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Grants fund good works of legal organizations



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MJF grants to fund consumer protection program, rural lawyer incubator, Indian Country legal clinics

Montana Justice Foundation has awarded a total of \$325,000 over a two-year period to fund three programs through its 2018 Bank of America Grants.

The projects include a consumer protection program, an attorney incubator project for recent law school graduates serving low- and moderate-income clients in rural areas, and a series of legal clinics in Indian country.

Montana Justice Foundation's Bank of America Grant Program is funded by a national mortgage-related settlement agreement between Bank of America and the U.S. Department of Justice. The settlement agreement and donation terms require Montana Justice Foundation to distribute these funds to legal aid organizations for the purpose of foreclosure prevention, legal assistance, or community redevelopment legal assistance.

"Montana Justice Foundation is proud to support organizations providing legal aid for community redevelopment and foreclosure prevention, especially in some of Montana's most high-need areas," said Executive Director Niki Zupanic. "We sought to fund creative projects that will have a far-ranging and lasting impact on the communities served, and these programs delivered."

Montana Legal Services Association was an early recipient of grant funding from the first installment of the settlement award. In 2015, with the help of a Montana Justice Foundation Bank



of America Grant, MLSA launched its Consumer Protection Project. This year's grant awards continue that project.

MLSA's Consumer Protection Project has helped low-income consumers achieve financial stability by resolving matters involving unlawful garnishment or attachment, credit discrimination, bankruptcy, and Fair Debt Collections Practices Act violations.

"Civil legal assistance for consumer matters keeps rightful income directly in low-income communities – helping to prevent future foreclosures and preparing a foundation for community redevelopment," MLSA Executive Director Alison Paul said of the program's impact.

MJF also awarded a grant to the University of Montana's Alexander Blewett III School of Law. Through its Margery Hunter Brown Indian Law Clinic, the law school will conduct a weeklong service trip for law students to provide pro bono or for-academic-credit work assistance with basic legal questions to residents on the Crow

Call for grant proposals

The Montana Justice Foundation is now accepting proposals for its 2018 grants program. The deadline for proposals is April 30. Please see page 13 for details.

and Northern Cheyenne reservations. Students will put their legal education and skills to work in service to tribal members who are often unable to obtain legal assistance.

One of the most promising and exciting proposals MJF received will create a Rural Incubator Project to provide training, support, and mentorship for new attorneys dedicated to providing modest means legal services in rural Montana. This is a collaborative program led and supported by Montana Legal Services Association, the Alexander Blewett III School of Law, the State Bar of Montana, Montana Supreme Court, and the Court's Access to Justice Commission. The Rural Incubator Project is based on several similar programs across the country and tailored to the specific needs of Montanans.

The Rural Incubator Project will

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Webinars, other notable CLE on schedule for March

■ Wednesday, March 7 -- Webinar: Mediation/Arbitration as a Full-Time Profession, presented by Jay Hunston. 1 live CLE credit.

■ Friday, March 16, Butte St. Paddy's Day CLE, 6.5 CLE credits (3.0 ethics). This seminar will explore two themes. In the morning, participants will learn how to protect their clients and from from cyber threats, while the afternoon session focuses on the basics of Montana's alcoholic beverage and gambling licensing and regulatory systems.

■ Friday, March 16, Billings: Veterans Discharge Upgrade free CLE. See page 8 for details.

■ Wednesday, March 21-- Webinar: Mind Body Connection: Ethical Considerations for its use in Mediation. Presented by Dr. Jamison Starbuck, who is a naturopathic family physician and an attorney. 1 live CLE credit.

■ Wednesday, March 21-- MLSA Webinar: Ethical Issues in Pro Bono Representation. Register for free: goo.gl/iwBv5K

■ Wednesday, March 21, Missoula Veterans Discharge Upgrade free CLE. See page 8 for details.

■ Thursday, March 22 -- Webinar: 2017 Legislative Changes: Medicaid Provider Audits & Active Supervision of Licensing Boards

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cultivate the next generation of rural legal practitioners to serve low-income and rural Montanans by training and supporting recent law school graduates in building their own sustainable solo and small practices dedicated to serving rural and under-served populations. The Rural Incubator Project will be a force multiplier throughout rural Montana communities by increasing the legal services available to low- and moderate-income Montanans in rural areas and encouraging sliding-scale services and limited-scope representation.

Montana Justice Foundation is proud to be among the first funders to support the Rural Incubator Project and is confident other funders will join in helping to launch this innovative program.

Montana Justice Foundation is a nonprofit charitable organization working to achieve equal access to justice through effective grant funding, promoting pro bono services, and developing more resources for low-income Montanans in need of legal assistance. Access to high-quality legal aid helps secure the overall health, well-being, and security of all Montanans. Attorneys interested in contributing or directing a *cy pres* award to Montana Justice Foundation may learn more at mtjustice.org.

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Newest title: "Initial Ownership of Copyright: Works Made for Hire and Joint Ownership," presented by the State Bar of Montana's Intellectual Property Law Section -- Speaker: Professor Scott Burnham (retired)

