

||||||| COMMUNITY |||||

# LEGAL ASSISTANCE



BLAINE SHAHAN | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Lisa M. Driendl-Miller, executive director of the Lancaster Bar Association, stands outside the association's office at 28 E. Orange St. in Lancaster city on Wednesday.

## *Lancaster lawyers offer free living will services to teachers in name of educator who died recently from COVID-19*

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Like many parents in Manheim Township School District, Lisa Driendl-Miller's two children had Alexandra Chitwood, who died of complications related to COVID-19 last month, as a counselor.

"I just knew that I needed to do something to help" to honor Chitwood, said Driendl-Miller, the executive director of the Lancaster Bar Association and its charitable arm, the Lancaster Law Foundation.

Knowing that COVID-19 prompted many families to evaluate end-of-life medical planning,

Driendl-Miller came up with the idea of having attorneys volunteer to provide free planning for teachers and their spouses.

The program is called Heroes in the Classroom. Attorneys taking part are providing a free phone consultation followed by a signing appointment to execute a living will and health care power of attorney.

Ann Martin, a partner at the Lancaster firm of Gibbel Kraybill & Hess, is one of the bar association members who's agreed to provide services to teachers. In her practice, she said she's seen an increased interest in formalizing such arrangements.

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ments. She's had clients who already had plans in place ask to modify them to address medical care practices that COVID-19 has made more well-known, such as the use of intubation and mechanical ventilators.

"You don't want to be putting your loved ones in a position of having to make a decision for you when they don't know what your preferences may be or they don't know who has the priority for you," Martin said. "That's really the challenge — getting those documents done before there's any issues."

## Recognizing teachers' work

Like many people, the

Chitwoods had talked about getting living wills in place, but just never got around to it, said Kenneth Chitwood. He is 57 and Alexandra was 47, and it seemed like they had years ahead of them.

"At 70, you know it's inevitable," he said, "but when you're younger ..."

In the case of Alexandra's sudden death, a living will wouldn't have mattered. But her husband said the bar association's program was a great way to honor her. (He's also planning to create a scholarship program next year in his wife's honor.)

Teachers are already taking advantage of the Heroes in the Classroom program. Driendl-Miller said the foundation has had more than 20 inquiries and more

than a dozen attorneys so far have volunteered.

Martin said it's a great way to recognize the hard work that teachers do — a job made even harder by the pandemic.

She should know: Her husband, Jim Stutzman, is a third grade teacher in Lampeter-Strasburg School District.

Marcie Brody, spokeswoman for Manheim Township School District, said the district was grateful to the bar association and foundation.

Superintendent Robin Felty "has shared with me that it truly shows the entire community coming together to help and support each other during these times," Brody said.