

NOVATO ADVANCE

Officials say elder abuse increasing



Moderator Paul Cohen from Legal Aid of Marin (left) surveys the forum panelists: (left to right) Alameda Superior Court Judge Julie Conger, Elder Financial Protection Network representative Ruth Robeson, civil rights attorney Liza de Vries, Marin Chief Deputy District Attorney Kathryn Mitchell and Marin Superior Court Commissioner Roy Chernus (standing).

By Kendall Watson Staff Writer

Over 100 people attended a public forum on elder abuse Thursday in San Rafael, seeking to learn more about what panelists called "the big secret".

Each panelist first examined a different facet of the crime, and then took a number of questions from the audience.

Alameda Superior Court Judge Julie Conger offered her experience adjudicating cases in the only Elder Abuse dedicated court in the country, while civil rights attorney Liza de Vries laid out the circumstances that lead to their victimization.

"The aging process eventually forces us all to trust others," she said. "We rely on what other people tell us. Unfortunately, some of these people are unscrupulous."

Marin Superior Court Commissioner Ron Chernus advised the audience that D.A. Ed Berberian had made elder abuse a priority, but warned that a number of statistics indicated that older residents ran some of the highest risks of victimization in the state.

"Here in Marin, you're at ground zero," he warned.