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A small 'thank you' to heroes

Free clinic offers wills and proxies

By Shelly Whitehead
Post staff reporter

Cincinnati paralegal Cathy Hutton felt obligated to do something for emergency responders after the 2001 terrorist attacks.

Problem was, she couldn't imagine what a legal professional, like herself, could do to help those who risk their lives on the job every day.

Then it clicked.

Danger is a fact of life for firefighters and cops, so it's absolutely essential that they have rock-solid wills and health care proxies. And with that, the Cincinnati Paralegal Association's Wills for Heroes program was born.

Since its inception about two years ago, the program has provided free wills, living wills and health-care proxies to about 250

Northern Kentucky police and firefighters.

Hutton, the Cincinnati Paralegal Association's pro bono committee chair, said the program involves dozens of attorneys and paralegals who volunteer their time at scheduled, day-long clinics where local police and firefighters can obtain such legal documents at no cost.

"We have 25 volunteers for each clinic and thus far, we have provided legal documents to firefighters from Newport, Wilder, Dayton, Boone county and ... and also the Boone County Sheriff's Department," she said.

The next clinic will take place July 16 at the Covington Police Department, where officers will meet with volunteer paralegals and attorneys to draft, finalize and notarize wills, living wills and health-care proxies. It takes about two hours to develop a set of such documents for an individual. Such services would likely cost at least \$750 outside of the free clinic, she said.

Program details

► For more information about the Cincinnati Wills for Heroes program, call Cathy Hutton at (513) 455-7673.

Boone County Sheriff's Department Deputy Tom Scheben took advantage of a clinic in August to revise his will and create a living will and health-care proxy.

"The neat part of it is that, No. 1, it's free. But also, it's that they're taking the time," Scheben said.

"And it's not like a lot of pro bono services, in that you may get some type of abbreviated service. This was a full-blown service designed for the individual who was sitting in front of the attorney or paralegal." He praised the professionals who put on the workshops.

"These people took their personal time on a weekend for us," he said. "So, who's

the real hero?"

Hutton said Affordable Upgrades Inc. in Ludlow provides 15 laptop computers for each clinic, while Ikon Office Solutions, in Blue Ash, Ohio, provides a printer and copier for the day. The clinics have been popular, Hutton said.

In fact, demand for clinics from Northern Kentucky departments has been so high, volunteers have not been able to take the service to Ohio yet. However, later this year she said programs are planned in Green Township and Norwood.

Hutton said the local Wills for Heroes program was independently developed. A similar program by the same name was initiated in Columbia, S.C., following the 2001 terrorists attacks.

Columbia attorney Anthony Hayes started the free estate-planning service there after he learned that many of the firefighters and police officers who died during the terrorist attacks on the U.S. had no wills.