

# The “Senior Law Day Program”: A Win-Win-Win Program

by William T. Wilson



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One of the best Virginia State Bar success stories is the “Senior Law Day Program,” which was begun in Covington by the Alleghany-Bath-Highland Bar Association (A-B-H Bar) on May 24, 2005. A panel of lawyers from that bar association, including one general district court judge, divided up the material in the *Senior Citizens Handbook*, a publication of the Senior Lawyers Conference (SLC), and presented the program to an audience of about 100 senior citizens at the Alleghany County Circuit Court. After that successful start, the SLC, in September 2005, adopted the Senior Law Day Program as its flagship program and has provided a blueprint and other resource materials to local bar associations so they can present Senior Law Day programs for senior citizens in their communities. One of the beauties of the program is that each local bar association is able to tailor its individual program to the particular needs of the senior citizens in its community. The program venues have ranged from courtrooms to churches, educational facilities, public library meeting rooms, restaurants, or other available meeting spaces in the communities. Using the SLC blueprint, bar associations all over the commonwealth have presented Senior Law Day programs to tens of thousands of seniors.

From the perspective of the SLC, the programs are “win-win-win.” The senior citizens “win” because they are receiving information about legal issues affecting their lives which they otherwise might not receive. The lawyers and their bar associations “win” because, in being a part of one of these programs, we see the enormous good that is being accomplished; when we make someone else’s life better, in the process, we make our own lives better. The program is also a “win” because it raises the image of the lawyers, the legal profession, and the bar associations in the eyes of the public. If you have been present for, or have participated in, one of these programs, you know how attentively and appreciatively the senior citizens receive the program and how interested they are in the subject matter. To

be able to give information to senior citizens and to know that what they are receiving is vital to their wellbeing is rewarding and professionally satisfying. Each bar association which has put on such a program has found it to be well-received by their senior citizens and uplifting for the lawyers involved.

The A-B-H Bar has now put on two Senior Law Day programs. I continue to be impressed and pleased by the number of people who, either because they attended our program, heard it on the radio, or read about it in the newspaper, come up to me later and thank our bar association for putting on the programs. With so many negative remarks about lawyers being bandied about in public, it is nice to receive that kind of praise and positive feedback. The reports to the SLC from

other bar associations throughout the commonwealth are very similar.

The SLC encourages all bar associations to put on Senior Law Day programs. They truly are "win-win-win" programs. All a bar association needs to do to get started is to order a blueprint from the VSB and to begin working. The outline in the blueprint tells you how to put on a basic program. The blueprint is a compilation of ideas from successful programs which have been put on in the past by other bar associations, but you should not hesitate to try different ideas. You know your community and its senior citizens, and you are only limited by your imagination.

At the SLC board of governors meetings, where I served as chair of the Senior Law Day Program, we bragged a lot about Warren Haynie, an attorney from the Northern Neck who also happens to be our past chair. He has personally led the lawyers in the Northern Neck in presenting more successful Senior Law Day programs

than anywhere else in the commonwealth. He is the master at the job. You would do well to ask his advice if your bar is putting on a program.

If your bar association does decide to put on a Senior Law Day program, I suggest that you involve some of your judges as well as senior citizens groups and churches. Coverage by radio stations and newspapers is always a big plus (Rick Richmond in Charlottesville even arranged to have their Senior Law Day program videotaped and it is televised periodically on the local public access television channel). If you are interested in putting on a Senior Law Day program, please get in touch with Stephanie Blanton, the liaison between the Virginia State Bar and the SLC. Call her at (804) 775-0576 and ask for copies of planning materials, including the blueprint, and the 2013 edition of the *Senior Citizens Handbook*, which is also now available to be used as a part of your Senior Law Day program.

## 2013 Edition of *Senior Citizens Handbook* Is Available

Produced by the Senior Lawyers Conference, the newly revised 112-page handbook is the Virginia State Bar's most requested publication.

It is a resource for seniors, their families, and their caregivers and provides information on the choices facing senior citizens today. It includes summaries of how specific laws affect Virginia's older citizens and practical advice on social security, pensions, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, federal income taxes, Medicaid, Medicare, Alzheimer's disease, long term care, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult day care, home care, continuing care retirement communities, housing, reverse mortgages, divorce and the elderly, real estate transfers, estate planning, probate and estate administration, advance directives and powers of attorney, guardianship and conservatorship, funeral services, protection of legal rights, landlord/tenant issues, selecting and working with a lawyer, consumer protection, discrimination, grandparent rights, personal safety and security, elder abuse, alternative dispute resolution, and Virginia's court system.

There is also an extensive list of governmental and community-service organizations that details the various services available to senior citizens.

If you are interested in obtaining single copies of the *Senior Citizens Handbook* for personal use, or in obtaining multiple copies for use in a Senior Law Day Program, please call Stephanie Blanton, VSB SLC liaison, at (804) 775-0576 for more information.