

Attorney wants to change opinions about lawyers

By SUSAN HAIGH
Norwich Bulletin

SundayProfile

Robert I. Reardon Jr.

Robert I. Reardon Jr. wants to change people's opinions about trial lawyers in Connecticut.

Recently named president of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association, Reardon said the 2,400 civil law attorneys in his organization care about more than just winning cases and earning fees. Most are strongly committed to their communities.

"When people talk about trial lawyers and trial lawyers having financial success, I think what they fail to appreciate is most of the people in our organization want to help the little guy," said Reardon, founder of The Reardon Law Firm, P.C., in New London.

During his term as the association's president from June 1997 to June 1998, Reardon, 51, said he

plans to promote that message.

He wants the public to know the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association does more than lobby legislators in Hartford. The organization offers continuing education programs for attorneys; has members volunteer with Habitat For Humanity; educates the public about the law through the People's Law School; assists lawyers on appeals; and promotes safety for children.

This year the organization distributed 2,500 bicycle helmets to youngsters across the state, including children in Norwich and New London. Next year, Reardon said the number of cities to receive helmets will expand from seven to about 12, and the association will give away 4,000 to 5,000 new bicy-

cle helmets.

But much of the association's efforts are concentrated on what is happening in at the state Capitol.

"There is a huge amount of interest in what we're doing — the civil justice system," Reardon said. "As a result of that, we have to be there to protect the rights of individuals."

During the past legislative session, the trial lawyers were deeply involved in a debate about municipal liability. Many cities and towns are closing playgrounds and public recreation facilities for fear of lawsuits in the wake of a recent state Supreme Court ruling.

While the municipalities want partial immunity from lawsuits, Reardon said such a privilege hurts individuals.

"It has nothing to do with our pocketbooks," Reardon said, referring to the association's involvement in the issue. "The fact

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Robert I. Reardon Jr., president of the Connecticut Trial Lawyers Association.

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of the matter is, immunities are bad."

Reardon, who has practiced law in New London for 23 years, lives in East Lyme with his wife Lise Reardon, director of the Eastern Connecticut Ballet. The couple has two daughters, Colleen and Kelly.

A native of Waterford, Reardon attended St. Bernard High School

and earned a degree in economics from Boston College. He later graduated from Fordham University School of Law and spent three years in the Marine Corps before opening his law practice.

Five attorneys work in Reardon's practice, specializing in personal injury and wrongful death cases.