

## Attorneys give back to seniors during Elder Law Month

*Editor's Note: The authors were co-chairs of the State Bar's 2011 Elder Law Month Initiative.*

**L**ast spring marked a successful beginning of the Indiana State Bar Association's Elder Law Month Initiative. To commemorate the month, members of the ISBA's Elder Law and Probate, Trust & Real Property sections established a program, encouraging attorneys to give back to seniors across the state. For their contribution to Indiana citizens, both sections, chaired by Christopher J. Holly and Suzanne E. Katt, respectively, jointly received the ISBA Presidential Citation at last fall's annual meeting in French Lick.

The Elder Law Month Initiative focused on educating seniors about advance planning through health care directives. With almost 40 million Americans over the age of 65, the importance of planning for one's health and legal needs is becoming increasingly essential. Attorneys across Indiana presented at various senior groups and discussed health care powers of attorney, appointment of health care representatives, and living wills. They also explained not only the importance of having health care directives in place, but also the value of talking with one's appointed representatives to ensure that the senior's wishes are known and, thus, more likely to be followed. Nearly 50 attorneys across 25 counties presented to more than 500 seniors at places like senior centers, local agencies on aging, nursing homes, hospitals, and local parks and recreation centers. Many of those attorneys also provided pro bono services to seniors to draft various health care directives. Approximately 80 seniors received such pro bono services.

The Elder Law Month Committee relied heavily upon attorney volunteers working within individual counties to create and coordinate their presentations with appropriate partner organizations. George G. Slater of Hamilton County designed a PowerPoint presentation that he shared with all volunteers to use in developing their own presentations. Douglas D. Germann Sr. spearheaded efforts in Elkhart, Kosciusko, LaPorte, Marshall and St. Joseph counties, and with the help of Bradley J. Adamsky, Cynthia A. Hedge, Peggy L. Bodin, Adam K. Lukenbill, Kenneth H. Lukenbill, Michael A. Pianowski, Donald R. Shuler and James W. Kolbus, the attorney volunteers gave 12 presentations in those five counties. Keith P. Huffman coordinated efforts in nine northern Indiana counties with the assistance of Timothy E. Baker, John Martin Smith, Daniel R. Gordon, Anthony Vilutis and Timothy J. Bloom, among others. Several attorney volunteers also arranged for media coverage of their presentations and the ISBA initiative. Ted A. Waggoner of Fulton County gave a radio presentation about Elder Law Month and announced that his firm, Peterson Waggoner & Perkins, LLP, would be providing pro bono services for health care directives through the local Council on Aging. In Madison County, attorney volunteers David P. Wilson, Ardeth L. Wilson and John W. Longnaker III coordinated four presentations, and John was featured in a newspaper article about Elder Law Month in *The Herald Bulletin*. These are just a few of the attorneys who dedicated a significant amount of their time to help make the ISBA pilot project a success.

Anyone interested in volunteering for the Elder Law Month Initiative in May of this year should be sure to contact the current chairs of the Probate, Trust & Real Property and Elder Law sections, Timothy E. Fears, [tfears@thompsonthrift.com](mailto:tfears@thompsonthrift.com), and Christopher J. Holly, [cjholly@medicaidguide.com](mailto:cjholly@medicaidguide.com), respectively. 📧

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