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Free wills, legal help for first responders

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ERIC VELASCO
News staff writer

Firefighters and other first responders can get free legal help drafting wills and related documents this week under a program by the Alabama State Bar called "Wills for Heroes."

Clinics are set Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at the Five Points West Fitness Center, 4712 Ave. W.

Tuesday's session will be 1-5 p.m. Wednesday's and Thursday's sessions are set for 8:30 a.m.-noon, and 1-5 p.m., according to a release from the state bar.

Patterned after a program that started in South Carolina, bar members will provide the free legal assistance to firefighters, law enforcement officers and emergency medical personnel.

In addition to simple wills, the lawyers also can help draft advance health care directives and powers of attorney.

"We are recognizing the extraordinary sacrifices that first responders make for the community every day," Birmingham lawyer Anthony A. Joseph, a member of the bar board of commissioners, said in a statement. "They are the real heroes."

The "Wills for Heroes" program is coordinated by the bar's Volunteer Lawyers Program. Participating lawyers may not solicit business while working on the project.

Similar programs in other states have shown that many of the first-response personnel are ages 25-35, with no will or directives about their treatment preferences if they are incapacitated.

Participants in the clinic should bring family information (spouse, children, grandchildren, other descendants, parents and former spouses); financial records such as bank accounts, retirement plans, IRAs; business and real estate information; and debt information such as loans or mortgages.

E-mail: evelasco@bhamnews.com

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