

Dedicated to helping tri-cities seniors

By ANN HARMON STEWART
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GENEVA – His official title is attorney at law, but to many senior citizens, Dan Parsons is more like a knight in shining armor.

For the past several years, he has been one of the only local attorneys concentrating on the legal needs and issues that affect America's growing population of elderly people.

Much of Parsons's work involves planning and preparing his clients for any future eventuality.

"It's primarily estate planning, wills, trusts, dealing with Medicare and Medicaid, elder abuse, and disability and incapacitation planning," Parsons said from his Geneva office.

A specialty in elder law was not Parsons's goal when he first completed law school.

"I worked for insurance companies, and I dealt with senior issues like Medicare, HMO's, and trusts. The senior citizens were struggling - these are complex issues. And I realized that it wasn't the insurance companies that really needed help," he said.

With such a background, however, Parsons was well-equipped to assist seniors in legal matters.

"Most seniors are concerned with maintaining their independence for as long as they can.

"They want to stay in their own home as long as they possibly can.

"But it's also important to prepare for incapacity and the eventuality of death," he said. "I emphasize not putting things off for too long. It's human nature

to procrastinate, but it can make things much smoother if you start while you're still healthy. Once a person loses their legal mental capacity, there's not a



Randy Pomaro/Flair

Dan Parsons of Geneva is one of the few local attorneys who specializes in elder law.

whole lot you can do for them."

Having a will or trust in place can be crucial, according to Parsons.

"That way, your assets will go to who you want them to go to. If you're not prepared, the state directs your assets, and it's usually not the way you'd like it."

A few basic legal documents will have most peo-

ple "pretty well covered," he added.

"Good estate planning includes a will or trust, health and property powers of attorney, and a living will," he said.

Of course, for many seniors, independent living eventually becomes impossible. For families facing the difficult decisions that come with placing a loved one in a nursing home or other facility, help comes in the form of Parsons's wife, Michelle, a registered nurse.

"She is the director of family services and acts as a liaison between family and caregivers when necessary," Parsons explained. "She can help families find appropriate placements and can help them navigate the healthcare purveyor system."

It's not only individuals who put things off, though. As a nation, America is ill-prepared for the aging of its population, according to Parsons.

"There's going to be tremendous growth in the population that is ages 65 and older, and we as a country are not prepared for it," he said.

The subject matter may sometimes be less than pleasant, but for Parsons, elder law offers its own rewards.

"It is extremely rewarding to me," he said. "Seniors have experienced it all. They have such stories to tell, and they are so appreciative of what you can do for them."

Elder law is also suited to Parsons's quiet, reassuring demeanor.

"This is non-adversarial for the most part. I'm just helping them get where they want to go."