

PERSPECTIVE

Winter 2020

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Sarah M. Robinson

The First Annual Paralegal Open House Meet and Greet was a success! Over 50 paralegals attended the networking event connecting both professionally and personally with others in the field. Amanda Sexton of [FocusWorks](#) lead two short discussions about marketing one's self to potential employers and building our personal brands sparking open dialogue with the audience. Seven lucky paralegals won gift baskets of tea, chocolate, coffee, Gucci sunglasses and free attendance to the Annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention on October 16, 2020. The Open House also allowed attendees to meet PANJ Board members putting a face to those that help govern the Association. Paralegals are already asking when the next Open House is scheduled to take place. The Association is hopeful to host the event annually. Stay tuned for an upcoming date!

Earlier this term, PANJ's second general membership dinner meeting was held on November 21, 2019 at the Maplewood Country Club. Joe Grabas differentiated *standard* title insurance policies vs. *enhanced* title insurance policies. Due to the generous sponsorship of Acres Land Title Agency, the meeting was FREE and well attended by paralegals and attorneys alike.

PANJ has been an affiliate of the National Association of Legal Assistants for 30 years! Save the date for NALA's upcoming Conference and Expo which is taking place July 9-11, 2020 here in New Jersey at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City. PANJ is participating in the Affiliate Showcase providing an opportunity to meet members of other affiliated associations and learning new ways to promote the profession.

For personal reasons, Vice President, Nathmia Abedrabo, has given her resignation leaving a vacancy on the Board and opening the discussion about upcoming elections. Elections generally take place in April of each year. All members, especially our newer members, should give careful thought to serving on the Board. It is an opportunity to take an active role in *your* Association, providing a new perspective while



enhancing your own skills and personal development. Work side by side with other paralegals to govern the Association and address issues that affect the future of *our* profession! No experience is required! If serving on the Board seems like a daunting task, there are several committees which could use an extra pair of hands. Committees are an integral mechanism of the Association. Contact Info@NJPara.org if you are interested in participating.

If you are a new member of the Association, Welcome! Take advantage of the free dinner meeting benefit sent to you with your membership certificate. A list of benefits of membership in the Association can be found on the Membership page of www.NJPara.org.

As paralegals, we partake frequently in continuing legal education to expand our knowledge. Also vital is our mental and physical wellbeing. Holly Onorato, a former paralegal, shares tips for daily self-care to alleviate stress in her article entitled, "[Reasons to Refresh Throughout the Day.](#)"

A message from Co-Chair of the Special Paralegal Committee of the New Jersey State Bar Association, Laurie Robinson, is included in this edition of *Perspective*. PANJ cooperates and participates with local and the State Bar Associations allowing the Association an active role in recent developments and providing feedback as to current issues affecting the paralegal profession. If you wish to join NJSBA's Special Paralegal Committee, feel free to reach out to Laurie directly. The Special Paralegal Committee meetings take place at the Law Center in New Brunswick.

[PANJ](#) is in the process of finalizing the remaining dinner meetings of the 2019-2020 term and is looking for new dinner meeting locations. The location must offer a private room available from 5:30 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. that can comfortably fit up to 30 people and is suitable for either a dinner buffet or plated three course meal including beverages. As a non-profit, [PANJ](#) makes every effort to secure professional locations that can accommodate the Association's limited budget in order to keep dinner meeting costs affordable for all attendees. Please email Info@NJPara.org with potential locations that may fit the Association's budget.

Finally, the Association is open to suggestions for improvement. PANJ's mission is to foster and promote regulated high-level educational standards and uniform practice guidelines for paralegals throughout New Jersey. PANJ also provides helpful resources to new and experienced paralegals and promotes the education of the public for the advancement and improvement of the profession.

What are ways the Association can further serve its members and the paralegal profession? All suggestions are welcome! Send ideas and comments to Info@NJPara.org.

If you wish to contribute to upcoming editions of Perspective, please submit your pieces for review to Info@NJPara.org.

If you know a vendor who may be interested in advertising their product/service in the Perspective or at an upcoming dinner meeting, have the vendor contact Info@NJPara.org.

DISCLAIMER: The *Perspective* is a newsletter designed to report news and/or opinions of interest to PANJ members. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author, not the *Perspective* Editor nor the PANJ Executive Board. Publication herein does not imply endorsement in any manner. No information contained herein is intended nor should it be construed as legal advice. All articles presented herein are with permission of the author. Inclusion and editing of material is at the sole discretion of the Editor. You received this newsletter as a privilege of your membership in the Paralegal Association of New Jersey and opted in at www.NJPara.org.



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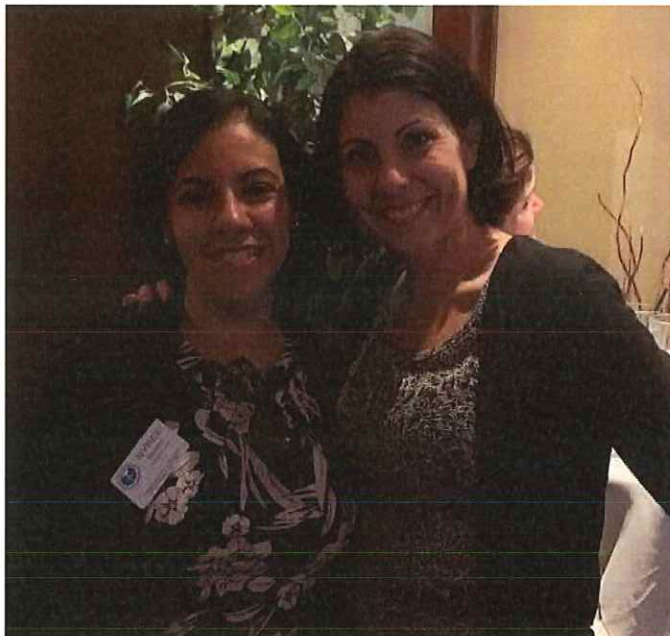
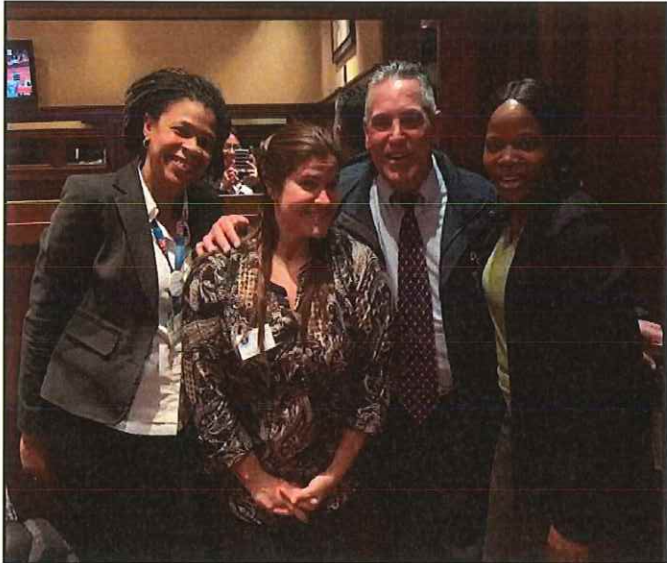
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NALA's Mission Statement
Advancing paralegals through certification and professional development.

NALA' Vision Statement
The preeminent resource for individual and professional success.

NALA has a new CEO!

Vanessa Finley, MBA became NALA's new. Ms. Finley has been in non-profit management for over 25 year and joined NALA in November 2019.

NALA dues increase.

Effective January 1, 2020, dues will increase as follows: \$154 Active Members; \$129 Associate & Sustaining Members; \$50 Student Members. Included in membership are NALA's *Utilization and Compensation Report, Facts & Findings*, discounted rates for NALA's CLE programs, affinity discounts, select complimentary member education and an \$80 gift certificate used to NALA's CLE programs

Findings & Fact Mini Bonus Issue

Q1 – January's *Facts & Findings* will have a bonus issue – *Career 101* – related to career and professional development.

CLE

Credit towards CLE requirement will be accepted in any time increments. No minimum length of time is required.

Any CLE hours over the required 50 hours for a certification period cannot be carried over to the next certification period.

2020 NALA Conference and Expo

NALA comes to New Jersey July 9-11, 2020 at Harrah's Resorts, Atlantic City. Mark your calendars. It's close! Take advantage of no airfare required. I highly recommend attending. It's so beneficial on both a personal and professional level.

CP Exam

February and April are the upcoming windows for the Skills Exam.

Christine A. Principe, CP is PANJ's NALA Liaison. Questions in connection with local NALA certification exam study groups should be directed to Christine at NALALiaison@NJPara.org.

2020

SAVE THE DATE

July 9-11, 2020
Harrah's Atlantic City
NALA Conference & Expo

918.587.6828 | nalanet@nala.org | www.nala.org

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For an annual fee of \$50, freelance, contract or independent paralegals can advertise their business with a weblink on the Job Bank Page of www.NJPara.org in the "**Freelance Paralegals for Hire!**" section across from the "Employers" section allowing paralegal employers immediate access to your web page, LinkedIn Page or whatever platform in which you advertise.

[This offer is only open to PANJ Members.](#)

If you wish to take advantage of this marketing opportunity, please email Info@NJPara.org.

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2019-2020 TERM

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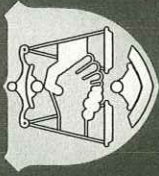
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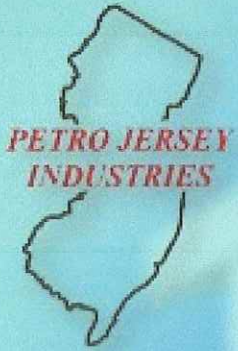
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* The National Academy of Distinguished Neutrals is an association of attorney mediators and arbitrators who have substantial experience in the resolution of commercial and civil disputes. All members have been recognized for their accomplishments through the Academy's peer nomination system and extensive attorney-client review process. Membership is by invitation-only and is limited to individuals who devote a substantial percentage of their professional efforts to ADR practice.

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REASONS TO REFRESH THROUGHOUT THE DAY

By Holly M. Onorato

“Movement is a **medicine** for creating change in a person's physical, emotional, and mental states.” - Carol Welch

Stiffness at work is a real buzz kill. When we feel like we are chained to a desk all day it takes a tremendous toll on our well-being. The results of sitting in a chair all day, in a stagnant position, are serious and left untreated can lead to chronic pain, poor posture, fatigue and a generalized feeling of burnout.

But the answer is simple - STRETCHING! Stretching allows your muscles to relax and is also a huge energy booster. Taking a few minutes to disconnect from your computer screen will increase your productivity and allow you to return to your legal duties more focused, refreshed *and* inspired.

Here are some additional benefits of a quick stretch break -

- **Reduced stiffness and muscle fatigue** - Slows the degeneration of joints.
- **Increased range of motion/reduced risk of injury** - A flexible muscle is less likely to become injured during various activities.
- **Improved posture** - Stretching the lower back, shoulders and chest helps keep your back in better alignment and improves your posture.
- **Manage stress** - Muscles that are stretched hold less tension. Chronically tense muscles lack oxygen and essential nutrients.
- **Improved circulation** - Stretching increases blood supply to your muscles and joints and increases the circulation of blood through your entire body.
- **Decreased low-back pain** - Flexibility in the hamstrings, hip flexors and muscles attached to the pelvis relieves stress on the lumbar spine, which in turn reduces your risk of low-back pain.

Breathing deeply is also a way to keep yourself on point and focused, which is especially important on days when you are slogging through briefs or researching for hours on end. Deep breathing is crucial to staying ‘grounded’ and reducing work-related stress. One of my favorites is the three-part yogic breath:

Three-Part Breath — *Dirga* (or *Deerga*) *Swasam Pranayama* (*DEER-gah swha-SAHM prah-nah-YAH-mah*) — is often the first breathing technique taught to new yoga practitioners. The “three parts” are the abdomen, diaphragm, and chest. During Three-Part Breath, you first completely fill your lungs with air, as though you are breathing into your belly, ribcage, and upper chest. Then you exhale completely, reversing the flow.

- Yoga Outlet

It’s easy to practice this breathing technique. Simply place your hand on your belly and breath in, imagining a balloon inflating in your belly. Next focus on your ribcage, inflating and deflating the balloon there and lastly inflating and deflating the balloon in your chest or diaphragm.

Now that your breathing is engaged, here are some quick, easy and effective stretches you can do *while* seated at your desk:

UPPER BODY

- Start gently with head circles - first clockwise then counterclockwise. This will help neck tension from staring at your screen. 5-10 repetitions each side.
- Next move your head side to side, mimicking 'no' (as in no more work!).
- Move your head up and down, saying 'yes' (to more time off!).
- Move your head side to side, like a windshield wiper and hold on any tender or tight spots; come back to your deep yogic breathing on stubborn shoulder knots.

UPPER SHOULDERS/BACK/LOWER BODY

Shoulder shrugs - lift your shoulders to your earlobes, hold a few seconds and then release. Next move onto circles, place both hands on your shoulders and make large circles with your elbows leading the way. Be sure to incorporate lots of breath here as well and change the circle direction (forward, then back).

Hands - it's important to stretch the hands and arms to counteract hours spent typing. Begin by opening and closing your fingers, spread them wide. Next, interlace your fingers and extend arms straight out in front and overhead, drawing shoulder blades down.

Eagle arms (feels REALLY GOOD for the upper back muscles) seated, extend your arms to the sides in a 90-degree angle. Place the right arm over the left, pull in your belly and round your upper back. Breathe deeply.

Seated side to side - get the belly and waist involved here. Seated tall in your chair, let your arms dangle to the sides and simply lean to the right, sending right fingertips down to the ground, and then alternate to the left side. Pause on any tight spots and take a few deep breaths.

Seated backbend or cat/cow pose - sit up tall; place both hands on your knee caps. Breathe in and push your chest forward, arching your lower back (cow) and then round your upper back up to the sky (cat, or more like a cat on a hot tin roof, that's the energy, really drawing everything up and in).

Moving down to the legs - extend one leg out in front while the other is planted on the floor in a 90-degree angle (knee over ankle) and circle your ankle, clockwise then counter-clockwise, spread your toes. Next, gently lean forward to experience a hamstring stretch - these muscles own the back leg (there are actually three muscles that make up the hamstrings). Feel the stretch and hold for as long as possible and repeat.

If you are feeling tired or sluggish, practice doing a few 'seated' desk squats which will help increase your energy significantly! To do this, simply sit down, plant both feet hip-distance apart, spread your toes and

stand up! That's it! For maximum benefit, really squeeze your buns together when standing. Keep your knees behind the toe line. Repeat 5-10 times. You can also reach arms overhead as you stand (depending on how close your co-workers are to you). Don't forget to incorporate deep breathing.

Lastly, to incorporate the hips and low back, throw in a few Figure Four stretches, one of my personal favorites and is so easy, yet effective. Seated in your chair, simply cross one foot over the opposite knee, much like the number four and gently lean forward.

Finally, to really bust out the last remnants of stress stored in your face - try a few rounds of lion's breaths (or a 'silent scream' will do here as well). The face is comprised of a whopping 43 MUSCLES!!!! To practice this empowering breath, simply inhale deeply through your nose and exhale audibly through an open mouth. For extra benefit, stick out your tongue, as far as you can and really let it rip. Do as many rounds of this as you can (without your co-workers thinking you've flipped your lid!).

RECAP

Head circles, no/yes, windshield wipers

Shoulder rolls, shrugs

Hand stretches, wrist rolls, open/close fingers

Side to side stretches

Leg stretches, one leg extended, bow forward, touch toes.

Seated squats

Figure four

Lion's Breath or silent scream

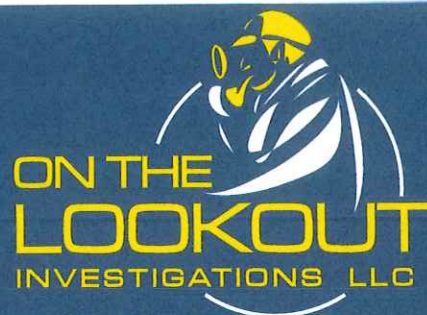
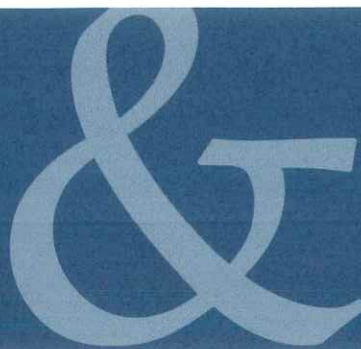
In a nutshell, stretching and breathing are fun and effective ways to revive yourself throughout the day. Don't beat yourself up if you can't make this a part of your daily life, but at least try to check in with yourself throughout the day. Take breaks when needed. A little self-care goes a long way!

Holly Onorato is the Manager for Roos Advisors' Recruiting Division. She excels at helping clients find top tier talent that elevates company performance. Her in-depth experience in recruiting and personal development ensures that each candidate is perfectly matched with our client's specific needs. She is also responsible for market and client development. Before joining Roos Advisors, she worked as a legal assistant, recruiting assistant, esthetician and yoga teacher. She is also a skilled life, health, and spiritual coach, working closely with clients to help them reclaim their power and innate wisdom. She has an Associate Degree in Office Systems Technology and is currently studying with Pathways of Light Spiritual College to complete her Ordained Ministerial Counseling Certification. Holly teaches weekly yoga classes at Robert Wood Johnson in New Brunswick, NJ and volunteers as a yoga instructor at Middlesex County Correctional Facility. She enjoys spending her spare time writing, going to the beach and exploring nature with her two children.



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Member Spotlight



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Senior Paralegal/Manager at Sanchez Law
jnegro0209@gmail.com
[Linkedin.com/in/jennifer-negro/](https://www.linkedin.com/in/jennifer-negro/)

Q. How long have you been a member of PANJ?

A. I have been a member for about two years now.

Q. Why did you decide to join the Association?

A. Networking is a huge factor in this field and the Association provides many events for us to do that.

Q. What is a typical day as a paralegal like for you?

A. I am a Senior Paralegal/Manager at Sanchez Law in Union County where we specialize in residential and commercial real estate. My days are hectic especially during the end of the month when most closings occur.

In a typical day, I am communicating via e-mail and phone between lenders, realtors, title companies and most importantly our clients, all in effort to get them to the closing table. I handle transactions from the end of attorney review to the closing table. This includes inspection negotiations, reviewing title binders, drafting legal documents that may be required for a particular transaction, creating/maintaining business entities, reviewing surveys, etc. While some days can be insanely busy, I truly love what I do.

Q. What do you enjoy most about the Association?

A. While I have been a member for the past two years, this past January was my first event that I attended. Why you may ask? I let my own fears get the best of me and after attending the Open House, I truly do not know why I was so fearful.

In addition to meeting some great people, I walked out with some helpful tools that I never thought of initially. The Open House showed me that it is a fun environment with great networking and I plan to attend more events in the future.

Q. What's a helpful tip for someone in our industry?

A. Multi-tasking and organization are truly vital in this field. Find an organization system that works for you. Being in real estate law, I am working on several transactions at the same time, so it is important for me to be organized and be able to multi-task. Also, use the Sticky Notes feature on your computer. It is more practical than using post-it notes which can get lost easily.



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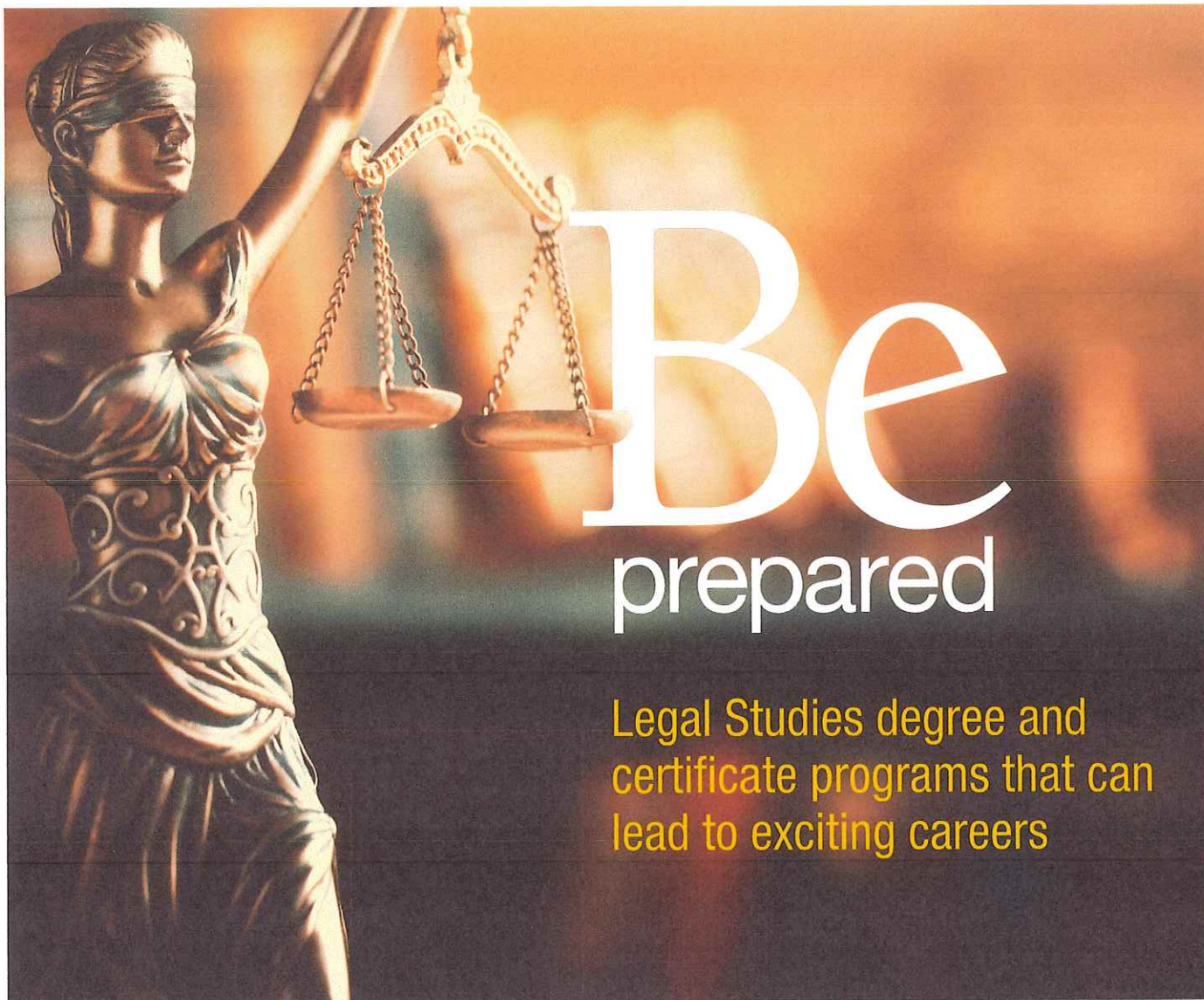
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THE UNCONVENTIONAL PARALEGAL THINKING OUT OF THE BOX

HOW TO ORGANIZE CHAOS

By Vincent Ascolese

Your organizing skills may need updating if you receive calls from your boss when eating dinner on a Saturday. In other words, everything should be easily located by anyone even when you are not in the office.

When I started my career as a paralegal, the largest file I had organized was contained in two file drawers. It was indexed and color-coded by category. I later progressed to manage, update, and maintain a file whose contents entirely filled 2 attorneys' offices plus an additional bank of cabinets. There was also a computer database called Summation which housed approximately 2 million pages of document productions. The latter was one case I worked on for 10 years. It was organized in a fashion that was easy to maintain and update. These files were numbered by category (e.g., 1.1 – 1.13 correspondence, 2.1 – 2.9 pleadings, etc.). I no longer color-code files because it is over the top, but mostly difficult to update and maintain.

Recently, I was tasked with sorting the Plaintiff's and Defendant's document productions into chronologies for several personal injury defense matters. The finished product was contained in 3-ring binders and indexed with numbered tab dividers (e.g., tabs 1-100). Here, not unlike file organization, there is an issue with expansion. When, not if, an additional document is produced in discovery, the binder(s) must be updated and reorganized (I use a tab 17a when an additional document falls after 17. I do not renumber all following tabs). This may not seem like an issue, but it is impractical when there are many documents to add. In years past, I composed a Document Chronology with over 1,600 documents/tabs. Renumbering was not an option.

After a partner drafted a motion, I was tasked with cleaning up the conference room (a/k/a organizing the file). There were papers strewn about on the floor, table, chairs and everywhere. I took a photograph of the room because it looked like the Tasmanian Devil had been at work. How do I organize chaos like this?

There is a cliché that "a journey of 1,000 miles starts with 1 step." What should that first step be when organizing chaos? For some guidance, you should ask the attorney whose work you are organizing, "What do the papers generally comprise?" First, esoterically see the room as paper and ink to remove any preconceived notions. From there, determine what papers are documents. For example, if you have page 10, you must find pages 1-9; If a certification attaches exhibits, you should locate the exhibits. Do not do so outside of the room at this point. Next, should be a quick review for commonality or a running theme amongst the documents. Then, break down the documents further into categories and possibly subcategories and sort the categories chronologically. A last detail-oriented step would be to further figure out if anything is missing. Be sure to make the supervising attorney aware of anything that is missing.

In organizing, each step must be flexible, adaptable and allow for expansion. There are a finite number of categories under which a document will fall. As a paralegal, one of our tasks is to accurately find out what is that category. Generally, small and large litigation matters have files/categories such as: correspondence, pleadings, oversized pleadings, discovery, document productions, depositions (transcripts, exhibits, deposition preparation), client documents, document productions, medical records, experts (correspondence/materials), expert reports, notes and research, settlement, *et cetera*. For ease of reference, I sometimes include a padded envelope for copies of all discs or USB drives also filed/saved elsewhere. Another note would be to avoid using the Miscellaneous category instead adding an additional specific category.

Vincent Ascolese graduated from St. John's University with a bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies in 1998. He has over 17 years of experience working as a paralegal in various practice areas including: employment, commercial litigation, and business litigation. Most recently he works in practice areas including personal injury, workers' compensation and business litigation. Vincent has served on the Special Paralegal Committee of the New Jersey State Bar Association. He is an active member and former Trustee-at-Large for the Paralegal Association of New Jersey.

Can licensed legal paraprofessionals narrow the access-to-justice gap?

BY PATRICK MCGLONE



Proposals for addressing the commonplace civil legal needs of low- and moderate-income persons by authorizing limited practice by licensed nonlawyer paraprofessionals have been gaining acceptance. Unlike paralegals, such paraprofessionals provide services without supervision by an attorney. Two state supreme courts have embraced the licensed legal technician concept, and other jurisdictions are closely studying it.

Given the high percentage of self-represented parties in courtrooms around the country, some advocates believe regulated legal paraprofessionals charging lower fees can help narrow the access-to-justice gap. That may one day be the case, but the paraprofessional model and its efficacy in addressing that gap remain unproven.

Washington state pioneered the limited license model. In 2013, after years of study, the Washington State Supreme Court adopted Admission and Practice Rule 28, which authorized nonlawyer limited license legal technicians to perform specific legal services in the area of domestic relations. LLLTs are subject to stringent requirements, which include obtaining an associate's degree or higher and completing additional specified coursework; performing 3,000 hours of paralegal work; passing three law and ethics exams as well as a character and fitness review; and, after licensing, satisfying financial responsibility, continuing legal education and malpractice insurance requirements. LLLTs are subject to rules of professional conduct and a disciplinary process similar to those that apply to lawyers. The board that oversees the LLLT program is now considering expanding the subject matter areas in which paraprofessionals may practice to include consumer debt law.

Following Washington's lead, the Utah Supreme Court adopted a recommendation in 2015 to authorize licensed paralegal practitioners to assist clients in family law, eviction, and consumer debt matters. Newly promulgated rules that will govern LPPs will become effective Nov. 1, and the rules generally track Washington state's template, with education, fitness, examination and CLE requirements, and regulation under a disciplinary code. Licensing of the first LPPs is expected to occur next year.

Oregon is the most recent jurisdiction to move toward this model. In a June 2017 report, the Oregon State Bar's Futures Task Force recommended the "licensure of paraprofessionals who would be authorized to provide limited legal services, without attorney supervision, to self-represented litigants in (1) family law and (2) landlord-tenant proceedings." The report also proposes eligibility, education, and disciplinary standards that follow the contours of the Washington and Utah examples. The OSB has created an implementation committee charged with developing a specific paraprofessional proposal.

The scope of permissible work for limited license paraprofessionals differs under these various models. It generally includes assistance to clients in understanding legal proceedings and completing court forms and other form documents, but does not include appearing for a client in court or at depositions, or taking on complex matters. LLLTs in Washington currently may not represent a client in mediated negotiations, but they may do so in Utah.

A primary impetus for this move toward a new tier of licensed paraprofessionals is the recognition that the civil legal needs of self-represented litigants remain vastly underserved despite lawyers' commitment to pro bono work and the efforts of legal aid organizations. This access-to-justice disparity has prompted bars and court systems to promote other forms of nonlawyer assistance to pro se parties, including courthouse navigators and facilitators (Arizona, New York, California, and Washington), and legal document preparers (Arizona, California, and Nevada). In a 2016 report, the ABA's Commission on the Future of Legal Services encouraged states to examine all forms of "judicially-authorized-and-regulated legal service providers" to help address the problem of unmet legal needs.

It is too soon to judge definitively the effectiveness and sustainability of the licensed legal paraprofessional structure. However, cautionary notes permeate a March 2017 study of Washington's LLLT program by the National Center for State Courts, with funding from the American Bar Foundation and Public Welfare Foundation. The study reported general client satisfaction with LLLTs, growth in the number of LLLTs, and increased acceptance of the concept by lawyers. But the study noted significant educational, regulatory and business challenges that may readily arise in other states that adopt similar programs.

Law schools and colleges are hard-pressed to invest in assembling a faculty and developing a curriculum without confidence that student enrollments will eventually repay the investment. Similarly, initial regulatory costs to develop licensing, oversight and disciplinary structures will not be recovered through modest license fees, at least in the early years. The reduced fees charged by LLLTs may be advantageous for clients, but the NCSC found that "the experience of licensed LLLTs to date has not been especially encouraging in terms of viable business models when operating as a pure full-time LLLT practice." The authors of the NCSC report express optimism that programs like Washington's LLLT model can improve access to justice for more members of the public, but the study results do not provide empirical evidence of a contribution toward narrowing the access gap.

Some jurisdictions have considered and rejected the licensed paraprofessional model. In October 2017, a working group appointed by Montana's Access to Justice Commission concluded that the "LLLT model is not the answer to the challenges Montana litigants and the courts face with the increased numbers of self-represented litigants." In addition to citing some of the conclusions of the NCSC report, the working group noted that LLLTs are not required to assist self-represented litigants; and that the fees paraprofessionals must charge to sustain a practice may still be a deterrent for many low and moderate-income persons.

Other state bar study groups have rejected the paraprofessional or legal technician concept. For example, in 2016, study committees at both the Illinois State Bar Association and Virginia State Bar declined to embrace the LLLT model. Among the concerns raised: The concept's success is not yet demonstrable, and the competency of legal paraprofessionals as a general matter is not yet established; there are many underemployed and unemployed lawyers with whom paraprofessionals will compete; and existing court-based resources, pro bono efforts, and law school clinic programs should be expanded instead.

Washington state, Utah and other jurisdictions are to be commended for experimenting with new models of delivering at least limited legal services by nonlawyers, subject to certain educational requirements and disciplinary oversight. After a period of refinement and growth, the licensed legal technician model may mature into a potent solution to the access-to-justice gap. In some jurisdictions, the model may grow to the point of

sustainability and complement the services available from lawyers, legal aid providers, law school clinics, court-based self-help resources, navigators and other sources of assistance on civil legal problems. In other states, the model may not be an effective solution, but given the persistence of the access-to-justice challenge, we must remain open-minded about this innovative approach.

Patrick McGlone is the senior vice president, general counsel and chief compliance officer at Ullico Inc., an insurance and financial services company in Washington, D.C. He is the immediate-past president of the District of Columbia Bar. His ABA activities include prior service as a member of the ABA's Standing Committee on the American Justice System.

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http://www.abajournal.com/news/article/can_licensed_legal_paraprofessionals_narrow_the_access_to_justice_gap

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A QUICK NOTE FROM NJSBA SPECIAL PARALEGAL COMMITTEE

Greetings and Salutations My Fellow Superstars ★ ★ ★ ★

Happy New Year! We are excited as we enter a New Year, and a New Decade. I've always been told that "2020" is considered perfect vision, and we hope that this year is just as perfect. There are several things on the horizon in the Paralegal Community. We are on watch for the ABA's consideration of the removal of "legal assistant" from the definition of Paralegal and how that will affect us. What will it mean for our future?

In January I have a meeting scheduled with the Essex County Bar Association regarding the NJSBA Paralegal Committee doing a possible collaboration with the Essex County Bar Association. In addition, during the meeting I look to gain a clear understanding of the membership options available for Paralegals.

The best is still yet to come....

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Thursday, February 13, 2020
- No March Meeting
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- Special Paralegal Committee Meeting Annual Wine & Cheese
Thursday, April 9, 2020
- No May Meeting



- *NJSBA Annual Meeting & Convention May 13 - 15, 2020*
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Thursday, June 4, 2020
- *New Jersey Paralegal Convention*
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If you have any questions, comments, concerns or suggestions, send me a note at NJParalegal.Laurie@gmail.com. I'd love to hear from you.

Best,

Laurie Robinson
NJSBA Special Paralegal Committee Co-Chair

My Experience Attending the Annual 2019 New Jersey Paralegal Convention

By Michael Feldman

As a newbie in the paralegal field, I was asked to write about my experience and impressions of the 2019 New Jersey Paralegal Convention which was held on October 25, 2019. Happy to oblige! For perspective, I've had three careers to date, the latest spanning roughly forty years as a vice president in the information technology areas of two major Wall Street financial institutions having a global presence. Having retired from that, I needed to keep busy, at least part-time, so I completed the Rutgers Paralegal Certificate Program. Career number four. My next stop will include taking the NALA certification exam and actually getting a job as a paralegal although not necessarily in that order. The 2019 New Jersey Paralegal Convention was not my first as I also attended the previous year to test the waters and I liked what I saw and the people I met.

So, I set off bright and early this past October 25th and managed to make the same wrong turn as I did the previous year to get on Route 1 South. Maybe I'll get lucky next year. After a quick breakfast and some coffee where the vendors were located, I started making the rounds along with everyone else to get the required vendor stickers for my Passport in order to be eligible for the drawings. There wasn't much opportunity given the time and space constraints to have extended conversations with anyone, but the various vendors did have informative literature that explained the respective services each provided and how those services integrated into the "big picture". Of course, there were plenty of free goodies that were also handed out. The sponge balls were a big hit with my younger grandkids.

I found all of the sessions I attended to be informative, but they were also of value to me personally in terms of helping to clarify which practice areas might be of the most interest to me. Accordingly, for me, the Convention was akin to the tasting menu at a good restaurant. Since I am no longer burdened with having to earn a living, I'm free to be choosy and pick an area that truly interests me and where I can make a contribution, even as a

volunteer. The first session I attended focused on immigration law. The speaker was quite knowledgeable on the subject, as would be expected, and had a knack for presenting information in a very coherent and clear way. This area of law obviously presents many opportunities given the tremendous number of individuals who want to enter and reside in the United States whether legally or illegally. The immigration process is complex and time consuming in either case, and the need for legal assistance to those wishing to navigate the process is high and will no doubt grow.

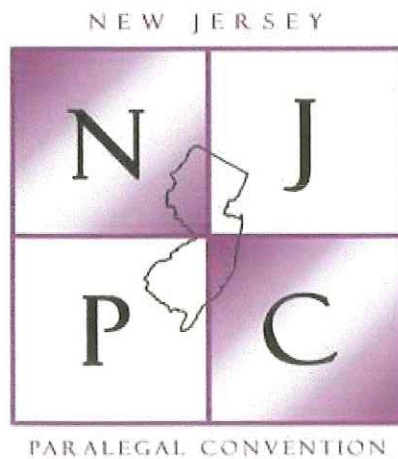
The second session focused on family law, more specifically, on the area of preparing case information statements. It was apparent that for a paralegal and a supervising attorney engaged in family law, a background in taxation and accounting would be helpful. A prime challenge is obtaining the required financial information. Individuals may tend to be somewhat reticent about divulging such information, may not be well organized in terms of maintaining comprehensive financial and tax records or may simply not remember essential details. As I recollect, in the series "The Odd Couple", the character Oscar Madison haphazardly placed receipts and records in an old shoe box when he remembered. In the case of a well-to-do client where a client's assets include a large, diverse portfolio, the valuation of that portfolio would be so complex an endeavor that I suspect it would probably be beyond the capabilities of most paralegals without expert specialist assistance. The value of such portfolios can change on a minute by minute basis depending upon the specific financial instruments that comprise the portfolio. The evaluation of real property presents challenges as well, since the current value of real property is only worth what someone is willing to pay for it.

I had planned for the third session to attend Bitcoins/Electronic Currency but decided against it. Having worked in the financial services industry for many years, I am already quite familiar with this topic and it's an open question as to how the regulatory agencies will ultimately decide to handle electronic currencies from a financial institution perspective. Instead, I opted to attend the session on resume construction since I'd like to obtain a paralegal position at some point, although my efforts to date have not yielded fruit. The session was well done.

The session after lunch was informative and useful given the ethical dilemmas that can inevitably surface for both attorneys and paralegals. That said, the luncheon was very useful because it afforded a chance to speak with and make contacts with practicing paralegals to a degree of depth not possible during any of the sessions or the relatively short breaks in-between.

I am looking forward to the 2020 New Jersey Paralegal Convention and hope that there will be sessions relating to criminal law and litigation which are emerging for me as areas of interest, and particularly, what I think will be the profound effect on the paralegal profession that will be the unavoidable outgrowth of artificial intelligence (AI) that has already made rapid strides in many industries and professions.

Michael Feldman graduated cum laude with departmental honors from CUNY's Brooklyn College with a bachelor's degree in anthropology. Upon graduation, he was awarded a teaching assistantship in the SUNYAB Anthropology Department until switching tracks to enter the field of information technology, eventually becoming a subject matter expert in the area of software and operating systems. Working for various Fortune 100 companies, he later transitioned over to the IT procurement area working closely for many years with his respective firms' IP attorneys to negotiate and draft agreements with software and professional services vendors. He is a published author and has presented at international conferences. Upon his recent retirement, he obtained his paralegal certificate from Rutgers and is currently studying for the NALA certification exam. He hopes to become involved as a paralegal with a practice in the area of criminal law, and still consults in the area of IT procurement.



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The 26th Annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention

By Samantha Vitone

As soon as I entered the 2019 Annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention located at the Delta Hotels by Marriott on Friday, October 25, 2019, I had the biggest grin on my face. "It is great to be back again," I mumbled to myself. It was my second time attending the Convention.

At the entrance of the event, I was greeted with smiling faces and received several hugs from old friends. A Convention board member enthusiastically handed me a black bag filled with informative paperwork, a personal name tag on a lanyard, and a Convention Passport. I recognized several people at the Convention—peers from my paralegal studies courses, PANJ dinner meeting events, and fellow PANJ committee members. Before I made my rounds to meet the vendors and network with others in the legal industry, I walked right to the headshot station. I have never taken a professional headshot before! I desperately needed a new LinkedIn profile picture and it was the perfect time to get one done. The photographer, Sabrina, was wonderful. My headshots are very professional! After I was done with my photo shoot, I toured the vendor hall, handed out my business cards, and talked to multiple paralegals.

I was excited to attend the four (4) sessions at the Convention – Immigration, Cannabis Legal Marijuana, International Child Custody Issues, and Ethics & Avoiding Legal Malpractice: It's Not Just the Lawyers. I learned a great deal about immigration law and intriguing facts about legal marijuana in New Jersey. It was a great opportunity to learn about different legal topics and a time to engage with the speakers and attendees from different legal backgrounds and specialties. I learned informative facts and insight from each speaker.

I walked into the event with a huge smile. I walked out with an even bigger smile! I had an amazing time at the New Jersey Paralegal Convention. For those who work in the legal field, who are thinking of becoming a paralegal or considering pursuing a career in law, come out to attend the 2020 New Jersey Paralegal Convention! Spend the day learning and networking! I cannot wait for this year's Convention!

Samantha Vitone graduated from Fairleigh Dickinson University's ABA Approved Paralegal Studies Certificate Program on October 17, 2019. Following her employment at Day Pitney, LLP as a Project Assistant, she recently accepted a paralegal job at a law firm in New York City and will be starting her new journey on February 10, 2020.

The 2019 Annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention: Paralegals are Valuable!

By Jessica E. Resnick

The Annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention. It's a mouthful. We, as paralegals, have tremendous responsibility. The Convention not only reminded us that paralegals have so much to offer in a legal environment, but we also have a powerful presence in the lives of attorneys. Paralegals are more than just "paralegals" but multitaskers, masters of organization, and that friendly voice on the phone when a client has dialed in for an urgent response to their pressing question. **The value of an indispensable paralegal is priceless.**

This is especially true of an attorney who is inundated with court proceedings and needs the assistance of their paralegal. Again, the Convention was a reminder to all of us paralegals that we are appreciated and invaluable to attorneys and clients.

When I arrived at the Convention, I was greeted with warm smiles and a goodie bag. You can't have too many bags! I walked through the throng of vendors and saw all of the prizes to be won, with even more goodies on their tables to add to my bag. The sponsors all come to the Convention because they know their products could add benefit to a legal environment, and most importantly, a paralegal's life. Sponsors present included process servers, pain management specialists; litigation support services and schools offering education in paralegal and law studies just to name a few! Before locating my first seminar, I visited the photographer to have my professional headshot taken. I needed a new picture for my LinkedIn profile! This was just another benefit of attending the Convention.

My favorite seminar was on medical marijuana and the law, presented by a panel of three attorneys. Obviously, this is a "hot button" issue and is quite relevant to paralegals. Since medical marijuana is now legalized in New Jersey, it is sensible to have attorneys deliver a presentation at the Convention who are well versed on the subject. They pointed out to the attendees the substantial workload necessary to address the client's needs (cue: organized paralegals who can multitask) from obtaining applications for permits down to finding a property in a town that is not near a school and has no zoning regulations for marijuana. This is an up and coming field of law and New Jersey paralegals will be in great demand!

During the lunch break, paralegals and sponsors alike gathered in the main ballroom for lunch, networking and prize drawings! I had the vegetarian dish – yum! When the lunch break ended, the final seminar was presented by an attorney and an Advanced Certified Paralegal. She spoke about her role in the law office where she worked. Her attorney commented that she was invaluable to him and his clients. She reminded us that, WE as paralegals must remember that it is our job to protect the attorney, while the attorney must protect the client.

Paralegals are imperative to a high functioning law office and the Convention was a great reminder to all of us that we should never doubt our value in the legal profession. If so many attorneys are willing to volunteer their time to educate us and so many sponsors are willing to take time out of their busy day to enlighten us, that is an indication that paralegals are invaluable.

Jessica Resnick has a Bachelor of Arts degree from Muhlenberg College and a paralegal studies certificate from Fairleigh Dickinson University. She's been a real estate paralegal for Epstein, Brown & Gioia, LLC since 2016 and a Trustee at Large of the Paralegal Association of New Jersey since 2019. She was recently appointed as Newsletter Editor of Perspective.

2019 ANNAUL NEW JERSEY PARALEGAL CONVENTION

By Sandy McCurry

I think at one time or another, we've all heard the expression, "teach an old dog new tricks." Going to the annual New Jersey Paralegal Convention is exactly that for me. I've been a paralegal since 1992 and I have been working in the legal field for 28 years. A great many of the men and women I meet and talk to at the conventions are younger than my years of experience. So I think it's safe to say that, without a doubt, that qualifies me as an old dog. Almost all of my work experience has been in personal injury, worker's compensation and employment law. Most of those years were spent in a larger personal injury firm in Bergen County but for the past seven years, I've been at a smaller, close knit firm in Sussex County, a whole 11 mile commute from my home.

It was actually my current boss who, about five or six years ago, first suggested I attend the New Jersey Paralegal Convention. I admit at first I scoffed. I'd been a paralegal for years, what could I possibly learn from a convention? However, I signed up, picked my meal choice and marked it on my calendar. With a shrug of my shoulders, I drove down to the Renaissance in Woodbridge for my first convention. I walked in with no knowledge of what to expect and no business cards for the many drawings the vendors held. I left with a bag full of free goodies, a stomach full of really good food, and more importantly, with the knowledge that being an older paralegal didn't mean that there still wasn't a thing or two (or 100) I couldn't learn.

I continued to go every year until last year, 2018. Unfortunately, due to a pending full knee replacement and a real inability to walk, I couldn't physically participate. I truly missed going and was sad when the day came, the convention was held, and I wasn't there. I resolved that come October 2019, I was going to be there, "bionic knee" and all.

Sure enough, when the email circulated about the upcoming 2019 New Jersey Paralegal Convention, I immediately signed up. A new paralegal in our firm also signed up for her first ever convention and another paralegal, who had only attended one prior convention, signed up as well. We thankfully work for a firm who believes in furthering the knowledge and education of their staff.

The three of us headed down to Woodbridge, business cards in hand. Krista and I were signed up for the three sessions on trucking litigation, while Marie was signed up for the family law seminars. We got our name tags and bags upon registration and circulated, meeting with the vendors and other paralegals, picking up the free 'swag,' putting our business cards in for the drawings and discussing everything from process serving to medical exhibits and even IT needs. After attending the opening session, we set off to our first educational session. The sessions are always informative, the hand outs are always extremely helpful and the time literally flies by. In between each session, we had time to grab yet another snack and drink and continue to meet with the many vendors.

By lunch, I actually had to run to my car to drop off the overwhelming amount of freebies given out throughout the day. During lunch and after speeches are given, the many, and I do mean many, drawings for prizes began. A word of advice to anyone who claims they never win anything. I strongly suggest you don't excuse yourself to use the bathroom during the drawings. Take it from someone who figured she's never a lucky winner and decided to step out. Walking back in to hear my name being called for "the last time" and having to admit that, oops, I was in the lady's room was, to say the least, very embarrassing. However, the wireless earbuds I won quickly had me forgetting my truly awkward moment!

Another word of advice- do not hesitate to collect the free items that the vendors put out. I don't mean take all of the gloves, coffee mugs, pens, etc. for yourself, but by all means, don't be shy either. The vendors bring this stuff for you to take, enjoy and share. The other people in my office know that come the next work day, there will be a wide array of items for them to take.

I look forward to the 2020 Paralegal Convention, as do the two women who attended with me this year, and I know that, despite having 28 years of experience, the New Jersey Paralegal Convention will no doubt teach this old dog yet again.

Sandy McCurry graduated from Rutgers University with a Bachelor's degree in Labor Relations and a certificate in Criminology in 1989. She received her paralegal certificate with honors from Fairleigh Dickinson University in 1992. She has 28 years of experience in personal injury, employment, worker's compensation and mass torts. She worked for Marc Saperstein, Esq. at Davis, Saperstein & Salomon for a number of years before moving to her present employment, Morris, Downing and Sherred in Newton.

"Legal Studies is a great program. All of the faculty have real-world experience and share their knowledge with students. They take a personal interest in your success. It makes me love my chosen profession even more."

Anna Mazur



PARALEGAL STUDIES COURSES

Introduction to the Paralegal Profession • Legal Research • Property Transactions • Family Law
Wills and Estates Administration • Criminal Law and Procedure • Litigation Procedure • Torts • Legal Writing
Advanced Legal Writing • Business Organizations and Government Regulations • Advanced Legal Research
The Paralegal Studies Program is approved by the American Bar Association Standing Committee on Paralegals

COST (2019)

In-County Tuition & Fees for 1 year, based on 15 credits per semester: \$4,455

Books & Supplies for 1 year: \$2,000

Financial Aid Assistance Available

Upon completion of this program students will be able to:

1. Use the law library, including encyclopedias, reporter systems, digests, and practice manuals, utilize computer-assisted research including WESTLAW, reporter systems, statutes, administrative codes, and extended databases.
2. Understand and use rules governing courts and basic litigation procedures including telephone technique, client interviews, complaints, interrogatories, and motions.
3. Use forms and filing procedures relevant to typical legal proceedings.
4. Use forms and filing procedures in real and personal property transactions, including Real Estate Settlement Procedures Act.

The College is a member of the American Association for Paralegal Education. Students who already have a college degree – Associate, Bachelor's or higher can earn a **Paralegal Studies Certificate** (31 Credits).

Articulation agreements with public and private institutions offer graduates of A.A.S. degree the opportunity to transfer all of their coursework to a four-year institution. Students in specialized programs, or who hold an A.A.S. degree should discuss the transfer process with an advisor.

DEPARTMENT CONTACT INFORMATION

Contact: Dr. Aslihan Cakmak, *Department Chair*

Email: BusinessAndCompSci@middlesexcc.edu

Phone: 732.906.2594

Web: middlesexcc.edu/business-and-computer-science