

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 Kristin Provost, RP®

As this year comes to an end, I hope each of us has the opportunity to hit 'pause' and reflect on the year behind us. Whether your reflection is personal or professional, formal or informal, at work or at home, taking stock of your life is important because it allows us to learn from our experiences and shape a more successful future.



Some key questions you can ask yourself are:

1. What went well?
2. Who needs to be acknowledged?
3. How did you grow this past year?
4. What were the stand-out, peak moments and why?
5. What's not working?
6. What's your mantra for 2017?

In asking ourselves these questions, my hope is that we can learn to take credit for our accomplishments (something many of us struggle to do), and acknowledge the individuals that have helped us along the way (both at work and at home), and the things that simply aren't working so we can make meaningful changes in our lives and where we want to go in the future. I also hope that each of us has a wonderful new year filled with abundance, joy and treasured moments.

May 2017 be your best year yet!

Editor's Message

By Louise Reese

Ladies and gentlemen, we survived convention! Although it was a lot of work that started over three years ago, we should feel very proud to have accomplished so much with an organization of our small size. For those of you unable to volunteer for or attend convention, this issue represents the experiences by some of our volunteers and co-chairs, including Lori Cohen, Corinne Deering, Robyn Sweet and myself. One of our Spotlights is Monica Litzelman who traveled from Northfield to wo-man the VPO convention booth. The other is one of my newest friends, Flo Smith, who traveled from Berlin to attend the convention, including the policy meeting. Robyn Sweet and I were inspired to volunteer for coordinator positions with NFPA. It's a feeling that we tried to put into words for this issue. You will find some repetition in this issue, and that is because we all appreciate the co-chairs and volunteers who helped make convention possible and we cannot thank them all enough. Some of us were also inspired by similar experiences at convention and are excited to share it with all of you.

Cathy Foutz has provided information on the success of our charity fundraising at convention for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta. Some of the prizes were donated by VPO members.

I have included several photographs of convention, including a fused glass red leaf created by the newsletter's behind-the-scenes angel, Jeff Moreau, that was given to Gov. Howard Dean, our convention keynote speaker.

Don't forget that 2017 is a voting year. Hosting a national convention inspired some of us to get involved at a national level. Being a member of a small organization that was able to put on such a well coordinated convention, and received strong praise both during and after it was over, should inspire you to get involved locally. I have been practicing for over 16 years, but there was still an opportunity at convention to get to know several of our members who I would normally only see once a year. I met many impressive paralegals from across the country, but I was also fortunate enough to make new friends with impressive paralegals from within our fine state. Be inspired; get involved.

Membership News

As of October 24, 2016 we have 77 total members: 62 voting; 14 associate; and 1 student.

Please welcome our newest members, Ian Litchfield and Kristina Botala, both from the law offices of Bauer Gravel Farnham.

Robyn A. Sweet passed the PCC Exam and is now a CORE Registered Paralegal. Congratulations, Robyn!



Q&A

Monica Litzelman Member Spotlight

How old are you?	61.
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Describe your family?	I have two daughters, a son, a son-in-law, and my awesome, darling granddaughter!!!
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Town in which you live?	Northfield.
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What is your favorite food?	Pizza.
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Do have any pets? If so, what are they, and what are their names?	None of my own but my granddog, Ein Poppy, lives with me and trains me well. My other granddog is Dudley, and I have two grandkitties, Blake and Meesh-Meesh. There are some fish, too. We're not that close but they are fun to look at.
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What kind of hobbies do you have?	Reading, dancing, exercising, music, and basically doing whatever my 12-year-old granddaughter wants me to do.
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How do you unwind at the end of a long work week?	My favorite day is Friday, so I spend time with family and friends, listen to music, or watch TV or read.
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What is your educational background?	B.A. Criminal Justice, King's College; Paralegal Certificate, Woodbury College; 4-year Vermont Law Office Study, Martin & Associates; Master of Environmental Law and Policy, Vermont Law School.
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Where do you work?	Vermont Law School, Environmental and Natural Resources Law Clinic.
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When did you first become a paralegal?	I think when Cro-Magnon Man was alive or maybe in 1987 or so.
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What area of law do you work in?	Environmental.
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What do you enjoy about working in that area of law?	There are so many aspects of environmental law, including air, water, endangered species, agriculture, forests, access to justice, to name a few, that my days are never dull. I know that what I do at the law clinic is making a difference at local, national, and international levels. All of the work at the law clinic is pro bono. The people and organizations we help do not have resources to address environmental problems. Working for the earth and the public interest is quite satisfying for me. Plus, instructing law students is loads of fun.
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If you could work in any other area of law, what would it be?	Criminal appellate or civil rights.
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What is the one thing about being a paralegal you would change if you could?	I believe professional paralegals deserve higher wages.
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How or why did you first enter the paralegal field?	I have had an interest in the law since my early 20s. I thought about becoming an attorney but did not have the confidence in those early years. The paralegal field gave me the opportunity to work in the law and stay in the background which is where I am most comfortable.
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Did you hold other positions, or have a different career, prior to becoming a paralegal, and if so, what was it?	Up until two years ago, I had a concurrent career working for Norwich Studies and Analysis Institute d/b/a Vermont Center for Justice Research as a research analyst and then as financial manager.
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What do you love about the paralegal profession?	I can work in the legal field yet avoid the pressure and worries often experienced by attorneys.
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<i>What things about the profession do you dislike?</i>	The lack of standardization in the field. "Paralegal" can be on a spectrum with administrative duties on one end and writing appellate briefs on the other. It is whatever the employer says it is. I find paralegal wages to be fairly low, despite job requirements that frequently include a bachelor's degree, paralegal certificate, and legal experience.
<i>How long have you been a member of the VPO?</i>	It's been a long time so I'm not really sure.
<i>Tell me about the skills or traits you possess that you find most useful in your position?</i>	My writing and research skills are fairly advanced. I love editing; it makes my day when someone wants to engage my proofreading, punctuation and grammar skills. I have a good sense of humor, am adaptable, and love rules of procedure. I'm careful with my work. I appreciate being asked for help by students. Injustice is abhorrent to me. I have a strong sense of loyalty. People tend to like me--I can't explain it.
<i>What character oddities or personality traits do you find at odds with your career?</i>	I have a dark sense of humor at times. I'm introspective when speed and thinking on one's feet can be more efficacious. My clothing and jewelry are vehicles for my personal expression. As such, it is my firm belief that fishnet hosiery is acceptable attire in most venues.
<i>What brief advice or friendly tip would you offer to someone just entering the paralegal field?</i>	Don't think everyone else is smarter than you. Work where you are respected; if you don't like the job you have, get a new one.



Q & A

Flo Smith Member Spotlight

How old are you?	I just turned 52.
Describe your family?	I am married to a supportive husband, Tracy (28 years). We raised two smart and beautiful daughters: Jessica & Molly. They and their families live close by. We have five grandchildren: Ella (7), Gavin (4), Henry (2), Peyton (9 Months) and Josselyn (3 Months).
Town in which you live?	I live in West Berlin, Vermont.
What is your favorite food?	It is a toss-up between lasagna and prime rib.
Do have any pets? If so, what are they, and what are their names?	I have a wonderful cat named Sage.
What kind of hobbies do you have?	I enjoy selling items at craft and vendor fairs; the customer service, socialization and making others happy brings me great joy. All the while, the proceeds help fund my Master’s Degree!
How do you unwind at the end of a long work week?	I enjoy everything about life and fill up every waking minute with family time, special dinners, and events with my grandchildren, including the Echo Center and plays at the Flynn, both in lovely Burlington, Vermont. I also crochet, knit, put puzzles together and love to read—just to name a few! Most of all, I enjoy spending time with my family.
What is your educational background?	At present, I am working on achieving my Master of Science in Law Degree from Champlain College (graduate in May, 2017). I hold a Bachelor of Arts from Norwich University and an Associate of Science from Champlain College.
Where do you work?	I work for the Assistant Attorney General’s Office, where we serve the Vermont Agency of Transportation in Montpelier, Vermont.
When did you first become a paralegal?	Although I have performed paralegal duties since coming to the AAG’s office in February, 2015, my position was formally reclassified to a paralegal position on July 24, 2016.
What area of law do you work in?	We provide a broad spectrum of legal services to the Vermont Agency of Transportation, including eminent domain, defense of construction claims, environmental permitting, tort defense and administrative law.

What do you enjoy about working in that area of law?	I enjoy assisting attorneys to make their work easier and to help our clients reach their program objectives. I cherish the tremendous sense of purpose working with intelligent, thoughtful and kind mentors.
If you could work in any other area of law, what would it be?	My satisfaction is evident in what I do. I just received a promotion to the confidential position of Transportation Legal Program Administrator, which includes supervising the Transportation Litigation Paralegal position (for which we will be recruiting).
What is the one thing about being a paralegal you would change if you could?	I would not change anything about being a paralegal, as I hold an admiration for the legal field and the professional benefits to all those served.
How or why did you first enter the paralegal field?	I began with the Vermont Agency of Transportation in June, 2003 – coming to work for the statewide headquarters of the Maintenance & Operations Division, which at that time was involved in all transportation modes – highways, airports, railroads, and public transit. After 12 years, an opportunity arose in the Agency’s Legal Section. I yearned to be within this exciting and challenging field, applied and was hired.
Did you hold other positions, or have a different career, prior to becoming a paralegal, and if so, what was it?	I began my career 32 years ago, working as an administrative assistant and office manager for local private businesses. Thirteen years ago, I moved to state government.
What do you love about the paralegal profession?	I love the ability to provide specialized professional work at a senior paralegal level. This includes factual and legal research, case and document preparation, assisting lawyers with case presentation and drafting of legal documents; including briefs, paralegal analysis, investigation, research and forms of assistance for the lawyers who serve the Vermont Agency of Transportation.
What things about the profession do you dislike?	I love everything about the profession, especially the challenge!
How long have you been a member of the VPO?	I received my Welcome to The Vermont Paralegal Organization on April 18, 2016. I am a member of the VPO and the National Federation of Paralegals Association (NFPA), as well as an associate member of the Vermont Bar Association. It was a great experience to attend the recent NFPA Convention in Burlington, VT. I thank everyone for this gracious honor to be included in the <i>Paralegal Focus</i> . I enjoy being a member of the Vermont Paralegal Organization.
Tell me about the skills or traits you possess that you find most useful in your position?	I am tenacious and determined. I am often told I am a hard worker of fine character. Co-workers tell me I am the happiest person in the world—always quick with a smile and kind word no matter what the situation. This is a great trait to diffuse difficult situations.

What character oddities or personality traits do you find at odds with your career?

This is a difficult question, but the best way I can summarize it is to refer to “stressed is desserts spelled backwards.” I am always smiling!

What brief advice or friendly tip would you offer to someone just entering the paralegal field?

Persistence is key. Also, be sure to take advantage of training opportunities!



NFPA News

By Corinne Deering, RP®

The 2016 NFPA Convention is now a blurred memory of a whirlwind five days. The VPO put forth its best efforts to host a successful NFPA convention, and we heard some great comments and compliments. We hope that members of our association were able to take part in convention activities in addition to attending CLE sessions. Our Keynote Speaker, Former Governor Howard Dean, was a huge hit during Friday's lunch.

It was reported at the Thursday night NFPA Board meeting that of the 47 NFPA associations, 40 associations were credentialed for convention and the quorum of 35 associations was met.

The dates of the future conventions were announced:

New Orleans	October 12-15, 2017
Seattle, Washington	October 25-28, 2018
Rochester, New York	October 10-13, 2019

One bid was submitted for the 2020 NFPA Convention and was granted to Minnesota Paralegal Association. The membership numbers reported at the Board meeting were: 7,057 association members, 121 individual members, 24 student members, 5 military members, 11 organizational members, for a total of 7,218 total members.

Thursday night's Board meeting also addressed the two administrative topics brought before the NFPA Board for consideration. Administrative topic #1 was requesting the NFPA Board establish board dispute resolution and bullying procedures. After much debate among the members of the NFPA Board, a motion was made to place the topic on the consent calendar for the NFPA delegates to consider. Administrative topic #2 was requesting that the contact information for member associations' regulation committee coordinators be added to the Leadership Directory on the NFPA website. The NFPA board voted unanimously to move this topic to the consent calendar for the delegates to consider.

During the presentation of the consent calendar at the policy meeting, a motion was made to remove topic #1 from the consent calendar. Once a topic is removed from the consent calendar, it goes to the delegates for debate, much like the agenda topics. Topic #2 passed without debate to add associations' regulation committee coordinators to the website leadership directory.

A summary of the five resolutions passed during the policy meeting are:

- Resolution 16-01 was presented as a late agenda topic requesting a position statement on regulation (as originally requested by Resolution 15-04 passed at the 2015 Convention). There was some debate about the timing of the late presentation of the statement to the delegates and that some delegates had not had enough time to bring the topic to their association members for review. The motion was ultimately made and approved to adopt the position statement on regulation of the paralegal profession. The position statement is available on the NFPA website under the Positions and Issues menu tab.
- Resolution 16-02 was presented as a discussion topic from Region V. The request was for a discussion by the delegates to determine a plan to address how NFPA can actively promote the paralegal profession going forward. Lengthy discussion ensued about the interchangeable use of the terms legal assistant and paralegal, and concerns about alienating members who might be called “legal assistants.” It was explained that the intent of the topic was not to exclude, but to take a stance and advocate for ourselves as paralegals and move forward on educating the legal community and the public on the definition of a paralegal and the preferred terminology. It was also suggested that a committee seriously consider taking a position that the terms are not interchangeable any more, and that it is confusing to the consumer, and the objective is to protect the consumers. After several motions and amended motions were made, the final motion that was presented and approved was to charge the Vice President and Director of Positions and Issues (VPDPI) and the Vice President and Director of Marketing (VPDM) to develop a marketing plan to promote the paralegal profession and NFPA’s preferred definition and term “paralegal,” with said plan to include educating the legal profession and community at large on NFPA’s position regarding the qualifications, education, and the utilization of a “paralegal.” Said plan shall be submitted to the NFPA Board at the 2017 spring NFPA Board meeting.
- Resolution 16-03 was presented as Bylaw Amendment #2 requesting amendment of Section 7.7 so that when the Board calls for an executive session, telephone meeting, or special meeting, the reason for that executive session (under Section 7.8) shall also be indicated in the notice of executive session. After a friendly amendment was made, the motion passed.
- Resolution 16-04 was brought as another late agenda topic presenting an update on NFPA’s non-lawyer practice position statement. After several objections to the timing of the late presentation, the agenda topic was brought to the floor for debate. It was explained to the delegates that there were no substantial changes to the language of the position statement. Updates were made to language, footnotes, references, and

additional paralegal programs were added. After some debate, friendly amendments, and a request for an editorial review, a motion was made to move the topic to a caucus meeting scheduled for Saturday evening. A motion to reconsider was voted upon and then a motion was ultimately made by the committee presenting the agenda topic to refer the statement back to the Ad Hoc Committee that prepared the statement for editing. The proposed statement will be posted by January 11, 2017 to the delegates via the leaders' email and discussion board. It will remain open for comments for twenty (20) days and then be sent out to the primary delegates for electronic vote.

- Resolution 16-05 was presented as Bylaw Amendment #1 requesting a clarification and update to NFPA's membership categories and the addition of an emeritus member category. After a friendly amendment was made, the motion to amend the bylaw passed unanimously.

The Ad Hoc Committee on the State of the Profession Report requested a one year extension to complete the writing of the report. No objections were voiced from the floor and the request was granted. This report was scheduled to be presented to the NFPA Board and delegates at the 2016 Annual Convention.

No further agenda topics were brought to the floor for discussion by the delegates, thereby effectively "killing" administration topic #1 (board dispute resolution and bullying procedure).

The new NFPA Board, as elected, was installed during Sunday morning's policy meeting. The results of the votes on the contested positions were:

President	Valerie Wilus, RP, PaC.P.
Vice President & Director of Positions and Issues:	Lori Boris, RP, MnCP
ABA Liaison (nominations made from the floor):	Tammy Smith

The full NFPA Board of Directors are (with their paralegal associations):

President	Valerie Wilus, RP, PaC.P. – Philadelphia
Vice President & Director of Profession Development	Allen F. Mihecoby, CLAS, RP – Dalla
Vice President & Director of Positions & Issues	Lori Boris, RP, MnCP – Minnesota
Vice President & Director of Membership	Yvonne DeAntoneo – Tampa Bay, FL
Vice President & Director of Paralegal Certification	Nita Serrano, RP – Tampa Bay, FL
Vice President & Director of Marketing	Lisa Lynch, CRP – Dallas

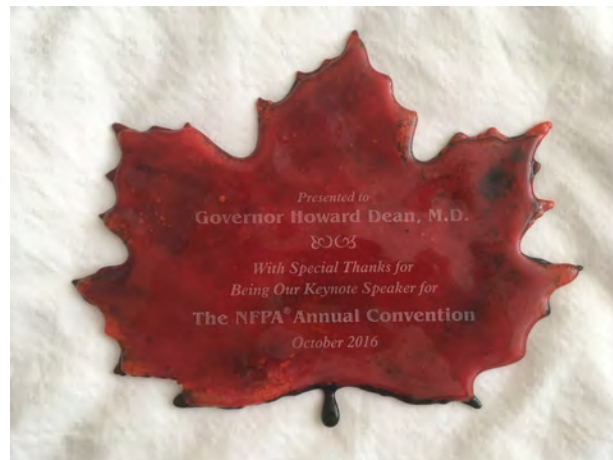
Treasurer & Director of Finance	MaryAnn Ivie, RP – Oregon
Secretary & Director of Operations	Cherylan Shearer – Michiana, Indiana
Region I Director	Ronell Badua – Hawaii
Region II Director	Mianne L. Besser – Rocky Mtn., CO
Region III Director	Lori Wagner, RP, IRP – Indiana
Region IV Director	Monique Luck, PaC.P. – Pittsburgh
Region V Director	Josie Estes – New Hampshire
Board Advisor	Lisa Vessels, RP, CP, FRP – So. Florida

The new President issued a renewed President's Challenge for each association to have 10 new members, 4 new CRPs and 2 new RPs before the 2017 Convention in New Orleans. We already have Robyn Sweet, CRP, who will qualify toward our goal, and we know of at least one other person who is currently studying to take PCCE. Everyone should carefully consider becoming certified. It may be the wave of the future!

With the passing of the torch to the New Orleans Paralegal Association, the 2016 Convention came to a close Sunday morning. I would like to thank all the VPO volunteers who worked on committees over the past several years, and the volunteers who worked the convention. Without all your help, "our convention" would not have been so successful. We now look forward to finalizing expenses on the convention and finding out if the convention was profitable enough for the VPO to receive an incentive payment. We are keeping our fingers crossed.

We hope those of you who attended convention enjoyed the opportunity to mix and mingle with colleagues from across the United States. Please remember to reach out to the VPO Board and to me and/or Ashley LaRose, RP, as your NFPA representatives if you have suggestions, comments or concerns about the NFPA website or the News You Can Use emails, if you would like to see a certain CLE subject offered, or if you are interested in volunteering with NFPA. We are here to represent your interests with NFPA and would like your feedback.





WE ARE NOT DONE YET...

Please help us congratulate the newly appointed NFPA Coordinators:

President's Coordinator

Inside Reports: Theresa Prater, RP (SVPA)

Board Advisor Coordinator

Strategic Planning Chair: Becky Kerstetter (CAP)

VP Professional Development Coordinator

CLE Coordinator, Individual: Catherine Allard (PANH)

CLE Co-Coordinator, Associations: Tracey Barnes (MCPA)

CLE Co-Coordinator, Associations: Linda Ruggiero, RP (NHCAP)

CLE Co-Coordinator, Commercial Providers: Louise Reese (VPO)

CLE Co-Coordinator, Commercial Providers: Barbara Tebo (PAW)

CLE Co-Coordinator, CLE Audit: Pamela Bass (PANV)

Special Coordinator to the VPPD: Theresa A. Prater, RP (SVPA)

Pro Bono Coordinator: Christine Flynn (PAP)

Roles & Responsibilities Coordinator: Kathleen Miller, RP (OPA)

State of the Paralegal Profession Chair: Becky Reedy (SJPA)

ABA Pro Bono Liaison (appointed 3 year term): Christine Flynn (PAP)

VP Position and Issues Coordinators

Case Law Monitoring Coordinator: Jackie Van Dyke, MPS (NCPA)

Case Law Monitoring Committee: Katharine Essex (PAW)

Ethics and Professional Responsibility Coordinator: Katina Whitfield (DAPA)

Ethics and Professional Responsibility Committee: Sybil Taylor Aytch (SVPA)

Legislative Co-Coordinator: Brenda Cothary (WSPA)

Legislative Co-Coordinator: Jeffrey Watts

Legislative Committee: Jessica Kubiak (CAP)

Legislative Committee: Jay William, TBLS-BCP (DAPA)

Regulations Review Coordinator: Maren Joyce Schroeder, RP, McCP (MPA)

Ethics Board Members: Debra Hindin-King (RMPA), Eugene Alcala (DAPA)

Ethics Chair: Pamela Starr, CBA, JSM, MATD (GAP)

VP Membership Coordinators

Armed Forces Co-Coordinator: Becky Reedy, NJCP (SJPA)

Armed Forces Co-Coordinator: Linda Odermott, RP (OPA)

Association Management Co-Coordinator: Kelli Smith, CRP (DAPA)

Association Management Co-Coordinator: Linda Odermott, RP (OPA)

International Relations Coordinator: Robert Hrouda, RP (PAP)

Association Leadership Training Coordinator: Mindi Schaefer, M.S., RP, OSBA, AACP

(PACO)

Member Benefits Coordinator: Mary McLaughlin, RP (SVPA)

Membership Growth Co-Coordinator: Jay Williams, TBLS-BCP (DAPA)

Membership Growth Co-Coordinator: Tracey Woolsey, RP (Indiana PA)

Student Membership Growth Coordinator: Jessica Kubiak, OSBA (CAP)

VP Paralegal Certification Coordinators

CRP Renewals Coordinator: Mary Ann Myskiw-Jones, CRP (SFPA)

Study Materials Coordinator: Kristy Geron, RP (DAPA)

Ambassadors Coordinator: Andrea Zwegat, RP (CAP)

Public Relations/Marketing Coordinator: Emily Merlin, CP (TBPA)

VP Marketing Coordinators

Corporate Partners Coordinator: Heidi Coleman, AACP, DCP (PAP)

Editorial Coordinator: Tanya Patterson (RMPA)

Internal Marketing Coordinator: Robyn Sweet, CRP (VPO)

Social Media Coordinator: Aileen Requejado (SFPA)

Secretary & Operations Director Coordinators

Governing Documents Coordinator: Brenna Dickey, RP (OPA)

Intellectual Property Coordinator: Michael Vertullo (PPA)

Convention Coordinator (1 year remainder of biennial appointment): Jessica Kubiak (CAP)

Post Convention Debriefing

By Louise Reese

Wow! Convention was scary in the planning stages, and it was scary the night before it all began, but what a rush once it got started. Thursday, our CLE day, made my head spin since I was the onsite CLE chair. Our presentation on Mobile Device Forensics was done remotely as Jonathan Rajewski had a conflict with another presentation he needed to do in person in Buffalo. Robyn Sweet, the room monitor, controlled the room, and Jonathan's associate from Champlain College got the technology in place. We had 15 other presentations that day and no significant issues or concerns. Lori Cohen, Tina Wiles, Audrey Holm-Hansen, Emma Novins, and Diane Brown were also room monitors for CLEs throughout the day. As monitors, they gave introductions, instructions, and information to the attendees, assisted the presenters, and made sure everyone signed in and signed out so proper CLE credit could be given. The job was important and helped a great deal in keeping the day running smoothly. It was also a pleasure to see other members of the VPO registered for the CLE sessions on Thursday.

We also had committed volunteers to wo-man the VPO booth and the charity table. The VPO booth volunteers included: Heather Rylant, Lucia White, Sara Boyden, Monica Litzelman, Pam Pinard, Tina Wiles, Gillian Bergeron, Carie Tarte, MB Prager, and Julie Anderson-Adams. On Friday, Robyn Sweet contributed as a runner, helping out when a need arose at any given time. Lori Cohen and Audrey Holm-Hansen also took shifts wo-manning the charity table, along with Lisa Pettrey-Gill, Karen Farnsworth, Tina Wiles and Cathy Foutz. Heather Moreau helped out with the Wednesday night informal social, and took care of our keynote speaker, Howard Dean, on Friday. Corinne and Carie buzzed in and out throughout each day to see how things were going and to confirm we had appropriate coverage, all while overseeing the bigger picture of convention.

The Friday night social at the Sunset Ballroom on Shelburne Road was a blast. The dance floor was packed and the photo booth (well, we may want to keep some of that stuff private) was jam-packed. By the time Friday night comes along, the host organization has done most of what it needs to do, and there was reason to celebrate. The VPO volunteers put on a great convention (“one of the best” was mentioned), proving that you don’t have to be from a big state to do BIG things!

All of our volunteers deserve a standing ovation for their time and attention to the event, but I would like to give a shout out to those who traveled across counties to get there. Our Washington County crew: Lori Cohen, Lisa Pettrey-Gill, Karen Farnsworth, and Monica Litzelman. Our Rutland County crew: Robyn Sweet and Tina Wiles. Our Windsor County crew: Julie Anderson-Adams.

I also made a new friend at convention and she is a fairly new member of the VPO. Flo Smith was recently promoted to Transportation Legal Program Administrator with the Vermont Attorney General’s Office covering the Vermont Agency of Transportation. Flo attended the CLEs, Friday meetings, and stayed for the policy meetings as an observer. She traveled from Berlin each day and took lots of notes during the policy meetings. Please check out the Member Spotlight on Flo and volunteer Monica Litzelman in this issue.

My apologies if I missed identifying any volunteer by name. Each helping hand made a big difference.



The Convention Experience

By Lori A. Cohen

If you didn't attend the 2016 NFPA convention in Burlington you missed an informative, professional event hosted by our own Vermont Paralegal Organization. Co-Chairs Corinne Deering and Carie Tarte, as well as each VPO volunteer, are to be commended for their time, energy, and thoughtfulness in preparing and orchestrating this national event.

I was fortunate enough to be able to attend some of the convention and, the educational aspect aside, had way more fun than I ever expected to have. The Friday night social at the Sunset Ballroom overlooking Lake Champlain was a stunning location and just a blast – from the DJ (those paralegals know how to shake their stuff) to the candy table, it was a great time to unwind, network, and laugh.

I attended four seminars, each which held a broad range appeal from the multi-tasking general practitioner to those of us who practice in boutique, specialized firms. The writing seminar – Devil in the Details – was time well spent discussing editing so as to be clear and concise in your writing. Gone are the days of legalese. Now is the time to write clearly so there is no doubt what the message is that you wish to convey. Ethics, though taught by the Vermont Bar counsel, was relevant to paralegals as far away as Hawaii. I was personally fascinated to hear how Ontario, Canada has legalized the independent practice of paralegals in certain specialties and the process in obtaining that freedom.

While the number of professional exhibitors was limited, each was relevant and informative in its own right. Working in a small, somewhat isolated office, I was very interested to learn of all the new technological opportunities out there to make my work more efficient (and dare I say less stressful?) that I wouldn't have learned about otherwise.

Thank you to the VPO Board for being brave enough to take on the enormous task of hosting this convention. I doubt I would have had the opportunity to attend such an event had it not been held locally. This was an opportunity not to be missed.

What Inspired Me

By Robyn A. Sweet, CRP

Inspiration for volunteering for Internal Marketing Coordinator:

After attending the NFPA Convention this October in Burlington, I was inspired to be more active in this career choice I made. Maybe it was the fact that I had recently taken (and passed) the PCC exam, felt the camaraderie of my fellow paralegals and was recently medically cleared to start living life again....or maybe just the high from spending 3 whole days (and nights) with adults...remember, I am a mom to six or more at any given time.

NFPA and our VPO always need members to step up and help to accomplish the day to day tasks, as well as the BIG stuff. I knew helping with smaller day to day tasks would be easier to fit into my busy schedule, so helping with the internal marketing (like the News You Can Use) was perfect. I enjoy writing and marketing (with not much use for that in my day job or mommy life), so those snappy one- liners I am so good at will now be put to good use for the NFPA board. The people I have met through the VPO and NFPA have been amazing as well as supportive and truly caring. These organizations are only able to remain in existence when the members contribute. I hope that in being a more active member in both NFPA and VPO I will be able to assist our profession and those in it locally and nationally to reach new levels of greatness.

I challenge each member of the VPO to find one thing they are able to contribute to the VPO or NFPA in the coming year and follow through on it. Contacting some paralegal friends who are not members of the VPO and encouraging them to join, support a VPO continuing education session, or help organize a VPO event, will make a difference. We are all busy (trust me, I know), however, without the "I's" doing their part there is no "us" to reap the benefits.

PCCE/PACE:

If anyone is interested in sitting for the PCCE or PACE exams, please feel free to contact me. I have study materials and I am happy to help independently or set up a study group (online or in person).

Convention and Joint Conference:

The convention was a smashing hit. Carie, Corinne, Louise and the rest of the committees did an AMAZING job! Kudos to everyone.

The Joint Conference for NFPA will be in NYC April 28-30, 2017. I hope that some VPO members will be in attendance. I will be attending that conference, and am willing to help coordinate roommates for people interested in attending but not wanting to foot the entire bill themselves. Please feel free to contact me.

What Inspired Me Too

By Louise Reese

My inspiration to get involved with NFPA started just before convention in October. Excitement for the event was starting to build. Our Facebook convention page was filling with positivity about traveling to Vermont for convention, and reconnecting with people from every region. I, too, was looking forward to reconnecting with people I met at my first convention about 13 years ago, and who I had seen at Region V meetings over the years.

We received an email alert about openings for NFPA Coordinators. Since I have been coordinating and managing VPO continuing legal education sessions for years, I thought that I could best provide support in that area. After convention had passed, I submitted my application and resume to NFPA to work under Allen Mihecoby, CLAS, RP, the Vice President and Director of Profession Development (and a man who knows his way around a dance floor). My application was accepted, and I am now a CLE Co-Coordinator focusing on Commercial Providers.

Although my interest in getting involved with NFPA started prior to convention, after attending the Coordinator Appreciation/Networking Luncheon on Thursday and the Awards Luncheon on Saturday, I was inspired even more, and my decision was firm.

I remain inspired to do my part locally, having already developed a passion for the newsletter and CLE's. Convention also allowed me an opportunity to become better acquainted with VPO members who I only saw once a year at annual meetings, like Robyn Sweet and the Washington County clan (Karen Farnsworth, Lisa Pettrey-Gill, Lori Cohen, and Monica Litzelman), and my ol' buddy, Tina Wiles. I also enjoyed hanging out at the policy meeting with Flo Smith.

Please consider getting involved. The friendships and support developed from within our local organization and with members from organizations in other states are priceless.

Convention Closing Speeches by 2016 Convention Co-Chairs

First up, Corinne Deering, RP®:

Madam President, Board Members, Delegates, Honored Guests and Observers,

Happy National Paralegal Day!

We are nearing the end of the 42nd Annual NFPA Convention and Policy Meeting. It is hard to believe how quickly it arrived and how quickly it has passed.

The Vermont Paralegal Organization hopes you have had time to get out and see some of the sights of Burlington and Vermont, or will be spending some additional post-convention time here to enjoy what is left of the fall colors.

While planning for convention, we certainly had a few challenges, frustrations and snafus along the way. However, through it all, there were a few members of the local committee that continued to jump in when needed, to fill the shoes of someone who could not continue, and who continually offered to help in any way they could. I wanted to give special thanks to Louise Reese, Gillian Bergeron, and Lucia White for their willingness to be of assistance at every turn.

I also wanted to thank the members of the NFPA Board, Convention Committee, past convention hosts, and our Region V Director for reaching out a helping hand where needed, and for several pep talks along the way to keep me going. Juggling planning for a national event, a paralegal workload, family matters, and life in general can be a real challenge at times.

Lastly, I would like to thank Carie, the members of the VPO planning committee, and the additional volunteers who pitched in to help at convention:

Julie Anderson	Diane Brown	Lori Cohen
Karen Farnsworth	Cathy Foutz	Lisa Laramee
Ashley LaRose	Monica Litzelman	Sharon Lucia
Heather Moreau	Emma Novins	Lisa Pettrey-Gill
Kristin Provost	Brandon Shields	Evelyn Wetzal
Tina Wiles	Missy Woessner	Sara Boyden
Robyn Sweet	Michelle Perlee	Heather Rylant
Pam Pinard	MB Prager	Audrey Holm-Hansen

As we now pass the torch to the New Orleans Paralegal Association, we wish them good luck, perseverance, and strength in the year ahead. If we can impart any guidance, tips or tricks, know that we are available, and look forward to attending the 2017 convention in New Orleans.

Thank you all for coming to Burlington to celebrate the paralegal profession and NFPA's 42nd Convention.

And to close out the event, Carie Tarte, RP®:

Good morning Madam President, NFPA Board, Delegates, Observers and Honored Guests.

Well, here we are. Four years of planning, sweating, fretting, is now coming to a close. As I look around the room and reflect on the past four days, I am amazed and proud of all that we have accomplished together.

I wanted to start by thanking the NFPA Board for having faith in our little organization and selecting us to host this year's convention. This has been an honor for the VPO.

I would like to thank Kellen for stepping in mid-stream in our final year of planning and doing all that you could to make sure we had a successful convention. I join Corinne in thanking all of our committee members and volunteers. We literally could not have done this without each and every one of you. Some took on additional duties like Louise Reese, who not only spearheaded our CLEs, but also coordinated the entire student event.

Of course I would be remiss if I did not thank my co-chair Corinne. She is THE person you want by your side for an event of this magnitude. I couldn't tell you the things that would have fallen thru the cracks without Corinne. Seriously, I couldn't tell you because I could not keep up! So thank you Corinne for keeping us organized and on schedule.

Although they are not here, I have to thank my family. I have a teenage son and daughter who haven't seen me since Tuesday and a husband who celebrated his 44th birthday yesterday. Without their support and self-sufficiency, I couldn't have made this commitment.

I also have a mother-in-law that is either a super hero or saint, I'm not sure which, but she made meals for my family, made sure my kids were where they needed to be when they needed to be there, and would text me daily to let me know where I was supposed to be and when! I also have to thank my employer, Maley and Maley. Chris Maley has been a champion for paralegals and extremely supportive of my role in convention. We have a small office, but he still allowed me to be out for three days this week, with pay, and he sponsored our break yesterday morning.

Last, but certainly not least, thank you all for joining us at NFPA's 42nd convention and letting us show you the beauty and sweetness of Vermont.



For a Good Cause

Let's not forget that we raised almost \$2,000 for Camp Ta-Kum-Ta at convention. The fundraising events included Casual for a Cause (jeans on Friday), sales of chocolate bars and mugs with the convention logo, a 50/50 raffle, and a vigorous silent auction that helped to bring in a significant portion of our donation to Camp. The Cabot cheese and maple products were a big draw!

The Real Estate Corner

Vermont Attorneys Title Corporation has given us permission to reprint the following information from its December 2016 newsletter.

The Vermont Department of Taxes has announced a launch of new software for property tax forms on December 7, 2016. In addition to no longer being limited to the Property Transfer Tax for online filings, here are some of the highlights:

- There will be no fee for filing online (the \$5.00 fee will go away);
- Use of the online filing system is mandatory

unless you file five or fewer per year;

- Submitting payment for taxes owed can be done online via ACH or credit card; however, online payment is not mandatory;
- A law firm may create a master account for submitting filings on as a preparer for clients. The firm may add multiple users within the firm to the account;
- Data from one form will flow to the other forms needed for a transaction;
- The software will handle calculations;
- A quick link will allow you to request a Commissioner Certificate;
- A law firm account will contain a dashboard that will allow you to see filings In Progress, Submitted to be Processed, Last Three Years, or All filings.

Claims Trends

Ever wonder what the most common title insurance claims are? The following is a list of the top five types of claims that VATC/CATIC has been involved with in Vermont during 2016.

- Unreleased or ineffectively released prior mortgage
- Defective instruments
- Easement matters
- Unpaid taxes/sewer & water liens
- Missing interest on a deed or mortgage



Federal Rule 6(d) has been amended and the extra three days added to a deadline to respond to electronically served papers will be removed starting December 1, 2016.

Effective December 1, 2016, Federal courts have approved increases to the miscellaneous fee schedule, which includes records searches, document filing/indexing, audio recording, certificate of good standing, and others. Access the court's website at www.vtd.uscourts.gov for specific changes.

Convention Tidbit

For those interested in the bankruptcy process, Judge Brown highly recommends attending the Section 341 Meetings of the debtor and creditors. These are public meetings in which the trustee examines the debtor under oath. Go to <http://www.vtb.uscourts.gov/calendar-meeting-creditors-341-meetings> for the meeting schedule.





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²Coverage not available in all states. The descriptions of coverage are necessarily brief and are subject to policy provisions, limitations and exclusions that can only be expressed in the policy itself. For a complete explanation of coverages, please consult a sales representative.

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