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## THE EX-PO SEPARATES FACT FROM FICTION ABOUT DIVORCE

### **Pro Se University, Experts to Answer Questions About Legal, Financial, Emotional Issues Surrounding End of Marriage**

*Seattle, Washington- August 2, 2010* - It starts with rings, vows and promises of love everlasting. But many marriages don't survive such happy beginnings, so divorce may be the only option. Yet both men and women have misconceptions about what is often a difficult journey to ending a marital union, and a challenging economy has only added more obstacles along that path.

On Sept. 26th, Puget Sound residents will get help dealing with these issues. Pro Se University is sponsoring the Ex-Po - a one-day seminar with a panel of experts giving custom advice on a wide range of topics for those considering divorce or those who have already begun the lengthy process of dissolving a marriage.

Marie White is CEO and Founder of Seattle-based Pro Se University, which offers workshops and services for those who must represent themselves in court because they can't afford an attorney ("Pro Se" means "for oneself" in Latin.) She came up with the idea of the Ex-Po to assist residents in confronting the realities of divorce.

"I've noticed in meetings with pro se parties that they often do not understand the broad implications of their divorce decisions," White said. "They also don't know what choices they have for legal representation, the costs involved, and what the process is like. They do not have a good understanding of what is involved in getting from 'I want a divorce' to 'I'm divorced.'"

The recent recession has also had an impact on key decisions involving divorce, White said. "Full representation in a divorce is very expensive, and people who no longer have access to credit cards, 401K plans, home equity, or the 'Bank of Dad' will often no longer be able to afford full legal services as they once could. Therefore, they will often be on their own to finish their divorce."

Joining White on the Ex-Po Panel are:

\* *Stephen Gaddis of Stephen Gaddis Mediation and Arbitration Services.* Gaddis, a graduate of the University of Washington School of Law, spent more than 25 years as a King County court commissioner and superior court judge. He has taught Family Law at the Washington State Judicial College and has published several articles in legal journals. He established the Northwest Mediation Service in 1977 and has been a co-instructor at the Seattle University School of Law.

\* *Bunny Parker and Karen Hoffbuhr, Keller Williams Real Estate Team2Use.* Realtors Parker and Hoffbuhr have worked together since joining Keller Williams in 2003. The lifelong West Seattle residents will offer advice and strategies for selling real estate in a challenging market, including information about "short sales" and the latest statistics

about home sales in the Seattle area.

\* *Caroline D. Davis, Family Law CASA of King County.* Davis is the executive director of the non-profit Family Law Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) organization, which screens, trains, supervises and supports community volunteers who are appointed to investigate custody and visitation disputes so they can give children a voice in court. A past president of the King County Bar Association who has practiced in Washington since 1979, Davis previously operated a family law practice and has trained and worked as a mediator.

White founded Seattle-based Pro Se University in 2009 after a 19-year career as a practicing attorney specializing in family law. She noticed an increase in those who were forced to represent themselves in court because of financial hardships. Those people often found themselves lost in a maze of legal language, paperwork and deadlines. Any mistakes in that process can have a long-term impact on child custody/parental rights and division of community property.

What are the biggest misconceptions surrounding divorce? "That it will be easy, and that their life will not change as much as it will," White said. "Women often believe they will receive more maintenance than the court is likely to award. Men often believe that they shouldn't have to pay alimony and that everything should be divided equally, even if their spouse hasn't worked for many years."

When it comes to child custody issues, women think they'll have the same level of control of their children's schedules and lives after a divorce, and that often isn't the case. Men can be surprised with how difficult raising a child on their own can be, White added.

"Women often wrongly believe that they can withhold visitation if the father fails to pay child support. Men are often surprised by the amount of child support they are required to pay," White said.

The Ex-Po begins at 2 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 26th, at Statements Tile, 6140 6th Ave. South, Seattle, WA 98108. Early Bird admission is \$18. Tickets purchases and more information about the event can be found at [www.TheEx-po.com](http://www.TheEx-po.com).

### **About Pro Se University**

Pro Se University's staff offers 29 combined years of experience in the King County court system as it guides clients representing themselves through the family law process in an affordable and easy-to-understand way. Pro Se offers workshops on how to represent yourself in court on matters like divorce, child support, parenting plans, family law ex parte motions such as restraining and protection orders, paternity actions, custody cases and legal separation. Pro Se University can also set up attorney appointments and offers a family law form bank and deadline reminder service.

For more information on Pro Se University, call 1-877-776-7310 or go to [www.proseuniversity.com](http://www.proseuniversity.com).

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