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Emergency responders get free estate help

By **Matthew K. Jensen**

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Local attorneys donated time and services pro bono Friday, crafting dozens of wills and legal documents for valley police, fire and emergency personnel through a national program.

The Wills for Heroes Foundation was created by two young lawyers who wanted to help the families of victims following the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Most of the 403 first responders at the World Trade Center did not have a will.

Today the program is active throughout the country and operates in Utah through the Young Lawyers Division of the Utah State Bar, said YLD spokesperson Stephanie Pugsley.

Lawyers volunteered their time at the event to help first responders draft three documents — a last will and testament, advance health care directive and durable power of attorney.

By 5 p.m., 120 people had documents in hand.

Local attorney and Utah Bar executive Herm Olsen called the Wills for Heroes program a great opportunity both for legal professionals and those receiving the help.

"As a bar association, this is a great way for us to contribute to those who really put their lives on the line for us," he said.

Olsen, like many of the lawyers involved, is not an estate attorney. But with the help of the YLD and a sophisticated software program called HotDocs, lawyers of all backgrounds can come together to serve the men and women who work a sometimes risky profession.

"These people know that death is a real possibility — maybe sooner than other professions. It's a little



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hard for people to think about this but it's far better to suffer a momentary discomfort than to ignore the problem and leave a mess," Olsen added.

Police officers, firefighters and first responders showed up Friday with a pre-filled questionnaire about their children, real estate and beneficiaries — information lawyers then entered into computers.

"It's a good opportunity for us to do something we probably wouldn't have done otherwise," said Logan Assistant Fire Chief Brady Hansen. "Hopefully nothing bad ever happens, but provided it does, we have this done."

After just 45 minutes with a lawyer, those lucky enough to have signed up early had a packet of legally notarized documents that could cost up to \$1,000 to draft in a private setting.

Organizers stressed privacy was a big concern and told participants their information would be erased after printing their wills.

The YLD says it plans to return to Cache County in the future to help those who missed the first round.

Three Wills for Heroes events have been completed in Utah during 2008.

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