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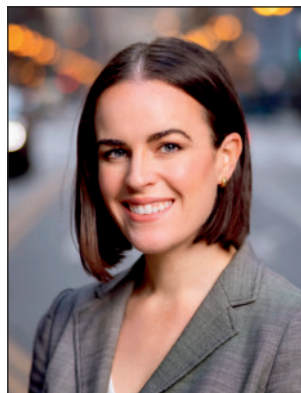
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Be a Hero for Our Local Heroes

By Tracy Brammeier, YLS Chair



The 100 Club provides immediate financial assistance and other resources to families of fallen first responders. On behalf of my law firm, Clifford Law Offices, I have served as the attorney contact for the 100 Club of Chicago families for several years.

It is never easy to get a call from the spouse of a firefighter or police officer who has died in the line of duty. Many of their questions revolve around the estate planning they always meant to do but never got around to. This often means an unexpected visit to the probate court. Typically, in these scenarios, real estate was purchased before a marriage and the deed is still held solely by the decedent, or the fallen first responder died intestate and children from a prior marriage complicate the distribution of bank accounts or vehicles titled in the decedent's name only.

After listening to tearful spouses who were trying to grapple with legal logistics while stricken with the grief that follows a sudden death, I knew preventive action was needed – because when a first responder dies in the line of duty, the last thing their spouse needs is fear and uncertainty about the family home.

Working with the 100 Club led me to volunteer for the YLS pro bono project, Wills for Heroes. One Saturday morning every month, Wills for Heroes provides

basic estate planning services to police, firefighters, and current or former members of the military and their spouses. After a couple of hours spent at the Chicago Police Department headquarters, these servicemen and women walk away armed with wills and information about how to prepare for the worst reality of their jobs – the ultimate risk they brave protecting us all.

Any attorney, paralegal, or law student is welcome to participate in this project, which uses an AI-based computer program to help volunteers ask and respond to questions to customize a simple form will and power of attorney documents. Attorneys who focus their practice on estate planning oversee the process and conduct a final review with every serviceperson to ensure their paperwork reflects their intentions. In just one morning, volunteers can help a half dozen heroes to be prepared should the need arise.

Due to the pandemic, Wills for Heroes shifted to a virtual service in May 2020 and expanded eligibility to include a new category of local heroes: Covid-19 essential healthcare workers.

If you are interested in volunteering for our Wills for Heroes program as an experienced estate planner, attorney drafter and reviewer, or notary public, please find more information on the YLS Wills for Heroes page on the CBA website or send an email to: wills@chicagobar.org.

Even if you do not have time to participate, you can help prevent those distressed phone calls from families by encouraging any first responders, military servicepersons, or Covid-19 essential healthcare workers you know to take a Saturday morning trip to the Chicago Police Department headquarters at 3510 S. Michigan Avenue or to meet with our volunteers virtually.

As attorneys, let's do our part to help our local heroes. ■