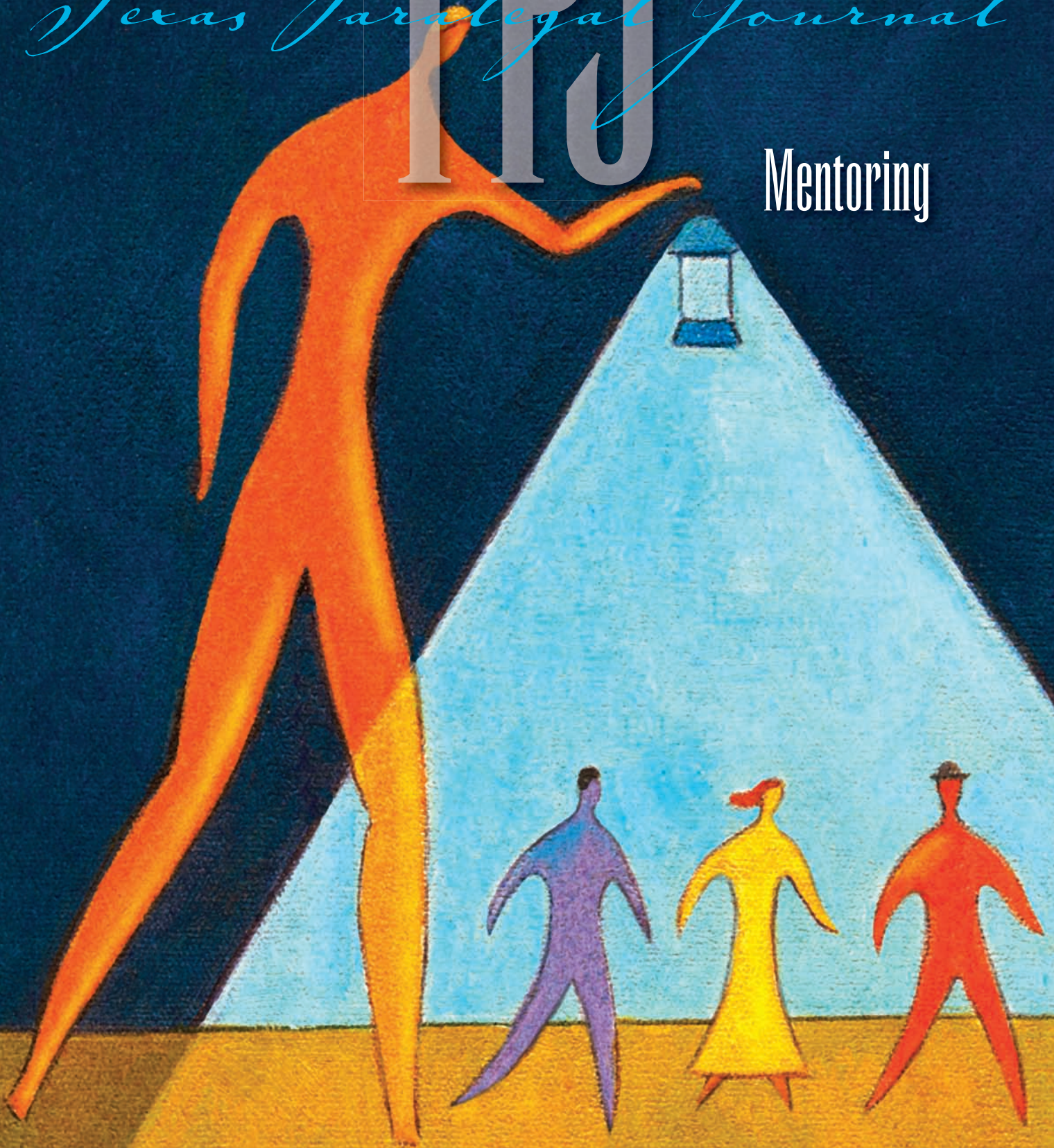


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TPIJ

Texas Paralegal Journal

Mentoring





State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division



PD Mentor / Protégé Program

Are you studying to be a paralegal, or are you new to the field?

Have you recently changed the type of law that you work in?

The Paralegal Division offers a mentor program to help you get started!

Participants receive direction and support on topics such as ethics, career advancement, and professionalism. Protégés also have access to valuable networking opportunities with other paralegals and the legal community through their mentor, as well as at state-wide and district Paralegal Division events.

Eligible PD members include:

- Student members
- Active and Associate members with less than 3 years' work experience as a paralegal
- PD members changing the area of law on which they focus



The mentor / protégé relationship can be very rewarding, with benefits extending long past the official end of the relationship.

All of the PD mentors are Division members who have at least 7 years' experience working as a paralegal. Many of our mentors are also Division leaders and liaisons.

Mentors are located across the state and work in many areas of law.

Protégés may be matched with a mentor who is not geographically close by; meetings may be held electronically based on the mentor and protégé's preferences.

The mentoring program is a **free benefit** available to Paralegal Division members.

Join the PD today and let us match you with a mentor in your area of legal interest!

Visit www.txpd.org to learn more about membership and the Mentor/Protégé program.

PRESIDENT'S *Message*

by Joncilee Davis, ACP, President, Paralegal Division

This is my favorite yearly issue of the Texas Paralegal Journal. In this issue we celebrate the Paralegal Division's members' accomplishments of the past year. As most of you know, the Division has some amazing members, and you are about to meet a few of them. Some of their accomplishments include becoming certified, being voted in as paralegal of the year by one of the local associations across Texas, serving on a committee, serving on the Board of Directors, and planning our wonderful Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar.



If you are in this issue, or have been in one of these previous issues, you should be honored. If you are certified by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, NALA, or NFPA, stand proud. You took time away from your friends, family, and hobbies to study and sit for the examination. If you have not yet sought certification, I hope you will think about doing so this next year. The CLA/CP examination has been

around since 1976, making this the 37th year paralegals have been able to take this test. The PACE examination was created in 1996, making this the 17th year of being able to earn the RP designation. In 2014, we will celebrate paralegals being offered the TBLS examination, marking 20 years of board specialization for paralegals.

There is no time like the present to become certified!

Have you ever thought about volunteering with the Paralegal Division? Maybe this is the year you "raise your hand" for the first time. As my first message of this year discussed, if you are shy like Boo Radley, there is always a place for you in the Division. Many of the Division's volunteers are more behind the scenes. If you are passionate like Jean Louise Finch, then volunteer to be a mentor. Read through all the committee listings and see which one may be the best fit for you.

This year, I am privileged to serve as

your President. My hope is that in some way I have inspired you to grow and I encourage you to use the wonderful resources of the Paralegal Division to help you continue to grow. Just a few include: The many hours of CLE, both in person and via webinar; the e-group; pro bono events; charity events; and networking opportunities. As Harper Lee's character Atticus Finch says in *To Kill A Mockingbird*, "Mockingbirds don't do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don't eat up people's gardens, don't nest in corncribs, they don't do one thing but sing their hearts out for us. That's why it's a sin to kill a mockingbird." While I'm sure Harper Lee did not intend for mockingbirds to be likened to paralegals, perhaps we are.

Guillaume Apollinaire was a French writer in the late 1890s and early 1900s. Maybe his words will inspire you to let the Paralegal Division help you fly and discover all the wonderful opportunities available to you as a paralegal:

"Come to the edge.
We can't. We're afraid.
Come to the edge.
We can't. We will fall!
Come to the edge.
And they came.
And he pushed them.
And they flew."

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TPJ

Texas Paralegal Journal

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The Mentoring Experience: Involvement in Learning

There is just no better way than a one-on-one, face-to-face interaction in a working legal office for a student to get a real feel for the profession.

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EDITOR'S *Note*

By Heidi Beginski, TBLS-BCP

Have you ever been the new kid in school? One of the worst feelings you can have as a kid is standing there, not knowing where to go or how things are done. Then, thankfully, a teacher or one of the other kids points you in the right direction or shows you how to do something.

Growing up as an “Army brat,” being the new kid was a common experience for me. When we moved to North Dakota, I recall being in the school cafeteria holding my lunch tray and having no idea where to get my drink. Fortunately, another student showed me that the huge stainless steel piece of equipment across the room was the “iron cow” and demonstrated how to pour a glass of milk from it. That glass of milk tasted so good...even though to this day I typically do not like milk.

Throughout our lives, most of us have benefitted by someone more experienced and knowledgeable than ourselves showing us “the ropes” of some new situation or undertaking. Not only do we benefit from such guidance, but the experience creates a bond between ourselves and those that help us. In addition, the practical experience teaches each of us to “pay it forward” and help others.

Helping other paralegals that are new to the profession, new to an area of law, or new to the office is a grown-up version of showing the new kid where to get a glass of milk. The stakes are bigger in the workplace, and so are the pay-offs.

In this issue, you’ll find articles that demonstrate that while mentoring can be difficult to define, it clearly involves communication, is relationship-based, and is a valuable tool in both personal and professional development—for both the protégé and the mentor.



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We provide... leadership • professionalism • public service

Join PD and reap the benefits!

Below is a highlight of a few of the benefits that can make your membership invaluable.

- » **E-Group Forum:** Join the members-only forum with hot topics, forms, ethics, and general questions posted and answered by paralegals. The eGroup is a way for members to share information and to obtain input to help address questions. Say you have a question and think the group would be a good resource; you could send your question to the eGroup. In a matter of minutes, you can have an answer to your question, a fresh idea about the matter, or a lead in the right direction. The amount of time that you can save with the eGroup is worth the cost of membership alone.
- » **CLE:** The Paralegal Division provides many opportunities to obtain CLE. Every year the Paralegal Division sponsors the Texas Advanced Paralegal Seminar (TAPS), a 3-day CLE seminar where you can obtain up to 14 hours of CLE for one low great price. A majority of the topics are TBLS approved for those board certified paralegals. If you are not able to attend TAPS, the Paralegal Division provides other opportunities by providing at least 3 hours of CLE in your district and online CLE. The Paralegal Division has over 60 different CLE topics available online for those paralegals that are not able to attend CLE outside of the office. You can obtain your CLE hours while at your computer.
- » **Mentor Program:** The mentor program is available to all members of the Paralegal Division. The purpose of this program is to provide support on topics such as ethics, career advancement, professionalism, and the Division. Mentors will provide support, guidance, and direction to new paralegals that will strengthen their links to the paralegal community, and contribute to their success as a paralegal. Protégés also have access to valuable networking opportunities with other paralegals and the legal community through their mentor, as well as at state-wide and district Paralegal Division events.

Membership criteria and additional member benefits can be found at www.txpd.org under “Membership” tab. All applications are accepted and processed online at www.txpd.org/apply. Dues payment accepted by check, money order or credit card (\$5 convenience fee is charged for all credit card payments). Questions regarding membership in the Paralegal Division can be forwarded to pd@txpd.org or memberchair@txpd.org.

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The Mentoring Experience: Involvement in Learning

By Lee Bass, ACP



In Homer's *Odyssey*, Athena disguised herself as Mentor, a wise old man and family friend, to offer advice to the original protégé—Telemachus, the son of Odysseus. Fortunately, no disguise is required for either mentor or mentee taking part in the Mentor Program sponsored by the State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division. This program is a benefit to student members of the PD Division, and not only benefits the students, but gives working paralegals the opportunity to help prospective members of our profession and provide some practical tips for students learning new skills and entering the job market.

I had the privilege of mentoring a student enrolled in the paralegal studies program at El Paso Community College. If my protégé is representative of the kind of student who reaches out for mentoring, I can safely say that potential candidates are among the most thoughtful, thorough, and professional potential paralegals out there. She was interested, appreciative, and eager to learn, and I certainly hope that she benefitted from the mentoring experience as much as I have.

When the call went out for a mentor in my community, I was excited because I love teaching and sharing my experience in the legal support field. Having taught a few paralegal courses over the years, I know all too well the gap that exists between the theory as presented in class, and the reality of the profession. It's perfectly fine to learn about Shepardizing and trial preparation in a class situation; but such lessons can take on a different light when filtered through the day-to-day experiences of a currently employed, experienced paralegal. Mentoring sessions offer a glimpse into the practical side of being employed in a law office—almost like a mini-internship.

After my protégé and I were put in touch through the Mentoring Program, we arranged to meet in my office. (Note that it's important for a mentor to inform his or her attorney-supervisor about the program and get authorization for any visits, and to make sure there are no confidential client materials visible in the office during the sessions.) I asked her to come in for a few hours on a not-too-busy day, and this meeting was followed by a second session some time later. This two-meeting structure seemed to work well—it allowed us to get to know each other a bit, gave me time to cover relevant topics, and gave her time to think about questions and bring up any concerns. In addition, the mentor must be available by phone or email to answer questions, or just to lend a helping hand.

I emphasized to my protégé that I could only show her what my small, boutique law firm was like, since there is so much variation in what paralegals do. In the first session,



I went over some of the basics in order to assess my protégé's knowledge and training, and covered some critical foundation skills, such as a thorough understanding of civics, the court system, and jurisdictions. I discussed my role in assisting with legal research, the importance and practicalities of calendaring, office administration, document management, time keeping and other day-to-day duties, and how they differed from what she was learning in school. I provided tips on factual research, and demonstrated websites and resources I use daily. I pulled out my reference books and my CP exam study manual and materials, and we discussed the various certifications and professional organizations. We also talked about the future of the paralegal profession itself, and reviewed resources available from OHSA, the State Bar of Texas, NALA, and NFPA.

For the second session, my mentee had some time to digest the previous information, and had some additional questions, which I did my best to answer. For example, she wanted to see a trial notebook, and wanted "more coverage on what other typical work an attorney hopes a paralegal to be proficient in." I went into more detail about research, depositions, and trial preparation, and pulled out as many desk books, examples, and practical aids as I could find (being careful not to use

privileged or current case material.) It was gratifying to practically see a light bulb appear above her head when I showed her an actual deposition transcript—one area where the gap in class theory and workplace realities was apparent. We discussed the workplace environment, working as part of a team, and working with attorney-supervisors. At this point, we also talked about practical job-hunting topics, including crafting a resume, acquiring additional skills such as a second language, managing social media content while seeking employment, and building a workplace wardrobe.

I feel that theoretical ethical problems presented in class don't always convey the real importance of the ethical guidelines we all must adhere to in real-world situations, so in addition to the topics described above, I spent quite a bit of time with my mentee going over the ethical rules for legal support personnel in detail. It's my hope that if she gained anything from our time together, it would be an enhanced awareness of the pitfalls, realities, and significance of ethics in the legal profession. At the close of the second session, we arranged to keep in touch, and I offered to help her with job recommendations, resume proofing, and any other assistance I could give with her job hunt. Embarking on a new career is a risk, and job hunting

is stressful under the best of circumstances, so the continued support of a mentor can be very reassuring.

I offer the above description of the mentoring process (as I interpreted it) in the hope that it will inspire more practicing paralegals to share their knowledge and experience. The specific content of instruction and interaction with a mentee may vary, but in the end, it's all about promoting the ethics and professionalism of the paralegal profession, with a generous helping of career practicalities and advancement. Even if unable to participate directly as a mentor, paralegals can spread the word through their local professional chapters and educational institutions. There is just no better way than a one-on-one, face-to-face interaction in a working legal office for a student to get a real feel for the profession, and I can recommend it as a very rewarding experience for both participants.

More information on the Paralegal Division (PD) of the State Bar of Texas Mentor/Protégé program can be obtained by visiting the PD Division website: <http://txpd.org>. Please log into the Members-Only area to obtain a mentor or protégé application.

Lee Bass, PLS, ACP is a paralegal at Ainsa Hutson LLP in El Paso.

PROTÉGÉS' COMMENTS ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN PD'S MENTOR PROGRAM

"My mentor is Ms. Sharon Wornick and she's been wonderful. We were paired up just this past October; she has follow up with me via email. I am very grateful for the mentor program and my experience with the program's support has been very helpful with my current job. I am relieved that I have someone like Ms. Wornick that I can ask a question in my time of need."

Yvonne Paus, Junior Litigation Paralegal
City Attorney's Office
City of Arlington, Texas

"I was matched up with a local Paralegal and she was extremely helpful to me. She answered all my questions, made herself available to me. I accepted a position with a Bastrop attorney working 3 days a week in office and 2 remotely. Her experience and advice calmed my nerves enough for me to get my resume out there and although I was seeking a 2-day-a-week internship, by week two, a paying offer was made to me. I've completed my last semester in the Paralegal Program and hope to be added to your mentor list. I think this is an asset for newbies like

myself. I've encouraged fellow classmates to join the State Bar-Paralegal Division in addition to local associations because it offers so much more."

Marcella "Marcie" Lowery
Copperas Cove

"I was paired up with Ms. Kay Walton and she has been invaluable. I really appreciate the program and all the help it offers to those of us who are new in our areas of law."

Shanna Mello
Weatherford



MENTORS' COMMENTS ABOUT PARTICIPATING IN PD'S MENTOR PROGRAM

"Someone once said that it takes a village to raise a child. Perhaps that's also true for those of us who graduate from a professional school and go directly into the work force without an internship. Sure, we know the rules of discovery but many of us can recall the sheer panic when, for the first dozen times, we were handed a stack of discovery documents from opposing counsel and told to draft the responses. A mentor - be it another paralegal, a seasoned legal secretary, or the supervising attorney - is invaluable at that moment

if for no other purpose than to lower the level of anxiety and nudge us in the right direction to complete the task. In everyday practice we are all mentors who bring to the table our own unique sets of experiences and knowledge that we share with our colleagues.

"Mentoring enables and promotes the growth of our profession but really is nothing more than extending a hand to another to help move them forward. For those of us who see being a paralegal as a career, not just a place to spend time until

something else comes along, building our knowledge base and resources is invaluable. No one can know everything but a mentor can help you learn where to go to find the answers you need. Most of all, I think a mentor can support and encourage another through stressful times; we can help others focus on the issues and learn to think critically; and we share the knowledge and insights we have gathered during our years on the road of hard knocks."

Kay Walton
Houston

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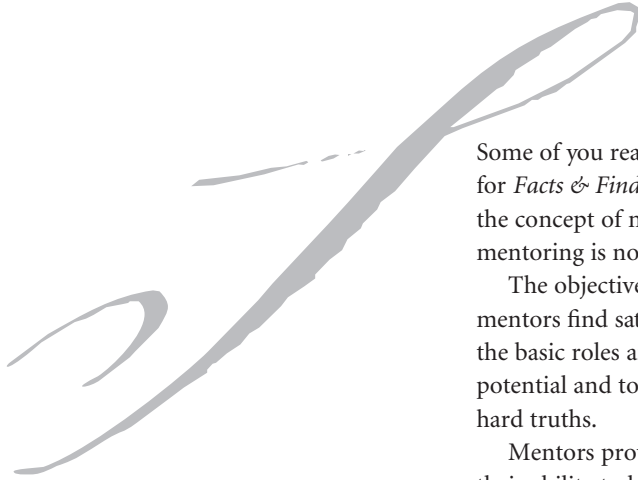
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Still Working? Mentoring

By Vicki J. Kunz, ACP, CRM

Reprinted with permission of Vicki J. Kunz and the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. The article originally appeared in the July/August 2012 issue of *Facts & Findings*.



Some of you read may recall an article, “The Give & Take of Mentoring” that I wrote for *Facts & Findings* 10 years ago. As one might expect, not much has changed about the concept of mentoring. What is particularly evident over the past decade is that mentoring is not going out of style.

The objective is to help mentees move forward in their career and life goals. The mentors find satisfaction in helping others by having an impact on their lives. We know the basic roles and responsibilities. Mentees seek direction and guidance to reach their potential and to grow personally and professionally. They are willing to be open to some hard truths.

Mentors provide direction and guidance based on their experience, connections, and their ability to help identify areas to focus on. They are also willing to take time to share constructive feedback. A good mentor will move you, inspire you, or motivate you. He or she can help alter the mentees’ perceptions about themselves.

PERSONAL EXAMPLES

I surveyed some seasoned paralegals about their mentoring experiences in both roles and found some who were amazingly positive, and others not so much. The positive stories were great. The ones I found particularly satisfying were those that involved establishing mentoring relationships with fellow NALA members. Every one of them shared stories of how a NALA member took them under their wing and showed them the ropes about organizational leadership or to learn more about NALA.

Several were encouraged to run for state or national NALA offices, and while some pursued those opportunities, some did not for various personal reasons. Every one of them, however, found it gratifying that a successful professional leader saw the potential in them. Even small confidence-building results, rather than always focusing on a pinnacle result, are still victories. These should be considered successful outcomes from mentoring relationships.

One paralegal shared a story in which she found an extremely satisfying mentor/mentee relationship that she had no idea was there. She had been a presenter at a conference sponsored by the administrative office of the US courts that was attended by jury administrators, federal judges, and clerks of federal courts from around the nation. Following the conference, she began receiving email from colleagues thanking her for her presentation and asking for her opinions about jury administration and more details about jury management in her own court. Several years later, she was attending another jury conference and a jury administrator from another state related what an impact that past presentation had made on her. She was humbled when that administrator told her that she was “professional, positive, knowledgeable, open, friendly, and willing to share information.” This person then told her that she had told her supervisor that she was her mentor and wanted to be just like her.



She had no idea that she had made such an impression with a colleague and that she was a mentor from afar. Since that time, others have expressed their gratitude for the example she has set and for being a positive role model. This mentor told me to remind others that it is always best to be positive and to keep a good impression because someone is always watching. We never know who might be inspired by how we act, what we do, or what we say.

I found her story similar to another by a person who has been teaching in a paralegal program for more than 25 years. She said some of her best teaching moments were the “war stories” she shared on getting a job. She also taught her students the importance of continuing to grow in their jobs, keeping their skills current, and maintaining a sense of humor. Students over the years contacted her long after they were into their careers and told her what a great influence she had been and how much they owed her for their success. She said it wasn’t until later in her teaching career that she recognized she was not just a teacher, but also a mentor to her students. She takes great pride in their accomplishments.

THE BOSS?

Another great story was from someone who told me her current boss was the best mentor she has ever had. Bosses or supervisors can be exceptional mentors if given the chance. Her boss has many years of experience in the corporate world. This storyteller admired how the boss had a way of focusing on what was real and important versus what was not.

When she had her last performance review, the boss told her that she had everything she needed to move up in the corporate world—with one exception, that she was not quite politically savvy enough to recognize when honesty is sometimes not the best policy when silence might be preferable. She agreed that she sometimes got into trouble by asking questions at the wrong time and pointing out the

“elephant in the room.” This was not a good thing within her company.

Her boss/mentor continues to work with her on that problem by reviewing meetings with her after the fact, and telling her what she did well and what she needed to work on. Wow! That takes spirit to accept hard and constructive criticism, and then do something with it. This person has actually been a mentor to me from afar. I have always admired her frankness. Her less here, one I have marked well, is that frankness is not always the best policy.

Other memorable comments from successful mentoring experiences included the mentor feeling wonderful knowing that the young junior paralegal struggling to find satisfaction in his skill level became proud that he was recognized as the best junior paralegal the firm ever had. He soon became a mentor to new paralegals in the office. The mentor’s true-life lesson from that experience was that we sometimes need help from others to recognize and be happy with our own abilities.

FAILURES?

I also appreciated the frankness of those who shared experiences of what they considered failures in mentoring relationships. As I read their stories, I didn’t see them as failures, but as meaningful lessons. I say that learning from your own mistakes sticks with you more than learning from others.

One paralegal shared with me two different situations where she was specifically asked to be a mentor to a fellow employee. Management handled neither situation correctly. The mentee wasn’t informed what was expected out of the mentoring relationship and when they established the formal connection in the first place. Further, they did not explain to the mentor that the mentee did not know this.

See the problem she encountered? She said she learned, the hard way, that

if asked by a third party to participate in a mentoring relationship, then all parties should sit down together to discuss expectations. All parties must be willing to participate. Egos and politics need to be set aside and trust is of the utmost importance.

Another paralegal shared the story of being flattered that she was asked to be a mentor to a fellow paralegal in her organization. She soon found early in the relationship that the mentee wanted her to do all the work. The mentee expected the mentor to arrange the meetings and send her e-mails with networking contacts she should use for potential jobs. More disappointing, the mentor shared confidential information the mentee told her about her career with others in their professional organization.

The mentee admitted that her enthusiasm and desire to help others in the organization wanted for awhile. Then she was asked to serve as a fellow mentor by someone that first presented her plan and set out her needs and expectations. Once again she found herself motivated and after some self-analysis and honesty, identified what skills and knowledge she could contribute to the relationship and acknowledged her weak spots. She happily reported the relationship evolved and she now considers her mentee a lifelong friend.

Mentoring is not going out of style. I can tell you that in the past 10 years I have seen the method of mentoring evolve into a more creative process that makes it easier to sustain a valuable mentoring relationship. Traditional mentoring relationships are enhanced with today’s technology, and sometimes evolve into fulltime e-mentoring or tele-mentoring relationships. I have had some of my own mentoring relationships in which I have not even met the other party in person, but considered them very successful.

We have talked about formal relationships, generally arranged by employers or professional associations,



and information associations in which you seek out your own relationships, establish expectations, set agendas, and are open to communications. But let's not forget an easy type of mentoring that you can use by simply being mindful of those around you. This is what I like to call the "Invisible Mentor," or the "Silent Mentor." It is amazing what you can learn from others. Watch, learn and listen!

Revisit mentoring. Some simple truths do not change with time. Mentoring is a give-and-take relationship. It is sometimes formal, sometimes comfortable, and sometimes a lot of work. We all will have, or have had, many opportunities to be on one side of a mentoring relationship at one time or another.

Consider the list of *Universal Truths of Mentoring* presented here and use them to find the right mentoring relationship for your own career needs and goals or to discovery satisfaction in sharing your own experiences to help develop and inspire others.

Vicki J. Kunz, ACP, CRM is the insurance risk manager for MDU Resources Group, Inc., in Bismarck, ND.

Universal Truths of Mentoring

1. Mentoring cannot be assumptive. You need to be respectful of the time and shared honesty.
 2. Mentoring means being open, not closed. Open to ideas, suggestions, and hard truths.
 3. Mentoring needs to be diverse. Do all your mentors look, sound, think, and act like you? Mix it up. Include those in the business sector, in community and government areas, through professional affiliations, and don't forget a cheerleader.
 4. You are not an expert in everything. Denial is essential. Be brave enough to say, "No, I can't help you there," or better yet, "I don't know."
 5. Mentoring is a shared two-way, give-and-take relationship. One sided does not work, and generally leaves one person feeling used and abused. Look at it as a "what can I give?" or "what can I share?" relationship, not "What can I take?"
 6. Mentoring means you must leave your ego at the door. You have to be big enough to accept the advice without being defensive.
 7. Mentoring, at times, mirrors networking. Example: people that you meet in your lifetime will circle around again. You don't know when a mentor will reappears. That being said, mentoring and networking are different. Mentoring, when you apply and follow the rules, is relationship building.
 8. Women mentoring women. We are often our own worst enemy. Cattiness, pettiness, whispers, and jealousies can leave battle scars. Mentoring means supporting each other. It does not mean tearing each other down.
 9. You have gone to training sessions, studied, and read shelves of books. If you are not where you are in your career, don't blame mentors, your boss, or the "good old boys" network. Take personal responsibility.
 10. Mentoring means remembering your manners. Say "thank you." Be appreciative for the gifts of skills, advice, and contacts that you have been given. Be gracious.
 11. Knowledge is power. Know people and know their work. You learn by asking open-ended questions and then (the hard part) be willing to listen more and talk less.
- Do not make mentoring connections based on appearance, title, and/or status.

Bonus Universal Truth: Give back!

Survey: *Texas Paralegal Journal*: Print or Electronic Journal Format?

A survey was submitted to the membership through email notification on March 1, 2013 in regard to the delivery format of the *Texas Paralegal Journal*. The survey was open from March 1, 2013, to March 15, 2013.

There were 513 responses out of a total of 1,652 members.

Analysis:

- Sixty-four point three percent (64.3%) of the members prefer to receive the TPJ in print format.
- Approximately 90% of the members read the TPJ.
- Close to 50% of the members receive other electronic journals, ¾ of them read these journals.
- While 64% of the members prefer the TPJ in print, close to 70% believe they would still read the TPJ if it were received electronically.

Summary:

Based on the sample of the membership, the members prefer to receive the TPJ in print format.

Certified or Certificated?

by Mona H. Tucker, ACP

A couple of recent discussions on the Paralegal Division's LinkedIn social network prompted me to make an effort to clarify the difference between true paralegal certification and the certificate received after completion of a paralegal education program.

Many people misunderstand the difference between being certified and having a certificate of completion. I have heard that some paralegal programs tell students they will be certified once they finish a three (3) month weekend paralegal program.

Those of us who attended an ABA-approved paralegal program can testify that it certainly wasn't completed in three months! I once tried to discourage someone from taking a course that promised to make her a paralegal in six weeks. She signed up anyway and a couple of weeks into it, confessed that there was so much information being dumped on the students that there was no way they could possibly hope to absorb any or all of it in six weeks.

Peel vs. Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Committee of Illinois 110 S.Ct. 2281 (1990) is the landmark decision concerning the reliability of a claim to certification. Although the case was over a lawyer's claims to a specialty certification, the decision offers a standard by which paralegal certification may be judged as well. The U.S. Supreme Court suggested that a claim of certification is truthful and not misleading if:

- the claim itself is true;
- the bases on which certification was awarded are factual and verifiable;
- the certification in question is available to all professionals in the field who meet relevant, objective and consistently applied standards; and
- the certification claim does not suggest any greater degree of professional qualification than reasonably may be

inferred from an evaluation of the certification program's requirements.

Further, the Court advised that there must be a qualified organization to stand behind the certification process.

Theresa A. Pater, RP, a senior paralegal in Illinois, remarked that "When folks use the term 'certified' in their bio but do not note a credential, I send them an email asking them if they have: (1) passed an exam offered by NFPA, NALA, NALS; or (2) met the credential criteria for a state credential program or that of AAPI; or (3) do they mean they have a certificate that says they graduated from a paralegal program."

A quote from *Peel* that I found extremely telling was this: "... if the certification had been issued by an organization that had made no inquiry into petitioner's fitness, or by one that issued certificates indiscriminately for a price, the statement, even if true, could be misleading. ... Much like a trademark, the strength of a certification is measured by the quality of the organization for which it stands."

Paralegals should carefully choose the organizations through which they desire to be certified. There are too many unscrupulous wanna-be's out there. I have included here brief descriptions of the most nationally recognized certifications. All of these organizations require that paralegals successfully complete a competent examination before they are deemed "certified."

The Texas Board of Legal Specialization (TBLS) has offered specialty credentials for paralegals since 1994. Applicants must meet a minimum 30-hour requirement of TBLS-approved courses in the specialty area. (The 30 hours are earned within the three years immediately preceding application.) The day-long exam covers knowledge, skills and subject matter. An applicant or board-certified paralegal must be substantially involved in the chosen specialty area, meaning he or she must

devote at least 50% of his or her paralegal activities in the chosen specialty area in Texas during each calendar year, with the exception of bankruptcy, which requires 35%. A board-certified paralegal has to complete recertification every 5th year of certification. Each specialty requires 75 CLE hours for recertification, and all of those must be in the specialty area of law. Currently, TBLS offers paralegal certification in seven areas—bankruptcy law, civil trial law, criminal law, estate planning and probate law, family law, personal injury trial law, and real estate law.¹

The National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) pioneered certification for paralegals in 1976, and offers the Certified Paralegal (CP) credential (formerly Certified Legal Assistant – CLA). In order to be authorized to use the CP credential, one must qualify for the exam, successfully complete a rigorous two-day exam, and maintain the certification through participation in 50 hours of continuing legal education (including at least five hours of ethics) every five-year period subsequent to the examination.² NALA began offering advanced specialty certification in 1982 to Certified Paralegals. This program evolved into the Advanced Paralegal Certification program, which now has exams covering 20 different practice areas of law, with three more scheduled to launch in the upcoming months. Advanced certification is available only to those persons with current Certified Paralegal certification.

Marge Dover, CAE, NALA's Executive Director, suggests that those seeking professional certification should select the program for them based on several factors. Among these factors are recognition of the program, history, and stability of the program. Those seeking certification should expect the credential to be viable during their career, and not at risk of extinction. In addition, they will want to select a credential that will be helpful in distinguishing themselves and competing with others in the workplace. Marge noted that there are over 17,000 Certified Paralegals in the US today, with over 3,000 of those being in Texas.

The National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) offers two paralegal exams, the Paralegal CORE Competency

Exam (new in 2011) and the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (since 1996). The PCCE was developed to assess the knowledge, skills and ability of early-career and entry-level paralegals. Successful completion of the exam entitles one to use the CRP credential (CORE Registered Paralegal). CRP's must have eight hours of CLE every two years, including at least one hour of ethics. The PACE program offers an exam covering tasks that experienced paralegals routinely perform. Permission to use the Registered Paralegal (RP) credential is awarded upon passing the exam. To maintain the RP credential, paralegals are required to obtain 12 hours of CLE (including at least one hour in ethics) every two years.³

Suellen Honeychuck, RP, NFPA's Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certification, suggests that deciding which certification exam is best is an individual choice based on a variety of circumstances. She points out a comparison chart of the national level certification exams, which is available on the NFPA website.

There are other organizations that offer certifications to paralegals through testing or education and experience. Before making a decision on which certification fits your need, be careful to review the standards for taking the examination, prerequisites and compare each program for

level of quality.

Claims by unscrupulous paralegal certifications along with the myriad of paralegal programs seen across the nation, is a case of *caveat emptor*. If you are considering pursuing certification, please thoroughly check out the organization offering the credentials, ask questions, and compare to others that are widely recognized and accepted.

Twenty years ago, before there was a distinction between legal assistants and paralegals, Arthur R. Littleton offered the following caveat in his chapter "Defining the Economic Model of Legal Assistants", which was included in the American Bar Association's book, *Leveraging with Legal Assistants*:

The hiring lawyer must be careful to distinguish between a legal assistant with a CLA designation and a certificate from an educational institution. The latter certificate only *implies* that the legal assistant will perform well on the job because he or she has successfully completed the legal assistant course given at that institution. There is confusion within the profession because of these two certificates. Legal assistants themselves often misconstrue the meaning of the certificate from

the institution. The difference is that the CLA has proven experience and proven capabilities within the profession.

Texas does not require certification, so why would anyone volunteer for the time, expense, and stress of taking a certification exam if it isn't necessary? Call it pride in one's self, pride in a career, or simply wanting to stand out from the masses. Even if your employer doesn't know the difference between 'certified' and 'certificated', now you do. And, since part of our jobs is to educate the attorneys, we have to seize opportunities to explain the difference to them. Once they recognize the added value that comes with certification, my hope is that they will get on board with facilitating our opportunities to sit for the certification exams, and that after the certification or advanced certification is earned, recognize that achievement with an increase in the old paycheck.

Mona H. Tucker, ACP, is a certified paralegal by NALA and works for Nix, Patterson & Roach, L.L.P. in Daingerfield and is Director for District 14 of the Paralegal Division.

¹ www.tbls.org
² www.nala.org
³ www.paralegals.org

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PD Member Spotlight

Linda J. Wolf, ACP

I began my paralegal career in 1980 when I answered an ad in the newspaper for a position with an intellectual property boutique known at the time as Richards, Medlock & Harris. I wasn't even sure what a paralegal was, but a good friend thought it might be a career I would enjoy. And although the name has changed many times over, until we merged with Sidley Austin in 1996, I've been with the same group of lawyers for over 32 years.

Particularly with a new profession, networking is essential because there are no standards for the career. And at the time, the best way for paralegals to network was to join a local association. And so I joined DAPA. It was during a meeting of DAPA that the president told us about the newly created Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas. There was such excitement in the room; we felt we had finally taken that first step towards the professional recognition that we all wanted. I don't think a single person left that day without signing up to become a charter member of the Division. I remember racing back to the office to tell my attorney, who was very pleased and whole-heartedly supported my desire to join.

Throughout my career, I have been very fortunate to work with a very supportive and progressive group of lawyers who see the value of an educated and well-trained paralegal. I worked with one partner for 20 years, until his retirement in 2000. He had a chemical engineering degree, and he encouraged me to go back to school and take some chemistry courses so that I could better understand the technology involved in his cases.

One of my favorite adventures was to accompany one of our experts to Pennsylvania to assist him with whipping up some explosives in the lab, which we then detonated in the field.



In 1985, I sat for and passed the CP exam offered by NALA after attending the first NALA short course offered to help prepare for the exam in St. Louis, Missouri.

Because our work schedule was so incredibly hectic, I was not able to get involved at the local, state or national level until the mid-90s, so I spent the next 10-15 years working long days and traveling the country going to trial, since patent cases are all heard in federal court.

In 1995, I sat for and passed the first NALA specialty exam in intellectual property and in 1997 I was invited to serve on the NALA Certifying Board, which grades and maintains the NALA CP exam. I spent the next 4 years on the Certifying Board, two as its Chair.

After my service as the Chair of the Certifying Board, I spent the next 10 years on the NALA Board of Directors, the last 2 as its president. And it was during this time that I started taking a renewed interest in my local and state associations. In 2000, I was contacted by Kim Littlejohn regarding forming a NALA affiliate in Dallas, and in 2001 NTPA was born. During the same time, I began to

explore the benefits of membership in the Division. I have felt for years that one of the most under-rated benefits of membership in the Division is the access to CaseMaker. So many paralegals aren't even aware the benefit exists and it's such a powerful research tool.

During my NALA presidency, I carried the Paralegal Division and its reputation everywhere I went. And it was during my travels that I came to appreciate just how lucky we are to have such a thriving Division. Paralegals in many states have tried to form divisions or sections of their bar association, with little or no success. Even more distressing, there are still states where there is no definition in place for our profession. As a result, they would reach out wanting to know more about our Division and who they could contact for more information.

After my attorney retired in 2000, as many of us do, I had to reinvent myself at work. In addition to my paralegal duties, I became the librarian for the Dallas office, which gave me the perfect pulpit to preach the benefits of membership in the Division, if only for the access to CaseMaker. Most recently, in addition to my library duties, I've been promoted to Paralegal Manager for the Dallas office. And although I'm no longer active in the day to day of NALA, I am currently serving as NALA's representative on the ABA Paralegal School Approval Commission. And as those of you who have been privileged to serve in that capacity can attest, it is truly a rewarding experience. To be able to meet with future paralegals, and know that they will take this profession farther than we ever dreamed is amazing. In fact, when I look back and realize that there were only a handful of paralegal schools in the country when I started down this career path, I can see we've come a long, long way. And the future for our profession is only getting brighter.

PARALEGAL DIVISION 2012–2013 COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSONS

The Paralegal Division is grateful to all of the Committee Chairs listed below who take time from their busy schedules to lead a committee for this organization. Without the work of the Committee Chairs and their volunteer members, the Paralegal Division would not be able to offer the many benefits to its members.

Thank you to all of you!

Standing Committees

2013 Annual Meeting

Jay Williams, Co-Chair (Dallas)

Kelli M. Smith, CRP, Co-Chair (Dallas)

Continuing Education—District CLE

Sheila Milbrandt, Chair (Beaumont)

Online CLE/Webinars

Rhonda Brashears, CP, TBLS-BCP, Chair (Amarillo)

Elections

Gloria Porter, Chair (Denton)

Membership

Clara L. Buckland, C.P., Chair (El Paso)

Professional Development

Christine R. Cook, Chair (Houston)

Professional Ethics

Ellen Lockwood, ACP, RP, Chair (San Antonio)

Publications

Heidi Beginski, TBLS-BCP, Chair (El Paso)

Public Relations

Mary LaRue, CP, Chair (El Paso)

Ad Hoc Committees

Ambassador Program

Patricia J. Giuliano, Chair (San Antonio)

E-Group Policy

Heidi Beginski, TBLS-BCP, Chair (El Paso)

Ethics Handbook

Ellen Lockwood, ACP, RP, Chair (San Antonio)

Felony Application Review

Jena Parker, CP, Chair (Fort Worth)

Leadership

Debbie Oaks, Chair (Irving)

Membership Renewals—Spot Audit

Lori Winter, CP, Chair (Dallas)

Paralegal Programs/Education

Lisa Sprinkle, ACP, TBLS-BCP, Chair (El Paso)

Members' Local & National

Awards/Recognitions

Debbie Spencer, Chair (Dallas)

Pro Bono

Lyla Elk, Chair (Sherman)

Pro Bono Definition

Susan Wilen, RN, Chair (San Antonio)

State Bar College Membership

Application Review

Michele Flowers Brooks, CP, Chair (Austin)

TAPS 2012 Planning Committee

Susan Wilen, RN, Chair (San Antonio)

TAPS 2013 Planning Committee

Susan Wilen, R.N., Co-Chair (San Antonio)

Joncilee Davis, ACP, Co-Chair

(Dallas)

Texas Board of Legal Specialization

(TBLS) Examination- Helpful Hints

Javan Johnson, ACP, TBLS-BCP, Chair (Longview)

Vendor Liaison

Debbie Oaks, Chair (Irving)

PARALEGAL DIVISION STANDING COMMITTEES

Each year the Paralegal Division Board of Directors appoints members to serve on the various committees of the Paralegal Division. The Paralegal Division sends a call to each member of PD and asks for their assistance in serving this great organization. The list below details the Standing Committees of the Paralegal Division. If you are interested in serving on a committee, please contact your District Director (see email addresses on page 1 of this publication). OR you may go to www.txpd.org; sign into the Members-Only Area of the PD website and choose "Volunteer."

Below you will find committee descriptions to determine which Committee is YOUR choice. As a volunteer, you may help serve the Paralegal Division based on the amount of free time you have to devote to a particular interest. There is a need for many volunteers to help make the many benefits of the Paralegal Division available to its members. Please consider volunteering for 2013-2014!

- 1. Annual Meeting.** This committee shall plan the Annual Meeting of the general membership of the Division. The Chair and Board Advisor of this committee each year shall be from the District in which the Annual Meeting will be held the following year. The Annual Meeting Committee is responsible for planning and executing this event that includes confirming a keynote speaker, preparing an event budget, marketing the event and assisting on-site.
- 2. Continuing Education.** This committee shall be composed of at least one eligible (Active) member from each District who shall chair a subcommittee of three to five eligible members of the Division in the respective District. This committee shall be responsible for planning and presenting at least three hours of continuing legal education in each district per year. Planning a CLE event can be as easy as setting up a brown bag lunch or sponsoring three one-hour CLE events. In addition, in place of one of the District CLE events, you can obtain a webinar speaker that will be available to the entire membership of the Paralegal Division.
- 3. Elections.** This committee shall be composed of at least one Active member from each District and shall fulfill the responsibilities set forth in the Paralegal Division's Standing Rules and Bylaws. This committee will be concerned with the process of elections for Directors and with the process of balloting on proposed amendments to the Bylaws and shall assure compliance with the guidelines for each such process.
- 4. Membership.** This committee shall be composed of at least one Active member from each District. The members of this committee will help grow the membership of the Paralegal Division. For example, a volunteer can send out emails to various paralegals that are not members of the Paralegal Division; visit paralegal programs and address students; distribute marketing materials to local legal associations, etc. In addition, the members on this committee can submit ideas to the Board of Directors on how best to market the Paralegal Division to non-members as well as suggest new benefits for membership.
- 5. Professional Development.** This committee will assist in various projects for enhancing the professional development of paralegals. This committee shall monitor any bills introduced in the Texas legislature which would affect the paralegal profession and members of the Division, and shall be prepared to inform the general membership of the pros and cons of any such bills. This committee shall also monitor nationally the following: (a) articles published regarding the activities and profession of paralegals; (b) legislative action regarding the activities and profession of paralegals; and (c) court cases relative to the ethical considerations in the use of paralegals and any other relevant information regarding the activities and profession of paralegals. Articles are submitted to the Texas Paralegal Journal for publication in regard to paralegal professionalism.
- 6. Public Relations.** This committee shall study and develop various means to better inform the legal profession and the general public about the Paralegal Division, Paralegal profession, and shall nurture positive relationships with local and national associations of paralegals and other associations throughout the country. Plans for 2013-2014 will include the use of social media to educate members of the Paralegal Division.
- 7. Publications.** This committee shall be responsible for reviewing and submitting various substantive legal articles for publication in the *Texas Paralegal Journal*. It shall also study and recommend to the Board any other publications which will be beneficial to members of the Division and shall also be responsible for soliciting substantive legal articles from as many members as possible. In addition, articles can be written and submitted by the members of this committee.

Members can serve on Ad Hoc Committees appointed by the President of the Paralegal Division. Currently, there is a need for volunteers to serve on the following Ad Hoc Committee:

Pro Bono Ad Hoc Committee. This committee is responsible for enhancing pro bono activities in each District of the Paralegal Division. If you are a person who volunteers your time to serve others, this is the committee for you. Texas citizens need your service to insure everyone has access to legal representation.

PARALEGAL DIVISION 2012–2013 AMBASSADORS

As a benefit to the paralegal profession, the Paralegal Division offers paralegal associations, bar associations and paralegal programs an experienced CLE speaker through its Ambassador Program. The Ambassador Program of the Paralegal Division (PD) is made up of past presidents of the Paralegal Division that over 20 years of paralegal experience. Ambassadors are prepared to speak on a variety of topics. They will travel across Texas to present CLE to paralegals (both members and non-members) and distribute information on the Paralegal Division and its many member benefits. These Ambassadors spend many hours preparing, presenting and traveling for the Paralegal Division. The Board of Directors would like to extend its sincere gratitude to each person listed below who is a PD Ambassador. Not only are these Ambassadors past presidents of the Paralegal Division, but they all continue today to lead its cause.

Ambassador presentations are requested through a website link on the Paralegal Division's website at www.txpd.org (PD Speakers/Request a Speaker). Please take a moment to get to know the PD Ambassadors by viewing their photos and bios under [txpd.org/PD Speakers/Ambassadors](http://txpd.org/PD_Speakers/Ambassadors).

Thank You!

Michele Border, CP, TBLS-BCP
Dallas, TX

Rhonda Brashears, CP, TBLS-BCP
Amarillo, TX

Debra Crosby
Austin, TX

Patricia Giuliano
San Antonio, TX

Javan Johnson, ACP, TBLS-BCP
Longview, TX

Ellen Lockwood, ACP, RP®
San Antonio, TX

Cindy Mankus, TBLS-BCP
Plano, TX

Debbie Oaks
Dallas, TX

Wendi Rogers, CP, TBLS-BCP
Dallas, TX

Lisa Sprinkle, ACP, TBLS-BCP
El Paso, TX

Susan Wilen, RN
San Antonio, TX

PD MEMBERS RECENTLY BECAME CERTIFIED PARALEGALS BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS (NALA)

Andrea J. Demetriades, Dallas

Gigi F. Cox, Bellaire

Anita M. Hamilton, Houston

Shannon B. Pinette, San Antonio

Michelle S. Davis, North Richland Hills

Bethany Van der Smissen-Jones, Houston

Billie R. Westbrook, Pflugerville

Tammy Essing, Houston

PD MEMBERS WHO RECENTLY BECAME REGISTERED PARALEGALS BY THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF PARALEGAL ASSOCIATIONS (NFPA)

Lan Giang-Lam, Sachse

Kristy Geron, Rockwall

Diligence: A Mark of Excellence

by Judge Oscar G. Gabaldón, Jr., CWLS

This article is reprinted with permission from the El Paso Bar Journal.

The liberties of our country, the freedom of our civil constitution are worth defending at all hazards; and it is our duty to defend them against all attacks. We have received them as a fair inheritance from our worthy ancestors: they purchased them for us with toil and danger and expense of treasure and blood, and transmitted them to us with care and diligence. It will bring an everlasting mark of infamy on the present generation, enlightened as it is, if we should suffer them to be wrested from us by violence without a struggle, or be cheated out of them by the artifices of false and designing men.”

When these words of Samuel Adams (1722–1803) were published in 1771, they vividly portrayed the essence of diligence. His words captured the spirit of what diligence entails: passion, commitment, dignity, and staunch determination to bring and maintain a vision to fruition.

Hence, pursuing our tasks, dreams,

or goals earnestly and with unwavering focus is critical to the virtue of diligence. Diligence includes the ability to be careful, while at the same time, to seek excellence in whatever it is we desire to accomplish or achieve. When we are diligent, we are consistently determined to resourcefully pursue and make our objectives become reality. Diligence is the sister of perseverance and tenaciousness, for they are all rooted in and given birth by steady and energetic effort. It is diligence that often helps to turn what seems impossible to become possible.

This treasured quality propels men and women to be timely to their engagements. It gives them the impetus to “hang in” no matter how trying and challenging doing that may be. Diligence manifests itself when we proactively tackle and complete everyday routine tasks, such as timely returning telephone calls, timely submitting assignments, timely making decisions, timely tending to important matters, and timely responding to the needs of others. Diligence helps us to persevere until the end in adhering to and completing

responsibilities; and, doing so with a solid commitment to achieve outcomes that are nothing less than excellent.

In professions, like that of the lawyer, diligence is golden. Being a diligent lawyer means that the lawyer must constantly keep abreast of developments in the law, must return the calls of clients on a reasonable and timely basis, must consistently keep his or her clients fully informed about their cases, and must make every effort to make sure that his or her calendaring is handled in such a way so that they are prepared, ready, and on time to scheduled court hearings, appointments, and other commitments. Abraham Lincoln recognized this all too well. He said: “The leading rule for the lawyer, as for the man of every other calling, is diligence. Leave nothing for tomorrow which can be done today.”

When a person is not diligent, often times this is indicative of a lack of consideration for others. A lack of diligence is sometimes associated with individuals that have disregard for other people’s time, other people’s interests, or other people’s needs. These people are usually late to engagements, often cannot be trusted to come through for others, will not be willing to place the interests of others over their own, and are generally considered to be unreliable and untrustworthy.

Diligence, therefore, is a key characteristic of the person that is dependable and responsible. It is an honorable quality that often places people in a positive light and in high regard. Diligence is a necessary ingredient for a person that truly values the road to success and achievement. In more eloquent words, perhaps Spain’s celebrated writer, Miguel De Cervantes (1547–1616), says it best: “Diligence is the mother of good fortune, and idleness, its opposite, never brought a man to the goal of any of his best wishes.”

Judge Oscar G. Gabaldón, Jr., CWLS is an Associate Judge of the 65th District Court in El Paso County and is responsible for overseeing the trial of Child Abuse and Neglect cases. He is certified by the National Association of Counsel for Children as a Child Welfare Law Specialist (CWLS).



2012 Paralegal of the Year Awards



Pam Etie was awarded Paralegal of the Year by Capital Area Paralegal Association (CAPA).

Pamela M. Etie, ACP was presented with the 2012 Paralegal of the Year Award by the Capital Area Paralegal Association (CAPA) and Center for Advanced Legal Studies at CAPA's annual Paralegal Day Celebration in October. Ms.

Etie started her legal career as a very young receptionist and worked her way up the ladder as a highly skilled legal secretary, ultimately growing into an accomplished paralegal (even working a six-year stint as a law office administrator along that path). Ms. Etie is a corporate/M&A paralegal at DuBois, Bryant & Campbell, LLP in Austin. She received her Specialized Paralegal Associate Degree from Kaplan College in 2001. She became a Certified Paralegal (CP) through the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) in January 2003 and Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) in August 2008 with the specialty in Business Organizations: Incorporated Entities.

Ms. Etie has held several Board positions in CAPA and has volunteered on CAPA committees. She is the 2012-2013 President of CAPA and has previously served as President-Elect, Treasurer and Parliamentarian on the CAPA Board. She was Job Bank Chair from 2007-2012 and Web Team Chair from 2009-2012. She was awarded the CAPA Volunteer of the Year Award for 2009-2010 and the CAPA President's Award for 2010-2011. She has also been a member of the Paralegal Division since 2003.

Ms. Etie is married and does not have children, but does have three senior dogs and a young cat. She is a scuba diver with over 100 dives logged in the Caribbean. She has been an avid Aerosmith fan for many years and has recently become obsessed with the Sons of Anarchy television series on F/X. ("All work and no play makes Pam a dull girl.")

Sandi Clark, CP, is the recipient of the 2012 Paralegal of the Year Award by the Northeast Texas Association of Paralegals. She has been employed as a paralegal to Kenneth C. (Casey) Goolsby since 2007. Casey and Sandi were originally with the firm of Love & Goolsby, PC, here in Longview, Texas, then joined the firm of Boon, Shaver, Echols,

Coleman & Goolsby, PLLC, in January of 2011.

Ms. Clark received her CP (CLA) designation in 1996 and has been a member of the Paralegal Division since 2005 as well as a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) since 1996. Sandi has served on the Paralegal Division E-Group Policy Ad Hoc Committee from 2010 to the present. Sandi has also been a member of the Northeast Texas Association of Paralegals (NTAP) since 1996 and has held every office and many chair positions within the association; she is currently serving as the North Texas Association of Paralegals (NTAP) President. Sandi says "I believe my affiliation with the Paralegal Division and with NTAP have been the most beneficial things to my career. The networking and education provided by these two associations has been invaluable to me."

"As far as being named Paralegal of the Year for my local association, I am honored. Our association has many dedicated, professional, hard-working paralegals and I am honored to be chosen."



Melody Mullen was awarded Paralegal of the Year by Fort Worth Paralegal Association (FWPA).

Luncheon. Her supervising attorney, Ross P. Griffith, not only wrote a letter of recommendation, but gave a speech when Melody was presented with the Award and told everyone that she is the "go-to" paralegal and he has come to depend on her completely in all phases of his practice. He went on to say that "Melody is the person I and everyone else in the firm turns to when they need help because they know that she will deliver." Melody began her career with the Tarrant County District Attorney's Office in 1979. Her Paralegal Certification is from the PDI/University of North Texas. She is a member of the Paralegal Division of the State Bar of Texas, Tarrant County Probate Bar Association, and a Board Member of Fort

Melody Mullen, Paralegal, at Griffith, Jay & Michel, LLP, was presented with Fort Worth Paralegal Association's Paralegal of the Year for 2012 award on December 6, 2012, at FWPA's Holiday

Worth Paralegal Association for the last four years, with the last two years as its Treasurer. Melody is also active in community and charitable events through FWPA.

Melody's father was the Public Defender for the 213th District Court in Tarrant County until his untimely death in 1983. She is married to a criminal defense attorney and has four children.



Sheila Jones was awarded Paralegal of the Year by J.L. Turner Legal Association.

Shelia K. Jones, CP, TBLS-BCP is the J. L. Turner Legal Association—Paralegal Section 2012 Recipient of the Frederick Barrow Paralegal of the Year Award. Shelia has 24 years of experience as a paralegal and is currently employed

as a Sr. Paralegal with the law firm of Rose-Walker, L.L.P., a nationally recognized trial law firm focusing in the areas of personal injury law, products liability, labor & employment, intellectual property, and complex commercial litigation. She earned her Paralegal degree in 1988 while residing in El Paso, Texas. Shelia volunteered as a CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) in El Paso, Texas. She has been an active member of the Paralegal Division since 1991. In 2010, she joined J. L. Turner Legal Association—Paralegal Section. Shelia served as the J.L. Turner Legal Association Paralegal Section Secretary in 2011 and currently serves as the Vice President/President-Elect.

She received her certification as a Certified Paralegal from NALA in 1992 and in 1995 she became a board certified paralegal in Personal Injury Law by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization. Shelia is also the supervising Sr. Paralegal of the Dallas Volunteer Attorney Program ("DVAP") Legal Clinic held at the Friendship West Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas. She is also a passionate activist for justice as she serves on the Social Justice Ministry of Friendship West Baptist Church as participate of a movement to address the critical needs of humans and social justice within local, national, and global communities.

Shelia is a single mother of one daughter, Candice.

PD MEMBERS WHO PASSED THE 2012 TEXAS BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION SPECIALTY EXAMS

Bankruptcy Law

Deborah A. Andreatchi, Cox Smith Matthews Inc., Dallas

Robert A. Heinly, The Law Office of Thomas Black PC, Houston

Janet Nolly, Law office of Mark B. French, Bedford

Civil Trial Law

Diana M. Anderson, Howry Breen & Herman LLP, Austin

Andrea R. Gulley, Piper & Turner PLLC, Austin

Stephanie A. Krietsch, Hall Maines Lugin P.C., Houston

Natalie Pittman, Corbin & Associates, Killeen

Amy Rainwater, Baker Donelson Bearman, et al., Houston

Criminal Law

Andrea M. Podlesney, Tyler Flood & Associates Inc., Houston

Estate Planning & Probate Law
Patricia Morris McMillan, Porter Hedges LLP, Houston

Family Law

Spring D. Liberty, Noelke English Maples St. Leger Blair, Austin

Julie Whitson, Noelke English Maples St. Leger Blair, Austin

TEXAS BOARD OF LEGAL SPECIALIZATION Paralegal Board Certification Program TBLS—BCP



There are currently
an elite 330 Texas
Board Certified Paralegals

Established by TBLS in 1994, the paralegal certification program recognizes the quality of services of paralegals who have achieved a level of special knowledge in a particular area of law. The program is the only state organization authorized to certify paralegals as specialist in specialty areas of law.

This year's certification applications are currently available through April 15, 2013. Please request a form via email to tbls@tbls.org.

Examination for Paralegal Board Certification will be mid-October, 2013 in Austin.

PARALEGAL SPECIALTY AREAS

Bankruptcy Law
Civil Trial Law
Criminal Law
Estate Planning & Probate Law
Family Law
Personal Injury Trial Law
Real Estate Law

About TBLS

Texas Board of Legal Specialization, authorized by the Supreme Court of Texas, is the nation's largest and most successful legal board certification program. It certifies attorneys in 21 specialty areas of law and paralegals in seven specialty areas. TBLS serves as a resource by listing all certified attorneys and paralegals online. TBLS works to ensure that the citizens of Texas receive the highest quality legal services. To learn more about Board Certification and TBLS visit www.tbls.org.

New Specialty Area

TBLS announces the addition of its newest specialty area, Bankruptcy Law, to its paralegal certification program. Bankruptcy Law is the first new specialty area for paralegals since Real Estate and Estate Planning & Probate were added in 1998.

The paralegal certification process closely parallels the attorney certification process:

- A minimum of five years of actual experience as a paralegal
- A thorough assessment of the paralegal's experience and duties under the supervision of a licensed Texas attorney
- 30 hours of Continuing Legal Education in the specialty area
- Completion of Baccalaureate or higher degree, or completion of an accredited paralegal program or 2 additional years of relevant paralegal experience



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