

Paralegal Focus

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Paralegal Focus is the quarterly newsletter of the Vermont Paralegal Organization.

Vermont Paralegal Organization is a Member of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA).

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President's Message

By Carie Tarte, RP®

As we wrap up 2014 (no pun intended), I would like to take this opportunity to take stock in my fellow board and committees members to remind everyone, including myself, how much this organization needs the support of each member. Before I do that, I should mention a couple of board changes. As you know, Laurie Noyes, RP® was nominated and voted in as our Region V Director. Since that is a NFPA Board position, Laurie can no longer serve on her local board. At the VPO board meeting on November 12th, the Board appointed Secretary Lisa Laramee, to the position of Vice President, and appointed Lucia White, CP to the position of Secretary. (See the Meet the Board section later in this newsletter to learn more about Lucia). Here are my Thanksgiving reflections on our board and committee chairs:

Lisa Laramee: Lisa returned to us from sunny California and immediately dove in to help out, stepping in to fill a secretary vacancy, and now, the VP vacancy. Lisa is always willing and able to do whatever the VPO needs from her.

Lucia White, CP: Lucia is new to us, but reached out a year ago when she and her husband were preparing to relocate to Vermont from Texas. Upon meeting her for the first time, we knew we wanted Lucia on our team. She, too, has stepped up and offered to help the VPO in any way that she can.

Ashley LaRose, RP®: Ashley has been our treasurer during my entire tenure as President. Not only has she made our budget meetings seamless, but she has kept our spending in line. Ashley is honest, reliable and accurate - qualities that other paralegal organizations have learned the hard way not to take for granted.

Corinne Deering, RP®: When you look on our board and committee directory, there is one name you see quite frequently, and that is Corinne. She wears many hats, and spends many hours working to make sure that the VPO goes down in history as the best NFPA convention host of all time. Our newsletter isn't long enough to list all of the things that Corinne has done for our organization, including setting up and updating our website, keeping our Facebook page active, researching and instructing on Wild Apricot, and attending the monthly and weekly NFPA convention meetings.

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Diane Brown: Diane's corporate acumen and her polished and professional presentation have brought the VPO a long way from its humble beginnings. Diane spent countless hours getting our Bylaws in order and being the voice of reason at many of our Board meetings.

Evelyn Wetzel: Evelyn has jumped in and taken on what I feel is the most time-consuming and difficult position we have. Collecting and processing membership dues, and fielding questions from current, past or prospective members can be challenging. Add to that learning new software to better track our members, and you have someone who deserves a big thank you!

Melissa Young Wilcox: Within a matter of months after stepping into her position as Professional Liaison, Melissa had a proposal to the Vermont Bar Association for a Paralegal Section within the Vermont Bar, and, once approved, began regular meetings to coordinate a well-attended session at the Vermont Bar's annual meeting in Killington on the limited licensure of paralegals.

Louise Reese: Last, but never least, is Louise. She puts together one of the primary benefits of VPO membership - the newsletter. Louise also has great connections within the legal community to get well-known speakers for the VPO annual meeting. Louise helps to keep us well-informed.

Editor's Message

By Louise Reese

There was a lot happening in 2014, and the content of this newsletter is evidence of a very busy and successful year. Although I hope all members are reading every newsletter with a thirst for knowledge, this is surely the issue to read! From Wild Apricot to the NFPA Convention in Dallas, there is a lot to take in. The authors of these submissions took personal time to write up detailed and informative articles, and the information contained in each article is hearty and worthy of tacking up on the wall near your desk.

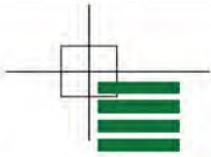
We are proud to have Lucia White volunteer for the VPO Secretary position, while Lisa Laramée helps out as Vice President. Please see the Meet the Board article in this issue for an introduction to Lucia White.

Please take the time to also read an introduction to Ashley LaRose, RP,[®] our new Paralegal Certification Ambassador, and to send an "air fist bump" to all our Vermont RP's for their commitment to the profession.

If you have any change in employment, education, or certification that you would like to share with your fellow members, please send the information to me at lreese@dinse.com.

Finally, please support our generous sponsors!

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Membership News

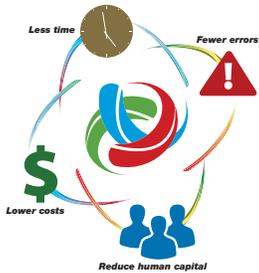
By Evelyn Wetzel

As of November 26, 2014, the VPO has 72 members, including: 55 voting members; 14 associate members; 2 student members; and 1 individual sustaining member. Nicole West, a student at Boston University, is a new student member since our last newsletter.

Thank you to our new and renewing members for their support!

{i-proclamation}

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Introducing the Wild Apricot Membership Database

By Corinne Deering, RP®

The Vermont Paralegal Organization is pleased to announce the development of its new membership database and corresponding website. We are using the Wild Apricot Membership Software in an effort to maintain and automate our membership information. Some of the features include an online membership application and renewal process, event registrations, and invoicing.

In addition, with this program, we are able to provide members with a directory listing which includes the member name, county in which they are employed, and fields of practice. We hope that this will assist our members in reaching out to each other for assistance. You have to be logged in to be able to see the county in which the member is employed and the member's field of practice. By clicking on the member's name, you can contact them via email through the membership software. We hope that this method will allow you some assistance without revealing any personal information via the Membership Directory. To the viewing public, the membership directory will only show first and last names. Please be assured that none of your personal information will be revealed to anyone other than to the administrators of the database – Evelyn Wetzel, as Membership Chair, and me.

The membership year runs January 1 through December 31, and we thank those of you who have already gone through the renewal process using Wild Apricot. We hope that you will find it easier and faster than completing the paper application. We are requesting that when you renew your membership, or sign up as a new member, that you fully complete the membership application. The only way we will be able to ensure that you continue to receive your membership benefits, and those benefits from NFPA, is to have your complete addresses (work and home) and contact information. If you are renewing, even though we have your information from last year's paper application, we ask that you **fully complete** the application and input all your current information. This information will need to be entered only once. Going forward, you will only need to update your profile if either of your addresses change.

After completing the online application, you will receive four emails. The email notifications will come from VPO@wildapricot.org. You may need to "white list" this email address so that the notifications do not get stopped by your spam filter or firewalls. The first email will give you a temporary password. The second email asks you to log in to finalize your application and accept the terms of use of Wild Apricot. The third email will generate an invoice for you to print off and mail to the VPO with your annual dues payment. The last email will notify you that we have received your payment and finalized your application process.

Please be sure to read the VPO Terms and Conditions once you have entered your application information. If your membership criterion requires an employer or supervising attorney affidavit, those forms are hyperlinked within the Terms and Conditions. The affidavit can be mailed to the VPO along with your invoice and dues payment.

The Membership Application is available through a button (widget) on the VPO website membership page which will take you directly to the application. You can also access the Wild Apricot Membership Page at the following link: <http://vpo.wildapricot.org>. Please be sure to renew your membership early!

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We appreciate your patience with the development of this membership database and related website. We will likely have kinks to work out and revisions to make once the database is activated and new information is entered. We hope, in the long run, you will find this database helpful, and that it will streamline the application and renewal process and event registration process.

The Wild Apricot Membership Website also includes a blog and forum features. Members can subscribe to all forums or specific forums which are open to all members for use. We hope you will find these helpful to open the lines of communication with your colleagues. If you have any ideas or suggestions that you want to relay to the VPO Board, we look forward to hearing from you. Please forward your comments to the Membership Chair and the Website Chair if you have suggestions or concerns.

If you have problems or questions with using the Wild Apricot application process to renew your VPO membership, please contact either Corinne Deering (802-658-2311; cdeering@pfclaw.com) or Evelyn Wetzol, Membership Chair (802-864-4555; ewetzol@healaw.com).

In compliance with the Bylaw Resolution to amend NFPA's Bylaw Section 4.1A.1, passed at the 2014 Annual Convention, the VPO will be paying an additional \$5.00 in dues to NFPA for each association member. Although the increase will take effect January 2015, the VPO has chosen to absorb this dues increase and not to increase its own membership dues for the 2015 calendar year. From each of your annual dues payments, the VPO pays to NFPA \$30 for each member (voting, associate, individual sustaining and corporate sustaining) and \$25 for each student member. If you have any questions regarding this increase in NFPA's dues, please reach out to either a board member or to the NFPA Primary or Secondary Representatives.



Q&A

Lucia White, CP
Member the Board - VPO Secretary

Describe your family, and where you live. I live in Burlington with my husband Ken. Our only child, Cathy, is in college at Drexel University in Philadelphia.

Where did you live before coming to Vermont? I'm originally from Scranton, Pennsylvania, so I am not foreign to cold and snowy weather. However, for the last 15 years, I lived in Austin, Texas. We moved to Burlington in January 2014 for my husband's job.

Where do you work, and what kind of law do you practice? I work at Dunkiel Saunders Elliott Raubvogel & Hand. The firm has a broad practice, and I practice in energy, environmental, intellectual property, civil litigation, corporate, and real estate law.

Where did you go to school? The paralegal field is my second career. I received my paralegal certificate from the University of Texas at San Antonio. For my first career, I went to the University of Scranton and Memphis State University, where I studied psychology.

What are your hobbies or favorite pastimes? I enjoy hand stamping cards, making scrapbooks, cooking, reading, and playing games.

Do you have any unique skills or interests? My parents are from Italy, so I speak Italian very well.

Anything else you would like to tell us about you? "Y'all" is a perfectly valid second person plural. Okay, probably not in legal writing, but definitely in speaking!

THE PCCE™ / PACE® POSTING

By Ashley LaRose, RP®

Paralegal Certification Ambassador



As 2014 winds down, there have been a few changes at the Vermont Paralegal Organization. You may know me as the VPO Treasurer, but I am pleased to announce that I am now your Paralegal Certification Ambassador. This position was held for many years by Corinne Deering, RP®, and I would like to thank Corinne for all of her hard work as the Paralegal Certification Ambassador.

Now, I would like to take a moment to tell you about my path to becoming the VPO Paralegal Certification Ambassador. In 2007, I began working in the legal field in Chittenden County, and I graduated from Champlain College with a Bachelor's Degree in Paralegal Studies in 2008. After meeting with some of the VPO board members, I made the decision to run for VPO Treasurer and have served in this position since 2011. After obtaining the required employment experience, I sat for the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam ("PACE®") in October, 2012, and earned my designation as a PACE Registered Paralegal® or RP®. As the VPO's Paralegal Certification Ambassador, it is my goal to promote PACE and the Paralegal CORE Competency Exam ("PCCE™") to the membership, and to encourage any member to sit for PACE or PCCE. I will do my best to answer any questions regarding Paralegal Certification.

I encourage any of you who are thinking about taking either PACE or PCCE to reach out to me for more information. Also, feel free to visit the VPO website <http://vtparalegal.org/what-is-pace.html> or the NFPA website <http://www.paralegals.org> for more information, or you can contact me directly at alarose@dkzlegal.com or 802-863-9603. **Don't forget the VPO offers an annual scholarship of \$250 to help with the costs of the exam fee or the study materials.**

High Five's, Fist Bumps and Cheers to Vermont RPs!

By Louise Reese



As we close out 2014, I thought it was a good time to recognize all of the Registered Paralegals in Vermont. These paralegals have shown a solid commitment to the Vermont Paralegal Organization and to the paralegal profession as a whole.

Corinne M. Deering, RP®
Received RP designation 05/04/2000

Michelle S. Perlee, RP®
Received RP designation 05/04/2000

Bernice M. Woessner, RP®
Received RP designation 05/20/2000

Laurie S. Noyes, RP®
Received RP designation 06/21/2010

Heather A. Moreau, RP®
Received RP designation 06/26/2012

Ashley M. LaRose, RP®
Received RP designation 10/26/2012

Lynn Wdowiak, RP®
Received RP designation 11/09/2012

Carie A. Tarte, RP®
Received RP designation 10/28/2013

Kristin M. Mattes, RP®
Received RP designation 11/25/2013

At the 2014 NFPA Convention, Vermont received NFPA's Award of Distinction for meeting the PACE® challenge of having two or more paralegals pass PACE since the last convention. This is the second year in a row that Vermont has met this challenge. More High Five's, Fist Bumps and Cheers!



2014 NFPA Annual Convention and Policy Meeting Dallas, Texas

By Diane L. Brown, NFPA Primary

The National Federation of Paralegal Associations (“NFPA”) held its 2014 Annual Convention and Policy Meeting from October 9 through October 12, 2014 in Dallas, Texas (“Convention”). I had the privilege of attending the Convention as the NFPA Primary Representative for the Vermont Paralegal Organization (“VPO”). Laurie Noyes, RP® was in attendance at this year’s NFPA Convention as a nominee for the Region V Director position. One of our VPO members, Monica Larose, was able to attend the CLE seminars through the generosity of her employer. I would like to thank both the VPO and my employer, GE Healthcare, for providing the funds necessary to attend Convention.

Yes, it is true that everything in Texas is BIG with lots of spicy food and plenty of cowboy boots. The Convention logo did live up to its name – “LIVE LARGE. THINK BIG.” The Convention was hosted by the Dallas Area Paralegal Association (“DAPA”). They did a great job, and made it a lasting experience for all. DAPA showed their southern hospitality and did a fabulous job with the meetings, activities, policy meetings, vendors, and all of the accommodations. Even with the outbreak of Ebola in the Dallas region, the associations and DAPA came together to make this year’s Convention a successful event.

Thursday, October 9, 2014 – Continuing Legal Education

The Convention kicked off with attendee registrations with each attendee receiving a Convention bag filled with important information and goodies. There were 367 individuals who registered for the Convention and that number broke down as follows: 279 attendees which accounted for 157 members, 107 non-members, and 15 board members; and 88 non-attendees which accounted for 24 speakers and 64 exhibitors.

Thursday was full of concurrent continuing legal education seminars. I attended the following seminars: Technology and Ethics: Inadvertent Disclosure of Confidential Information; Focus on Paralegal Ethics: Panel of two attorneys, a paralegal and a judge; Everything a Paralegal Wants to Know About FOIA; and Comparison of International and Domestic Corporate Entities. The seminars were very interesting with great presentations by the well-qualified speakers.

At Thursday's luncheon, keynote speaker, Harriet Miers, Esq., provided her insight on "A Different Kind of War: Access to Justice for All." She illustrated the distinct need for legal assistance to all, especially those less fortunate and living in poverty and turmoil. She certainly touched the minds and hearts of many during her speech. Attorney Miers is well-known throughout the United States because she served in the administration of President George W. Bush as Staff Secretary, Deputy Chief of Staff, and Counsel to the President.

I attended the NFPA workshop which reviewed the basics about the Wild Apricot Member Management Software. Lisa Vessels' presentation was designed for local associations interested in learning more about Wild Apricot's features and how to streamline membership management. She also showed the basics behind the website builder templates, integrated event registration, online payments, and email templates used with the contact database. The VPO recently rolled out the Wild Apricot Membership Management software to its members for membership renewals and for gathering of all membership information.

I finished the day with a cocktail reception celebrating NFPA's 40th Anniversary, and then moved onto the NFPA Board of Directors' Meeting.

Friday, October 10, 2014 – Region V Meeting

Friday consisted of day-long region meetings where the delegates split up into each of their five regions. Our Region V meeting was led by Pat Gagnon, the current Region V Director, and we discussed the following items: preparing questions for the candidates, introductions, discussing and commenting on the upcoming bylaw resolution and agenda topics, webinars, a recap of the Thursday night Board Meeting, taking a region picture, overview of the Summer Board meeting, commenting on the NFPA website, reporting of membership numbers, the upcoming Joint Conference in Portland, Oregon, processing of Inside reports, existing committees and the need for committee members, calling out for coordinators, reviewing the 2015 Budget with the Treasurer, and the upcoming Spring Region V Meeting.

After the Region meetings, I attended the Treasurer's Meeting to review the 2015 NFPA Budget and hear the delegates' questions for the NFPA Treasurer. NFPA promotes transparency of the NFPA Budget and many asked several questions concerning the potential increase in membership dues on the agenda, where costs could be cut, and why it is important to build a reserve. After the Treasurer's Meeting, I was off to the Friday night social event.

The Friday night social event took place at the Sixth Floor Museum at Dealey Plaza which chronicles the legacy of President John F. Kennedy, interprets the Dealey Plaza National Historic Landmark District and the John F. Kennedy Memorial Plaza, and presents contemporary culture within the context of presidential history. The Sixth Floor Museum provides history through one of the world's most significant repositories of original photographs, film, video footage, documents and artifacts related to the assassination of President John F. Kennedy. This was a truly memorable experience and really brought you back to the time and surroundings of the unbelievable assassination of President Kennedy, leaving you with a chilling affect and memory.

The social event was filled with fun with a margarita machine, a photo booth, good ole' Tex Mex food, and the ice-breaker of the selfie speed meet and greet. It was a good way to network with the attendees and to socialize away from the formal Convention events.

Saturday, October 11, 2014 and Sunday, October 12, 2014– NFPA Policy Meeting

There were 112 people in attendance at the Policy Meeting which broke down to 62 delegates, 1 local officer and 49 observers. There were 40 out of 49 associations in attendance at the Convention and represented by their delegates.

The NFPA Policy Meeting promptly commenced at 9:00 a.m. with the color guard marching up to the front of the room and leading the Pledge of Allegiance. President Robert S. Hrouda, RP made the introductions of the Board Members, special guests and certification recognitions. Tracey Young presented the NFPA memorial for the loss of three NFPA members. The meeting continued with the association roll call, credentialing report, adoption of the standing rules of order, adoption of the agenda and notification of meeting minutes. The meeting continued with the welcome and annual convention report, state of the federation address, overview of Robert's Rules of Order, report on the Thursday evening Board meeting, presentation and vote on the consent calendar, report by the nominations coordinator, call and close of nominations, introduction of candidates, candidates' statements and the balloting for Board of Directors' positions.

There were three contested Board positions: President; Secretary and Director of Operations; and Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certification. The announcement of election results was made and there was a tie for the position of President between Valerie Wilus, RP, Pa.C.P., and Lisa Vessels, RP, CP, FRP. Each delegate had to re-vote for that position and Lisa Vessels, RP, CP, FRP was finally elected. In addition, the following were elected: Lynne-Marie Reveliotis as Vice President and Director of Positions and Issues; Cherylan Shearer as Secretary and Director of Operations; and Juanita (Nita) Serrano, RP as Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certification. The complete listing of the 2014-2015 NFPA Board of Directors is provided herein.

The Policy Meeting was temporarily adjourned for the luncheon, and at the luncheon there were various presentations of awards as follows: Certification Ambassador Award, PACE® and PCCET™ Scholarships, Individual and Association Pro Bono Publico Awards, NFPA-Thomson Reuters Award, Local Outstanding Leader Award and The Honorable William R. Robie Award.

The Policy Meeting continued with the 40th Anniversary Presentation slide show. I believe I got a glimpse of our very own Kristin Mattes, RP and Corinne Deering, RP, and it was quite remarkable how some people had changed. The presentation was very well created with great background music and showed the various Conventions throughout the years.

The first agenda topic presented was Agenda Topic #3 – PCCE to PACE requirements for eligibility. The proposal was to expand the eligibility requirements to sit for PACE to include eligibility through having held a CRP credential for two years or more, and having met certain additional requirements. The sponsors and co-sponsors were of the opinion that the PACE eligibility requirement should be expanded to include, inter alia, the holding of a CRP designation for more than two years with at least one successful renewal, with six years of substantive paralegal experience. There was some discussion on this matter and the agenda topic was tabled for voting after lunch.

After the luncheon, the Policy Meeting continued with reports by the Strategic Planning Committee and the Ad Hoc Committee. There was also an Association Recognition representation for those members who recruited a member to join in order to increase local membership which increases NFPA membership.

At this point, the Policy Meeting circled back to Agenda Topic #3 for a vote and a two-thirds vote was needed. The delegates voted as follows: 18-yes, 20-no, and 2-abstained. The agenda item was not adopted.

Agenda Topic #2 was presented which covered the PCCE™ and PACE® CLE requirements for dual credentials. The sponsors and co-sponsors of this agenda topic proposed the adoption of a resolution to redefine the CLE requirements for PACE and PCCE to state that those candidates in good standing with both the RP® and CRP™ credentials could use the same CLE hours to maintain both credentials. There was some discussion, and then it was put to vote where a two-thirds vote was needed. The delegates voted as follows: 34-yes, 5-no, and 1-abstained. The agenda item passed.

Agenda Topic #1 was presented which covers community service administrative matters. The sponsors and co-sponsors of this agenda topic are of the opinion that administrative hours and contributions NFPA paralegals spend on the planning, logistics, design and implementation of Community Service projects should be specifically defined and more publicly acknowledged, which will inspire other NFPA paralegals to support and more actively participate in Community Service projects to attain NFPA's suggested 24 hours annually. There were discussions and recommendations to modify the language of the resolution for better clarity. It was then put to vote and the delegates voted unanimously in the affirmative, thereby passing the agenda item.

Discussion Topic #1 on Proxy Voting was brought up for discussion. The purpose of this topic was to provide a manner in which NFPA member associations could vote by proxy on agenda topics that come before the assembly of delegates at the annual NFPA policy meetings in order to actively represent the interest of their local associations. This type of circumstance would occur when the financial viability of the local association precluded their in-person attendance at the annual policy meeting. There was very little discussion on this point and no voting took place.

Bylaws Resolution #1 on the dues increase was presented and brought up for discussion. The proposal was to amend Bylaw Section 4.1A.1 to provide for a dues increase of \$5.00 per member to be assessed against all voting member associations. This was the most contested item during the Policy Meeting and the discussions were lengthy. Many delegates called upon the opponents of this resolution to ask them why they opposed. A delegate then asked if a straw vote could be made to see what the current vote would be. The straw vote produced 28 affirmative votes and 12 negative votes, and there needed to be 30 votes to pass this resolution. A huge discussion ensued, and then some delegates asked the opponents to contact their respective associations in order to see if they could obtain authorization to change their vote. This item was set aside to allow delegates additional time. The Bylaws Resolution #1 was brought back for a vote and the delegates voted as follows: 31-yes and 9-no. The resolution passed and was approved.

The next agenda item was the nominations for Region directors and nominations were closed. The delegates then voted on the nominations. The Policy Meeting was adjourned for the day and remaining agenda items would be covered on Sunday.

On Saturday night, the Region V delegates and a few guests headed out to the House of Blues, and had a wonderful time enjoying each other, having a great meal and bobbing to the bluesy music.

On Sunday morning, the Region Directors were announced. We were all delighted that Laurie Noyes, RP was nominated and elected as our Region V Director. Congratulations, Laurie!

The Policy Meeting wrapped up with the adoption of the 2015 budget, retiring of the colors, and the passing of the torch. DAPA passed the torch to Hawaii, and Hawaii provided a presentation about their beautiful state. The installation of the officers and Board of Directors took place, and then the newly elected President, Lisa Vessels, gave a speech on her future vision and goals for NFPA over her tenure. The Policy Meeting was adjourned quite early as there was no further business to address.

VPO Receives Two Awards at the 2014 NFPA Convention

At the Convention, the VPO was honored with a certificate of NFPA's Award of Distinction for meeting the President's PACE® Challenge. In 2013, Carie Tarte, RP® and Kristin Mattes, RP® passed the PACE exam and were recognized among the 49 new RPs that have passed the PACE exam since the last convention. During the NFPA Policy Meeting, the names of all new RPs and CRPs were recognized.

I was personally awarded a certificate of NFPA's Award of Distinction for superior achievement and excellence in performance as part of the 2015 Budget Committee from Region V.

Upcoming Conventions

The 2015 NFPA Annual Convention and Policy Meeting will be held in Honolulu, Hawaii; 2016 will be held in Burlington, Vermont; 2017 will be held in New Orleans, Louisiana; and 2018 will be held in Seattle, Washington. The 2015 Joint Conference (Regulation/Leadership/Paralegal Certification) will be held in Portland, Oregon, and the 2016 Joint Conference will be held in Kansas City, Kansas.

The benefits of attending a NFPA Annual Convention and Policy Meeting are as follows:

Personal Contacts – A personal connection, resulting from face-to-face contact, generates a higher level of trust. It is a great way to build your business relationships with others in the profession.

Networking Opportunities – A convention provides a great opportunity to expand your network and make valuable connections.

Continuing Legal Education – The educational sessions are designed specifically to provide paralegals with continuing legal education. Attending the educational sessions will enhance your knowledge in specific areas, which can directly impact your professional status.

Get Inspired – Many paralegals find that they have a significantly renewed passion for the profession and an increased level of confidence in building the paralegal profession after attending a NFPA convention.

Recap

It was very exciting to attend the 2014 Convention in Dallas, and as my second convention, I gained a better appreciation and enhanced knowledge about being involved on the national level within the paralegal profession and community. Being at the Dallas Convention will be a lasting and memorable experience, and I encourage each and every one of you to get involved both on the local/state level, as well as the national level. One voice can, and will, make a difference!



2014 - 2015 NFPA Board Members



NFPA Convention News - Dallas, Texas

By Diane Brown, NFPA Primary

The National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (“NFPA”) announced the 2014-2015 Board of Directors at the 2014 NFPA Annual Convention and Policy Meeting held in Dallas, Texas.

The NFPA Board of Directors is the leadership team that provides oversight and guidance to the federation to ensure that it achieves its mission of promoting a national presence for the paralegal profession and leadership in the legal community. The Board shares its regional knowledge and perspective towards working with NFPA's strategic plan and goals. These Board members are nominated, elected, and volunteer in these specific positions. They are leaders who serve both on the national and the state levels, and make a tremendous contribution to the paralegal profession.

The 2014-2015 NFPA Board Members are:

- President: Lisa Vessels, RP[®], CP, FRP
 - Vice President and Director of Profession Development: Beth Bialis, RP[®]
 - Vice President and Director of Positions and Issues: Lynne-Marie Reveliotis
 - Vice President and Director of Membership: Cynthia S. Welch, RP[®]
 - Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certification: Juanita (Nita) Serrano, RP[®]
 - Vice President and Director of Marketing: Melissa Leslie, TBLS-BCP
 - Treasurer and Director of Finance: Tracey Irvin Chandler, RP[®]
 - Secretary and Director of Operations: Cherylan Shearer
 - Director, Region I: Thomas (Tom) Holmes
 - Director, Region II: Allen F. Mihecoby, CLAS, RP[®]
 - Director, Region III: Yvonne DeAntoneo
 - Director, Region IV: Donna Huntermark, RP[®]
 - Director, Region V: Laurie Noyes, RP[®]
- Board Advisor: Robert Hrouda, RP[®]



Members of Region V

Below are the
scholarship and award
recipients from the
2014 NFPA
Convention:



NFPA PACE Scholarship

Becky Reedy, NJCP, South Jersey Paralegal Association

NFPA PCCE Scholarship

Noreen Messmer, Pa.C.P., Montgomery County Paralegal Association

Thompson Reuters/NFPA \$3,000 Scholarship

Farah Perez, Miami Dade College (Miami, FL)

Thompson Reuters/NFPA \$2,000 Scholarship

Robert A. Harty, Jr., Tampa Bay Paralegal Association

NFPA Certification Ambassador Award

Janet Williams, RP®, Georgia Association of Paralegals

NFPA Individual Pro Bono Award

Risa Burgess, Dallas Area Paralegal Association

NFPA Association Pro Bono Award

Dallas Area Paralegal Association

NFPA Paralegal of the Year

James Hills, Department of the Navy

NFPA Outstanding Local Leader

Cynthia Minchillo, RP®, Dallas Area Paralegal Association

NFPA William R. Robie Award

Judy Stouffer, RP®, Philadelphia Association of Paralegals

Vermont Bar Association Commission on Access to Justice

By Carie Tarte, RP[®]

On March 23, 2014, Vermont Supreme Court Chief Justice Paul Reiber gave a speech to the Vermont Bar Association calling for the Bar, the Court, the various legal education providers, the business community, and the public to come together to study the question of how to ensure that Vermonters can obtain quality, affordable, legal representation and efficient dispute resolution. Chief Justice Reiber asked, “What are we doing and what should we be doing to increase the availability of legal services, access to the courts, and ease of use in the legal system?”

In order to answer these questions, the Vermont Bar’s Board of Managers created four distinct Committees: (1) Technology and the Law; (2) The Court Process; (3) Legal Services; and (4) Legal Education/Future of the Profession. Each committee is composed of attorneys, judges, court staff, academics, and other interested parties, who will work with the Vermont Bar Association’s Board of Managers to study and develop responses to the specific questions posed to each committee. From these assignments, each committee will produce a report to be delivered at the VBA Annual Meeting in September, 2015.

I have been invited to be a member of the fourth Committee to study the future of the legal profession and the role of legal education. This group has the following members: Kevin Ryan, VBA Education and Communications Chair; Michael Kennedy, VBA Board Member - Bar Counsel; Bridget Asay, Esq., Vermont Attorney General’s Office; Marc Mihaly, Dean of Vermont Law School; Leslie Cadwell, Esq.; Hannah Smith, Esq., of Tarrant, Gilles, & Richardson; and Marie Peck Fabian, Esq., former paralegal, now attorney at Miller, Faignant & Fabian, P.C; and me, Carie Tarte, RP. We have met a couple of times to discuss the scope of our recommendations for our report to be delivered at next year’s VBA Annual meeting, and how we want to tackle specific questions posed to us. Below are some of the questions that pertain to the paralegal profession:

- a. Are there changes that could be made to Vermont’s clerkship program that would improve representation for low income populations?
- b. What legal education is currently available for paralegals and other legal support personnel?
- c. Could legal educators provide specific certification for paralegals, and what would that certification entail?
- d. Who would be responsible for overseeing this new class of paralegal, and who would promulgate the rules and regulations for these new paralegals?
- e. Can certified or licensed paralegals obtain malpractice insurance?
- f. How would certified paralegals work with attorneys?

Although early in the process, everyone in our group has been in agreement since the first meeting about one possible solution — to provide paralegals with a means to obtain some form of voluntary certification or licensure that will allow them to help portions of the population that cannot afford to hire an attorney, but nonetheless need help navigating the legal process. By expanding the number of people who can provide legal services to the public, new and exciting opportunities can be available for paralegals in Vermont in the coming years. A copy of the Committee's full recommendations and research will be provided in the Fall 2015 edition of *Paralegal Focus*.

Save the Date!

NFPA Joint Conference
May 1-3, 2015
Portland, Oregon

NFPA Annual Meeting
and Policy Meeting
October 8-11, 2015
Honolulu, Hawaii

CLE

By Louise C. Reese

The Basics of Contract Law seminar held at GE Healthcare on October 23, 2014 was a success. There were 13 people in attendance, including three non-members. Mark Sciarrotta, Assistant General Counsel for VELCO, covered the basics of contract law, including why a written contract may be needed, whether a contract can be enforced, the types of breaches, and available remedies. Those in attendance were actively involved in discussions on the recommended do's and don'ts of contracts, and Mark provided all of us with the understanding that the "devil is in the details."

We held a drawing for a \$25 gift certificate to Trader Duke's at the DoubleTree Hotel in South Burlington, and it was awarded to Denise Anderson, who traveled about three hours, one way, to attend the seminar. Congratulations, Denise!

Did you know?

Environmental Court has moved! Its new location is in the Costello Courthouse where Chittenden County's District and Family courts reside. The new address and phone number are:

Vermont Superior Court
Environmental Division

32 Cherry Street, Suite 303
 Burlington, VT 05401

Phone: (802) 951-1740
 Fax: (802) 657-4292



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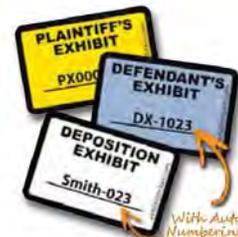
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