Calling All Civ. Pro. Superheros!

By Barbara Engstrom, Executive Director

One of the first things that struck me when I started working with *pro se* litigants at KCLL was that many folks were operating in a vacuum with no real sense of the how the litigation process works or why. It occurred to me that *pro s*es could really use an introductory civil procedure class. To that end, the law library joined forces with fabulous volunteer attorney **Jeff Cowan** in 2018 to create the class, **Civil Litigation without Tears: The Basics of Representing Yourself in Court**. While the class might be more accurately called Civil Litigation with Fewer Tears, it was a 90-minute dive into the court rules, deadlines, and procedures that *pro ses* are most likely to encounter.

The class was a huge hit right from the start. After taking the Basics class, attendees were clamoring for other classes. I knew we were on to something if people sat through 90 minutes of civ pro and wanted more! Jeff and KCLL developed a series of 4 additional 60-minute Advanced classes including: **The Nuts and Bolts of Motions**, **Discover Discovery**, **Examining Evidence**, and **Preparing for Trial: The Basics of Getting Ready for Court**.

The **SRL Workshop Series** as we began calling it, won the inaugural **Community Engagement Award** from the **American Association of Law Libraries.** The classes were taught in-person in partnership with Seattle Public Library and King County Library System branches. Unfortunately, COVID hit and the workshops went on hiatus.

Rebooting the SRL Workshop Series – Calling All Civ. Pro. Superheros!

Several people have asked about the SRL Workshop Series lately and whether we have any plans to revive it. Alas, Jeff has moved to sunnier climes, and we are now looking for volunteer attorneys to teach the workshops. Are you **faster than the response to a summons, more powerful than a well-drafted motion, able to leap through Local Rules in a single bound?** It's a bird, it's a plane, it's a …. **Civ. Pro. Superhero!** Don your cape and come join KCLL in presenting these fun and informative workshops.

While in the past we taught the classes exclusively in-person, we've been finding that we get a lot of engagement with our *pro se* patrons in our webinars. Depending on the instructor's preference, the class can be taught in-person, on-line, or hybrid. Your choice.

Class-in-a-Box – Little to No Prep Required

A considerable amount of time has been expended creating lectures and materials tailored to each of the classes. Every workshop was designed with a prepared lecture, accompanying PowerPoint, and handout packet including templates of relevant forms. Each is essentially a class-in-a-box, ready to plug and play. That said, volunteer attorney instructors who want to customize any of their classes are welcome to do so and can work with KCLL's staff to design their own templates and materials.

To give you an idea of what this could look like, the **Preparing for Trial** class has a prepared lecture notated to work with an accompanying PowerPoint. The slide deck offers visual references to the issues being discussed. In the Preparing for Trial class, this includes things like LCR 4, Witness List forms, sample pattern jury instructions, and a template for a trial brief among others.

In addition to the lecture and PowerPoint, handouts were created for this class and include forms specifically tailored to be easily understood and used by *pro ses*. For example, the fill-in-able trial brief form has enumerated sections such as Statement of Issues, Statement of Facts, Legal Authority, and Argument to help *pro ses* understand the purpose and structure of a trial brief.

Video Reinforcement

While we do strive to make the workshop content accessible for non-attorneys, we understand that the litigation process is inherently complex. To that end, we created short videos to help reinforce what was taught in the classes. As we reboot the SRL Workshop Series, we'll begin updating the videos. To get a sense of what the videos do, I suggest checking out the series discussing the **Nuts and Bolts of Motions**. https://kcll.org/videos/?tx_post_tag=motions-basics

Be Part of the Solution

It is our hope that the workshops will have the immediate benefit of enabling more effective use of attorney services at limited legal advice clinics across King County. With better prepared patrons, the clinic attorneys can spend more time on substantive issues and will be able to more easily explain procedural issues. Particularly as they can refer clinic patrons to the video content and to the workshops themselves.

We also hope that the workshops will have the long-term benefit of better prepared submissions to the court, which will reduce the amount of time that district and superior court clerks spend trying to explain proper format and procedures. Additionally, we hope that workshop attendees will also be better prepared for their hearings, easing the burden on judges, bailiffs, and court staff. Ultimately, we want to provide SRLs a better chance at a successful outcome.

To make this SRL Workshop Reboot a success, we'll need a dedicated cohort of attorney instructors to facilitate classes to be taught on a regular basis. Please consider donning cape and joining the good fight!

Learn More About Becoming a Civ. Pro Superhero!

If you have questions or want to find out more about the SRL Workshop Series, contact the law library at services@kcll.org. To learn more about all the resources and services the King County Law Library offers visit us at https://kcll.org/.