have blessed me so much.”

To support our growing number of referrals, our pro bono application is now on our website. It can be faxed, emailed, or mailed to our pro bono program.

<b>How did you hear about our program?</b>		
<input type="checkbox"/> Online	<input type="checkbox"/> APS or other elder abuse agency	
<input type="checkbox"/> Legal Services	<input type="checkbox"/> Self Help Law Center	
<input type="checkbox"/> Court Staff	<input type="checkbox"/> Other attorney or law firm	
<input type="checkbox"/> AWARE, STEP or other disability agency	<input type="checkbox"/> Former client of Crowley	
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____		
<b>What type of problem do you need help with? (check all that apply)</b>		
Please Note: We do NOT take the following types of cases: Criminal, CPS defense, civil lawsuits like medical malpractice or personal injury, help with collections, or bankruptcy.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Custody/Parenting	<input type="checkbox"/> Elder Abuse	<input type="checkbox"/> Landlord/tenant issues
<input type="checkbox"/> Divorce	<input type="checkbox"/> Guardianship	<input type="checkbox"/> Will/Estates
<input type="checkbox"/> Order of Protection	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
<b>Applicant Information:</b>		
First name: _____	Middle: _____	Last: _____
Other names you have gone by: _____		
Year of birth: _____		

See: <https://crowleyfleck.com/practice-areas/pro-bono>

## Pro Bono Newsletter • Spring 2021

CROWLEY FLECK ATTORNEYS CELEBRATING 125 YEARS 1895-2020

### Some of our favorite clients are our smallest



In 2020, Crowley attorneys opened more than 65 pro bono matters that directly impacted children, by representing parents in need of parenting plans, mediating family law matters, establishing legal guardianships, and finalizing adoptions. Additionally, our attorneys were also called upon by judges to serve as guardians ad litem for children in our communities.



Please contact our pro bono practice group to learn more about our program at [probono@crowleyfleck.com](mailto:probono@crowleyfleck.com).