

MEMORANDUM

TO: First-Time County Law Day Chairpersons
FROM: Giovanni Perry, 2008 OBA Law Day Chairperson
DATE: Jan. 29, 2008
SUBJECT: Important Background Information

So, you've been given the "opportunity" to be County Law Day Chairperson. Are you a little overwhelmed with the responsibility? Don't know where to start? Well, here is some basic information to get you started.

Q: I'm new in town and don't have a clue where to start.

A: Start with research. What events have been done in the past? Which have been successful and which ones have flopped? Find out why. Talk to last year's Law Day Chairperson about his/her experience. Learn from their successes or mistakes. Read the OBA handouts on Law Day events and promotion ideas included in this packet. Don't wait too late to begin planning - start now.

Q: What is Ask A Lawyer?

A: It is a one-hour TV program aired statewide on OETA that is produced by the OBA with OETA. As part of the TV show, every county bar association is asked to recruit lawyers to volunteer to give free legal advice to people who call in. ***As County Law Day Chairperson, you tell us what phone number your county wants to use.*** During the entire TV program, cities and phone numbers scroll along the bottom of the screen. Viewers are encouraged to call with legal questions. Lawyers are asked not to identify themselves — this is a community service project and not an opportunity to recruit new clients. The TV show is taped several weeks in advance, but it is the date the show is aired that determines what day we do the Ask A Lawyer call in.

Q: Who determines what day and time the Ask A Lawyer TV show airs?

A: The date this year will be **7 - 8 p.m. Thursday, May 1**. The OBA requests dates on Law Day (May 1) or during Law Week, but it is OETA who has the final word on our day and time slot.

Q: Is our county limited to giving legal advice for only one hour?

A: No, not at all. Tulsa and Oklahoma counties staff phones from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. Other counties are asked to staff phones at least one hour - the hour the TV show is on. ***If your county wants to expand beyond one hour, be sure to let the OBA Communications Dept. know so that information will be included in the news release for your county.*** The news release will tell people they can talk to a local attorney between the hours you give us or they can call a toll free number and speak to an attorney in Oklahoma City or Tulsa.

Q: My county is small. We give free legal advice all the time or we didn't get very many calls last year, so why should we participate in Ask A Lawyer?

A: At least we can say we offered the service - even if people don't take advantage of

the free service. People (and especially reporters) think lawyers giving free legal advice is a really great thing to do. The OBA would like to say all 77 Oklahoma counties are providing this community service - this sends out a positive message about lawyers. A few counties recruit one attorney who gives out his/her home phone as the Law Day number and takes any calls at home. Other small counties use a law firm phone number and reward/bribe volunteers with pizza during the call-in to make it fun. Work out with your volunteers what would be the best for you, and let us know how we can help.

Q: What will the OBA do to promote Law Day/Ask A Lawyer in my county?

A: The Law Day Committee works closely with the OBA's Communications Dept. that provides staff support to:

- mail state Law Day contest information to all Oklahoma principals and more than 29,000 teachers (this was mailed in October 2007)
- news release announcing your appointment as County Law Day Chairperson
- news release announcing your county's phone number for Ask A Lawyer
- produce radio public service announcements to promote the opportunity for free legal advice - phone numbers for Tulsa or OKC are included - which one depends on the media coverage area - these are mailed directly to all Oklahoma radio & TV stations
- produce newspaper public service announcements that are mailed to you - designed to include your county's phone number
- write story for OETA's monthly newsletter about the TV show and call-in service project
- contact nonprofit organizations across the state to promote free legal advice
- purchase ads in the Daily Oklahoman and Tulsa World to run the day of the Ask A Lawyer project

Q: What Law Day activities does the OBA sponsor?

A: Statewide contests - coloring, drawing, collage, diorama, creative writing; online activities and an "Art Free for All" contest for high school students.

Ask A Lawyer - TV show

Ask A Lawyer - call in for free legal advice

Q: How can my county piggyback on the OBA contests?

A: Because the OBA Law Day Committee moved the contests to the fall this year, the entries have already been judged at the state level. However, feel free to conduct your own countywide contest. ***The entries have been separated by county and can be made available for your county contest.*** Call the OBA Communications Dept. to work out details if you would like to do this.

Q: How will I know if anyone in my county wins the OBA contests?

A: You will receive a phone call or e-mail. Award certificates, checks and prize ribbons are mailed to you, and you are asked to contact the school to arrange a date/time for you to present the award(s). Many schools present the certificates during their end of

the year awards presentation ceremony, which is great exposure for your county bar association. Be sure to take photos of your ceremony and send them to the OBA Communications Department for publication in the bar journal and/or the OBA Web site.

Q: What suggestions do you have for a first-time Law Day Chairperson?

A: Here are a few thoughts:

- it is more important to do a few events well than a lot of events mediocre
- ask the county bar president to appoint a committee for you or recruit your own volunteers to help you
- involve your district's representative on the OBA Board of Governors
- involve as many courthouse personnel as possible, i.e. court clerk's office, judge's clerks, county treasurer and assessor, sheriff
- don't be afraid to ask the local judiciary for suggestions or help. They often have ideas or information that would help their courts and be good public information.
- brainstorm with volunteers to create a plan
- build on established activities, but try to add something new and different or change an established event if interest seems to be dropping off
- promotion is critical to successful events
- make your Ask A Lawyer program a social occasion with food and beverages. Make it enjoyable as well as a public service.
- Contact your local newspaper and talk up Law Day - its importance, its history, the local schools and bar associations' activities. Write a column or an editorial - if you need help, call! - and submit it to your local paper. Call your local radio stations and see if they'll have you as a guest on a morning show.
- if you have questions or need suggestions, call me or the OBA Communications Dept.

Q: What does the OBA Law Day Committee expect of me?

A: Not too much - really:

- submit your county's Ask A Lawyer phone number by March 21 to take advantage of the news releases and advertising that is done for you.
- written summary of planned Law Week events for a bar journal story in April to highlight county bar activities. [deadline: March 21]
- remember to take photos of your events and submit to the bar journal for possible publication following Law Day
- think about nominating your county bar association for the OBA's Hicks Epton Law Day Award for most outstanding Law Day activities, deadline in August.

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