

Foundation's will-ing to help

Utah Bar prepares 100-plus wills at no cost to first responders

By **Lindsay Whitehurst**
The Salt Lake Tribune
Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated: 05/03/2008 01:34:26 AM MDT

The fragility of life as a police officer hit home for Randy Mansfield after he was shot in the line of duty 12 years ago.

"You think a lot about your mortality," said Mansfield, now an officer with the Utah Transit Authority.

Even so, he did not immediately draw up a will. Like many police officers and firefighters, he couldn't afford the \$500 to \$1,000 price tag.

On Friday, the Utah Bar Association's Young Lawyers Division prepared more than 100 first responders' wills for free at the UTA office building.

Nearly 90 percent of police officers, firefighters and paramedics don't have wills, organizers said, and cost isn't the only reason.

"It's like tempting fate," said 23-year-old Melanie Simpson, whose husband is a UTA police officer.

Over the past year, Erik Simpson has broken up several fights involving weapons and seized many more.

"My No. 1 thing is to make sure my family is taken care of," he said, 2-year-old daughter Mckenzie in his lap.

The event was inspired by the Wills for Heroes Foundation, started after hundreds of police and firefighters died with no wills in the Sept. 11 attacks.

About 100 lawyers prepared basic wills spelling out guardians for children, recipients for property, power of attorney and power of health care.

When people die without a will, state law dictates the fate of their children and possessions. "It's the best way to make sure what you want happens," estate planning lawyer Laurie Hart said. "I run into a lot of people who have stepchildren and want them to get something."

Sitting before a lawyer preparing her will on a laptop computer, Salt Lake County sheriff's Deputy Rocio Moderno thought of her four children.

"I'm their primary provider of food and shelter," Moderno, 37, said. "It's a big responsibility, and I want the right person to be around them."

The Young Lawyers Division will hold at least two more will-preparation days, one at Logan in July and at Provo in September. Appointments are required; visit utahbar.org and click on the Wills for Heroes logo for more information.

lwhitehurst@sltrib.com

Close Window

Send To Printer