

## ***Pro Se* Divorce Clinic Started in Franklin County, Fall 2006**

Bolstered by a grant from the Pennsylvania IOLTA Board, the Franklin County Bar Association launched a pro bono program in fall 2006 with a two-fold purpose — helping more low-income clients in domestic relations cases and enabling attorneys without a family law background to assist those clients.

The FCBA's new *pro se* divorce clinic kicked off in September with a one-credit CLE seminar for attorneys. Two clinics have been held so far, in November and January, with about a dozen clients registered for each. Another clinic is set for March.

Only low-income clients filing for simple divorces are eligible for the clinic. Clients are referred by the three civil legal aid agencies in the county, the locally organized and run Franklin County Legal Services which just celebrated its fifth anniversary, MidPenn Legal Services (the regional legal aid program that has a local office) and the Law Offices of WIN Victim Services. WIN (Women in Need) Victim Services assists victims of domestic violence.

Clients must attend the clinic, conducted by a family law attorney, to receive the packet of forms for filing with the court as well as access to the volunteer attorney assigned to his or her case. The attorney provides guidance in completing the forms and on the filing procedures if needed.

Franklin County Legal Services administers the clinic on behalf of the bar association. Under the IOLTA grant, a staff member at FCLS works five hours a week on the clinic as the bar's new pro bono coordinator. The grant also funded creation and preparation of the forms and accompanying instructions.