

## **Many Self-Represented Litigants Resolved Cases Quickly at Peter Johnstone Day**

Thirty-six family court cases were fully resolved during the Second Judicial District Court's recent Peter H. Johnstone Pro Se/Pro Bono Mediation Day.

That number represents 75% of the total cases considered that day. The parties reached partial settlements in five additional cases, pushing the event's overall success rate to 85%.

The Second District Court hosts Peter Johnstone day each year to offer self-represented litigants a chance to work through family law issues free of charge with a mediator's assistance. Peter H. Johnstone, a family law attorney in Albuquerque, was one of the early organizers, and the event was named in his honor following his death in 2013.

There are two requirements for parties wishing to participate in a Peter H. Johnstone Pro Se/Pro Bono Mediation event:

- Neither party can be represented by an attorney
- Cases must be referred by the Family Court.

This year, the court referred 48 cases. Seventy-one attorneys and 16 University of New Mexico law students volunteered to mediate the cases.

"Peter H. Johnstone Day is a win-win for everyone involved," said Aja Brooks, director of the Second District Court's Center for Self-Help and Dispute Resolution. "The parties receive free facilitation services from top-notch attorneys, and by the end of the day, most reach some sort of agreement with regards to their family law issue. The attorneys get the satisfaction of giving back; most of them joined the practice of law to help people, and that is exactly what they get to do on Peter Johnstone Day."