

Region V Meeting Report

On May 19 and 20, 2012, Carie Tarte, Lisa Laramée and Diane Brown on behalf of the VPO attended the Region V meeting held in Clifton Park, New York, at the law firm of Bonnie McGuire Jones PLLC. Beth Bialis, the NFPA Region V Director, conducted the meeting with representatives from Capital District Paralegal Association, Central Connecticut Paralegal Association, Central Massachusetts Paralegal Association, Connecticut Association of Paralegals, Massachusetts Associations of Paralegals, New Haven County Paralegal Association, New York City Paralegal Association, Paralegal Association of New Hampshire, Paralegal Association of Rochester, Rhode Island Paralegal Association, Western Massachusetts Paralegal Association, Western New York City Association, and Vermont Paralegal Organization.

On Saturday, the group dove into the 2012 Spring Region Meeting Agenda by discussing various NFPA issues, the first of which was the Leadership Directory and the importance of having accurate email addresses for individual members. Beth reminded us that it is important for NFPA to have individual members' email addresses to allow for more direct communication to members in the form of email blasts. Beth also advised us that individuals who move or switch firms can update their own information via the membership page.

We were reminded that associations need to send in their updated bylaws to Barb Peppersack so that she has a current set, especially if changes have been made to the bylaws, and submitted as part of the pre-convention procedures in order to have the local NFPA representatives present at the NFPA Annual Convention.

Beth went through the 2012 NFPA events starting with the Regulation/Leadership/PACE Conference hosted by the Middle Tennessee Paralegal Association on April 20-23, 2012, *Pro Bono* Conference Webinar held on March 29, 2012, via GoTo Meeting; Summer NFPA Board Meeting via telephone conference July 21-22, 2012; and the Annual Convention hosted by the Alaska Paralegal Association, September 27-30, 2012. Because the *Pro Bono* Conference Webinar was filled to capacity, it was suggested that it be expanded to give additional involvement by associations and their *Pro Bono* Committee.

Beth shared with the group that NFPA's annual conventions are scheduled at the following locations: 2013-Connecticut; 2014-Dallas, Texas; 2015-Hawaii, and 2016 is open for bidding at a location on the East Coast. Diane, Lisa, and I believe that Vermont would be a perfect location! The VPO Board is currently looking into the bidding process to determine if this is something that we can accomplish. If so, this is a very large commitment and will require the assistance of many VPO members. We will keep the membership apprized of this very exciting endeavor.

Beth encouraged associations to be more involved and serve on NFPA committees, reminding attendees that you do *not* have to be a board member of your local association to serve on a NFPA committee — anyone can serve on a NFPA committee. Beth mentioned that the following positions are up for election at the convention in Alaska: President, Vice President and Director of Positions and Issues, Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certification, Secretary and Director of Operations, and Education Coordinator. Each of these positions is for a two-year terms. The group discussed those individuals who were interested in running for the positions, and Beth stated that she would be interested in continuing as the Region V Director, which has an unlimited term.

Beth also reminded us that NFPA has two Thomson-Reuters Student Scholarships available, one for \$2,000 and the other for \$3,000, as well as a one-time PCC examination scholarship. For the Thomson-Reuters Scholarship Application, go to:

http://www.paralegals.org/associations/2270/files/2011content/2012_Thomson_Reuters_Scholarship_Application.pdf.

Beth provided an update to the attendees about the PACE exam and PCC exam. She has recently passed the PACE exam, and Jodi Estes has passed the PCC exam. We were told that a study manual will soon be released for the PCC exam, and that the online course for the PACE exam will commence on June 4.

Beth provided the topics of the NFPA Winter Board Meeting: (1) Member get a member program; (2) Pro bono opportunities; (3) Student members; (4) Charting of issues and questions; and, (5) A special strategic alliance with the Notary Public Association.

Beth emphasized the opportunity of hosting a NFPA Board meeting or conference; additional information can be found on the NFPA website. In addition, she recommended the importance of communicating to members what the responsibility is as a Primary or Secondary Representative and as a Region Director. The Primary and Secondary representatives are liaisons between members and the Region Director and NFPA, and the Region Director is the liaison to the NFPA Board. It is important that representatives report back to their members about current issues.

Beth shared several reminders with the group, including the following:

- Remind associations to submit their Form 990 to the IRS;
- Remind the Primary and Secondary representatives that they can summarize the Inside Report and prepare articles for local associations newsletters;
- Remind associations to send in their newsletters for posting on the NFPA website;
- Remind associations that they should report all pro bono activities to the ABA Liaison for inclusion in the regular report to the ABA (i.e., this is vital for the ABA/NFPA relationship);
- Remind associations that NFPA's Pro Bono Committee is setting up a Pro Bono Mentoring System that will provide assistance to the associations that do not have pro bono programs; and,
- Remind associations to sign a current licensing agreement for the use of the logos/trademarks of PACE, PCC, and NFPA on websites, newsletters and other communication tools.

The associations also discussed many issues, including the effectiveness of list servs, updates on regulation within Region V, leadership training, having the Region V Director come to a local association every two years, attracting student members, military membership, policies and procedures manuals, and mentoring new members in local associations. The entire day was filled with great discussions and information that the three of us found most helpful, as well as several items that we will share with our VPO Board and membership.

On Sunday, we returned to the meeting and Beth led the discussion about agenda topics for the NFPA Annual Convention. The group felt that it would be most useful to have a future training session on how to write an agenda topic. Shaun Pilcher of the Massachusetts Association of Paralegals introduced an agenda topic submitted by the Pittsburgh Paralegal Association involving the expansion of the eligibility

requirement for PACE to include a bachelor's degree in legal or paralegal studies or a master's degree in legal or paralegal studies. There was much discussion about this issue and Shaun had the task of going back to rewrite the agenda topic. In addition to this agenda topic, we discussed two other important agenda topics concerning a change to the PACE exam to expand upon eligibility. The first proposed change is that if the PCC exam is taken and passed, you should be able to take the PACE exam automatically. The second proposed change is to change the current 30-day notice to member associations of the agenda topics to providing a 60-day notice to allow associations to share agenda topics with their members for consideration.

The group discussed various other issues including ideas for generating non-dues income, job bank (i.e., employment opportunities), mentoring program, social media, brown-bag seminars, professional liaisons, code of ethics, dissolution provision in bylaws, websites, emails to members, and donations to state employees.

Overall, we enjoyed the meeting and felt it was very productive. The meeting was certainly a great forum for networking and working together as a region to share experiences, information and ideas. We are compiling a list of those action items that need attention by the VPO and we look forward to sharing them with you in the near future.

Carie Tarte, President

Diane Brown, NFPA Secondary