

Lawyers in Libraries: May 1, 2014

by Hon. Andrew M. Mead¹

Lawyers will be present in community libraries around the state of Maine to speak, at no cost, to individuals on Law Day, May 1, 2014. Should you speak with a lawyer if you have a legal question or concern? The answer is unequivocally “Yes.” The law is often complicated, and the assistance of a person trained and experienced in the law is invaluable to anyone seeking answers on legal questions.

We live in a society that is governed by the rule of law, and thankfully so. Although we may occasionally disagree with a particular law or complain about living in such a regulated environment, the absence of the rule of law is truly hell on earth. One need only visit nations attempting to live without the rule of law to experience the devastation and destruction that occurs when there is no law.

Unfortunately, the law cannot be as simple as the directive to all people to “Do the right thing.” Instead, our lawmakers have found it necessary to create numerous volumes of words to establish the many rules that serve as the template for peaceful coexistence of members of our society. It is often difficult to make sense of them. Persons unfamiliar with the law or nuances of language are often left befuddled and confused by the sheer volume of statutes and caselaw.

¹ Andrew M. Mead is an Associate Justice of the Maine Supreme Judicial Court. Prior to being appointed to the Law Court, he served as a Superior Court Justice, a Judge of the Maine District Court, and Judge of the Penobscot Tribal Court. He currently serves as co-chair of the Maine Justice Action Group Collaboration on Innovation, Technology and Equal Access to Justice, which includes the Maine State Bar Association, Pine Tree Legal Assistance, Maine public libraries, the Volunteer Lawyers Project, and other organizations dedicated to furthering the cause of access to justice.

A lawyer can help. Just as one would consult a physician for a physical ailment, so should one consult a lawyer regarding legal issues. However, due to economic and/or geographic barriers, many people are unable to obtain the services of a lawyer to assist them in their legal affairs. They set off to navigate the often complex and confusing world of law by themselves. Although the courts welcome and accommodate self-represented litigants, the prospect of entering the halls of justice without counsel can still be a daunting or even overwhelming task for many. The concepts of access to justice and access to lawyers are clearly conjoined.

On May 1, 2013, libraries across Maine will partner with local lawyers to speak with library patrons about the challenges an individual faces when confronting a legal problem. Volunteer lawyers will provide information on how to access civil legal resources and will be available for a brief consultation for attendees. Information will be provided about free resources and low-cost legal assistance. Information will also be available for those who do not qualify for free legal help.

This event is organized and presented by the Maine Justice Action Group Collaboration on Innovation, Technology and Equal Access to Justice which includes the Maine State Bar Association, the Maine Bar Foundation, Pine Tree

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Contact your local library or visit <http://lawyersinlibraries.org> to see if a *Lawyers in Libraries* event will be offered in your community on May 1, 2014.