

# THE SKETCHLEY LAW FIRM, P. A.

Providing Compassionate Support & Guidance Through Elder Law & Guardianship

## NATIONAL ELDER LAW MONTH

May 2008

May is National Elder Law Month. To celebrate and raise awareness about the importance of advance directives such as Living Wills and Health Care Surrogate Designations, The Sketchley Law Firm participated in Emancipation Day festivities at Wakulla Springs State Park on May 16.

### **Elder Law Month**

Governor Charlie Crist proclaimed May 2008 Elder Law Month in Florida. Elder Law Month is celebrated every May by the National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys (NAELA). Many state and local governments also declare May as Elder Law Month to bring attention to the legal issues facing elders and the work that Elder Law attorneys do in assisting clients.

Elder Law attorneys provide assistance in 13 key areas, according to NAELA. These include: Estate Planning and Probate, Estate and Gift Tax Planning, Guardianship/Conservatorship, Medicaid, Medicare, Entitlement Programs, Retirement Benefits, Age Discrimination, Elder Abuse/Neglect, Housing, Long Term Care Financing, Medical Decision Making, Disability Planning, and Insurance.

### **Emancipation Day**

Emancipation Day recognizes the issuance of two executive orders by President Abraham Lincoln during the Civil War. The first one, issued September 22, 1862, declared the freedom of all slaves in any state of the Confederate States of America that did not return to Union control by January 1, 1863. The second order, issued January 1, 1863, named the specific states where it applied. Together, they are known as the Emancipation Proclamation.

Since 1995, Tallahassee has observed Emancipation Day in an annual re-enactment of Major General Edward McCook's reading of the Emancipation Proclamation on May 20, 1865. Each year, the community gathers on the steps of the historic Knott House on Park Avenue where McCook originally gave the speech that officially ended slavery in Florida.

The Emancipation Proclamation states "by virtue of the power, and for the purpose aforesaid, I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves within said designated States, and parts of States, are, and henceforward shall be free; and that the Executive government of the United States, including the military and naval authorities thereof, will recognize and maintain the freedom of said persons." Along with the Thirteenth Amendment to the U. S. Constitution, which was ratified in 1865, this Proclamation ended the practice of slavery in the United States.

Volunteers from The Sketchley Law Firm commemorated Emancipation Day with the senior citizens attending the Tallahassee Smith-Williams Community Center's celebration at Wakulla Springs and spoke to them and their loved ones about advance directives and Elder Law issues. Despite the torrential rain, approximately 100 people received free advance directives or assistance in executing those provided and others received general information about health care decisions and incapacity planning. Participants also enjoyed barbeque, outdoor games, and Bingo.

*If you would like to arrange for one of our attorneys to speak to your group or organization about this topic, please contact Tracy Rouse at (850) 894-0152. Past newsletters can be found at [www.sketchleylaw.com](http://www.sketchleylaw.com).*



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