

PARALEGAL PÛBLICUM

Issue 2011 Volume 1

A MISSISSIPPI PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION, INC. PUBLICATION

SPRING 2011

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- **What Does It Take To Be A Medical Expert Witness**
- **Is your Career Stuck in the “Someday” Trap?**
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From the Desks of the Editors:

Darleen Dozier, CLA

And

Sarah L. O'Neal, ACP



Welcome to the inaugural edition of the Mississippi Paralegal Association, Inc. ("MPA") eZine *Paralegal Pùblicum*. We hope you enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed publishing it. We have a new design, layout, and new vibe to our eZine that we feel will help propel us into the 21st Century.

We will be publishing our new eZine online and will announce all the details soon. We have added new sections to our eZine that we think you will find interesting like our *Tips & Tricks* section, the *Paralegal Spotlight* sections, the *Legal Quotes* section, *Highlight on Legal Blogs* section, *Weird Laws* section, *Overheard in Court* section, along with many new legal articles on subjects of interest to you.

As with any new publication, we want to hear from you. Let us know what you like, don't like, or would like to see in future editions. If you have any comments on our new eZine, write to the editors at ddozier@holmescc.edu or sarah.oneal@youngwilliams.com.

Your comments could be printed on a future *Letters to the Editors* page in upcoming editions. We have big things in store.

We are planning a special Heritage Edition of *Paralegal Pùblicum*. *If you have pictures, memories, or snippets to add to this edition, please let us know.*

Don't forget to celebrate with us all year long as MPA turns the big "30". We have a lot of activities planned and many valuable prizes to be given away so be sure to participate.

If you would like more information on Paralegals or would like to become a member of MPA visit our website at www.msparalegals.org.

"Enthusiasm Fever" is contagious. *Catch and spread the FEVER wherever you go!*



Paralegal Pùblicum is a publication of the Mississippi Paralegal Association, Inc., Post Office Box 996, Jackson, Mississippi 39205 in conjunction with the Newsletter, Public Relations, and Professional Development committees.

Pùblicum—(pùblicus m.) (feminine pùblica, neuter pùblicum); first/second declension of or belonging to the people, State, or community public, general (substantive) a public officer, magistrate)



Message from the President of the Mississippi Paralegal Association, Inc. ("MPA")

Donna Alderman, ACP

In our first publication for 2011 you will notice many new and exciting changes!!

We have changed the name of our quarterly publication to *Paralegal Pùblicum*. We have also changed the format to an eZine format. We have added new content as well. I believe these changes will make our publication more fun and exciting for our membership.

Your Board of Directors has been working diligently to improve our association. We are working on new education and pro bono opportunities to advance MPA. We want to make MPA bigger and stronger than ever!!

We are also getting ready for this year's NALA Convention, where Sarah O'Neal and I will be presenting the 2011 Affiliate Exchange Presentation. It is such a privilege and honor to be chosen as the only Affiliate to present at the convention. I am very proud to be representing MPA at the convention.

I look forward to being your president for 2011 and will represent the membership in to the best of my ability.



Common Accidents in Public Places

By Gerard Malouf, Solicitor
April 17, 2010, 4:29 am

Accidents in public places happen frequently. They can happen to adults and children alike at any time and can take place in a variety of ways. A public place is anywhere that the public can access, free or not. It includes places such as: schools, shopping malls, supermarkets, play areas, pavements, sports centers, parks, streets, highways, pubs, nightclubs, railway stations, railway lines, hotels, sports stadiums - the list is endless. Common types of accidents include stepping into a pothole, slipping on a wet floor in a cafe or pub, or tripping on an object that is protruding from the ground.

The most common type of accidents involving both children and adults relate to slipping and falling. Slips and falls in a public place are most of the time not your fault. For example, a slip and fall may be caused by a wet substance such as melted ice cream, causing the floor in a public place to be slippery. Slip and falls can happen without any warning and anyone can suffer such an accident, often in the blink of an eye, not noticing a slippery floor. Aisles and walkways can cause many slips and falls especially when they lack proper signs for maintenance or work areas. Slips and falls may also take place in a restaurant where a worker does not clean up after a beverage has been spilled. The basic types of slip and fall accidents fall under 3 categories: A slip and fall happens when your footing slips and you fall to the ground. It is usually caused by wet, slippery, or icy substances on the floor. A trip and fall usually occurs when there is an object in your path or when the pathway is not leveled well. It can be the result of unpaved or uneven sidewalks, or a misplaced box in the middle of a store aisle. A step and fall happens when there is a hole in the walking path. An example of which is when someone steps into a pothole that they wouldn't have expected.

In these public areas, it is the responsibility of the property owner to prevent such accidents. If slip and falls occur on their property, the owners are liable and will owe you accident compensation. It is crucial for you to seek accident compensation if you know you are not at fault and are involved in a slip and fall accident in a public place. Accident compensation can also be given to children who slip or trip while on school premises. If a child trips on computer wire or a wet cafeteria floor, parents may pursue a claim for accident compensation. Successful accident compensation on behalf of the child can also be made when the property owner of say, a shop, does not employ a regular system of cleaning up spillage and ensuring that the floors are clean and dry, and their walkways are free from any obstruction. Keep in mind that our law protects us from being injured in a public place and requires local authorities and public land owners to have regards for the safety of people who are accessing their areas. Special care must be given when children will be entering into or using their properties. So if you have suffered an accident and have incurred injury in a public place due to dangerous premises or negligence from the land owners, you may have a claim. If possible, take some photographs of the place where your slip and fall took place, showing evidence of the danger that has caused your injury.



Legal Quotes

“ ... ”

- ◆ The law is only a memorandum. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882) Essays, second series, 1844, Politics.
- ◆ Justice has nothing to do with what goes on in a courtroom; Justice is what comes out of a courtroom. Clarence Darrow

Source: <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/keywords/legal.html>



Overheard in Court

Good Morning?

Attorney: What was the first thing that your husband said to you when he awoke?

Witness: He said, “where are we, Cheryl?”

Attorney: And why would that upset you?

Witness: Because my name is Kathy.

Must have been me...

Judge: Sir, you have a warrant for a public intoxication from March of 2010.

How do you plead?

Defendant: No contest, I guess. I don't remember it.

Source <http://overheardincourt.com>

What Does It Take To Be A Medical Expert Witness

By A. Noton

April 17, 2010, 4:09 pm

What does it take to be a medical expert witness depends on what sort of trial it is and what state you are in. The qualifications necessary differ from state to state and sometimes from county to county. If you are looking to be an expert witness of any kind it is a good idea to check with your local and state qualifications. There are different things necessary for each specialty.

The first thing you will need is a medical degree of some sort to become an expert medical witness. Also it is good to have knowledge of the case or the facts of the case. If you want to find out the qualifications for your state or county you will need to speak with the prosecutors office and they should be able to tell you. You should have some medical knowledge and a medical degree of some sort in order to be a medical expert. This generally involves at least four years of school if not eight years and a residency.

Any specialization can be a medical witness depending on the case that you are looking at. Most times lawyers will pick experts within the field that they are looking at. If the person was poisoned a gastroenterologist or another type of expert on ingestion or poisons. Those that have superior qualifications in their field also make excellent expert witnesses. Authors or award winning doctors are usually picked first. Sometimes knowledge of the community surpasses other qualifications. As a medical expert you might need knowledge of the case. You might have been a doctor or evaluator of a person in the case or you might have some knowledge of the evidence. It is not unusual for the courts to hear medical expert testimony from the psychologist or psychiatrist of the victim, defendant, or plaintiff. Sometimes even a family doctor will testify depending on the case. ER doctors might be considered expert witnesses depending on the circumstances. Case knowledge is sometimes a requirement because the expert needs to prove something is correct. Some of the belong to companies that provide expert witnesses just for trials and court proceedings. These companies are a guarantee that their witness is an expert and has first hand knowledge of the subject.

Anyone who has extraordinary knowledge of the subject or circumstances surrounding the case can be considered an witness. An expert witness is one that has the training, education, or experience can testify on behalf of any party in a case. Many other professionals can be expert witnesses but to be a medical expert you have to be a medical professional and medically trained. Other medical experts aside from doctors are nurses, physicians, radiologist, corners, medical examiners, and other health professionals. These all can be considered medical expert witnesses. If you are in doubt as to what does it take to be a medical expert witness check with your local court house. They have different qualifications depending on the case involved. An expert witness should of course be an expert in their field. It is unlikely that anyone who is not qualified would be accepted by the attorneys or the judge.

The testimony of a medical [witness expert](#) can potentially influence the outcome of a court trial. Since 1978, our board certified [medical expert witness](#) team has provided consultation and testimony services across North America. Source:www.isnare.com

Regions 2 and 5 Director:

Darleen Dozier, CLA

I am looking forward to serving MPA this year as Region Directors for our South Mississippi members. You will be hearing from me soon to determine the needs you may have for continuing legal education, socials, online resources, etc. Please be getting your thoughts together as to how we can increase membership in your regions and help you actively participate in your state association. MPA will come to you – if you will participate. Get creative and be prepared to share your ideas soon. If you would like to contact me individually, please do so at ddozier@holmescc.edu.



Vice President/New Membership:

Steven J. Jones



Spring is almost here and I can't wait. There are several things on my list of "to-do" and I am sure your list is as long or longer. On another note, I am excited about what MPA is doing this year to celebrate our 30th Anniversary. I hope you all enjoyed the January 2011 luncheon. It was so much fun!! Remember to keep attending the monthly luncheons to better your chances of winning the diamond necklace that will be given away in October. I hope to see you there!!!

Currently, we have 21 newly approved members. Congratulations to all of our new MPA members for 2011 and thank you for your interest in MPA. We are so excited about what MPA has become and what MPA is striving to become in the future!!!! Happy Spring to all!!!

Parliamentarian:

Mary Lynn Underwood

Welcome back! My job is a relatively easy one, but let me tell you about your officers and board members. They are an awesome group who are working hard to make MPA one of the best, if not THE BEST, association in the country. Buckle up, because I believe this is going to be another exciting ride.

Let me challenge you in two ways: First, support your board by volunteering in every way possible; and second, encourage others you know, in your firm, or otherwise, to join MPA. Membership can be a great networking tool, but more importantly, it's a wonderful enhancement for your career. Yes, career, not just a job. I look forward to the great things to come this year!



Vice President of Education:

Rachel Nesbit

Thank you for allowing me to serve as the 2011 VP of Education. The year has just started and I have already lined up some great speakers for our luncheons. We have had several requests for specific topics – keep the suggestions coming! We love hearing what the members are interested in.



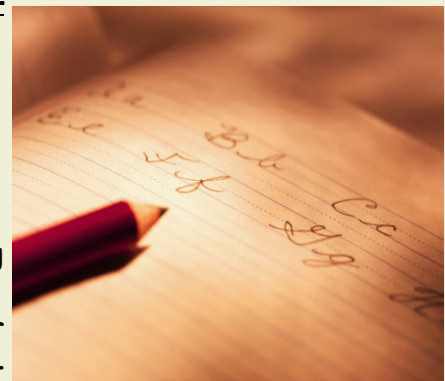
At this time, I would also like to thank the MPA members for the (very unexpected) honor of being presented with the 2010 Pro Bono Award at the January luncheon. While there were several good causes that needed MPA’s help last year, the biggest project we worked on was the Salvation Army “Stuff The Trucks” event. As I mentioned at the January luncheon, the Salvation Army holds a special place in my heart because of the vision of its founder, William Booth: “*Others*”. There will be several opportunities to get involved in service projects with MPA to benefit “*Others*” this year. We are already planning for another “Paralegal Day” at the 2011 Stuff the Trucks event for those of you who are interested in participating. Updates and information will be available throughout the year on our Facebook page, on Twitter, and announcements during the luncheons, so be on the lookout!

“Life’s most persistent and urgent question is, ‘What are you doing for others?’”
- Martin Luther King, Jr.

Secretary:

Kathy Mangum

Thank you for allowing me to serve as your 2011 MPA Secretary. 2010 was the best!!! I am looking forward to another exciting and productive year. Our monthly membership meetings have always extended a grand invitation of networking opportunities, and I am grateful. Again, thank you for giving me an opportunity to serve as Secretary.



Did you Know.....? Who invented the paperclip.

When Johann Vaaler patented his paper clip in 1901, there already were similar designs on the books. William Middlebrook of Waterbury, Connecticut patented his design in 1899. Cornelius Brosnan of Springfield, Massachusetts patented his Konaclip in 1900.

So, who was first to invent the paper clip?

Well, it is thought to be Johann Vaaler. Drawings of his design date to early 1899, but since Norway had no patent law at the time he had to seek patent rights in Germany and the US in the following years.

Johann Vaaler was born on 15 March 1866 in Aurskog, Norway. Known as an innovator in his youth, he graduated in electronics, science and mathematics. He was employed by the owner of an invention office when he invented the paper clip in 1899.

Several designs followed the original. Only a few remain, such as the Ideal, Non-Skid, Owl and Gem. The first double-oval clip, the Gem, was launched in early-1900 by Gem Manufacturing Ltd of England. The paper clip remains as one of the most-used items of all time



www.didyounow.org/paperclips/

TIPS AND TRICKS

How to Make Boring Work Interesting

Three tips:

- 1) Focus on the people affected by a task rather than on the task itself. For example, accounting work would be considered boring by some. But the work that an accountant does helps the client achieve goals that enhance many lives (doing accounting work for a software firm helps all the people who use the software);
- 2) View the mundane tasks that make the job seem boring as steps in the solution of a puzzle. Writing and organizing hundreds of tax tips for inclusion in a database might seem boring. But the ultimate goal is to create a learning resource of great power. The worker should aim to view himself or herself as an adventurer required to engage in boring tasks like cutting through brush to attain the exciting purpose of discovering a new world (the world in which the new tax-tips learning resource is available to serve those in need of the information provided in it); and
- 3) Engage in enough exciting tasks in your non-work hours so that you feel that your life is not in an overall sense boring. If you go home from a boring job to watch television every night, life itself will come to seem boring to you over time. If you go home to prepare for running a marathon or to prepare for the next meeting of your book or investing club, you may come to appreciate the boring nature of the work you do as a chance not to need to become so emotionally involved for a few hours of days that are part of a life that in an overall sense is not boring at all.

<http://www.passionsaving.com/workplace-tips.html>

Treasurer:

Kimberly Pierce, CP

THANK YOU MEMBERSHIP for your confidence in me to serve you as MPA Treasurer. I am enjoying making new friends while learning how this great Association works from the inside. I am proud of the hard work that the Board has put forth to meet the needs of our membership. Such efforts include luncheons and seminars to help certified paralegals obtain required CLE credits, as well as the partnership with Ole Miss and Lorman to offer the MPA membership educational opportunities. We are on-line and streaming meetings and working very hard to get the NALA Convention held in Mississippi! Members of the Board have been asked to speak at the next NALA Convention and tell others of their electronic accomplishments, which is getting national recognition. Please know that I am available to the membership if there are questions or comments regarding my duties or any other aspect of this great organization in MPA.



Vice President Established Membership:

Zenda Heafner, CLA



Happy New Year! Can you believe that it is 2011; and better yet it's March.? I'm still in Louisiana and Mardi Gras is everywhere. I'm up to my eyeballs in King Cake; and yes I did get the baby from treating myself yet again. Throw me some 'mista – beads that is! Let me throw something your way. MPA has gotten off to a great start this year; way better than 2010. We are about 140 members strong so far; better than we were at this time last year. Hopefully we will continue to grow throughout the year. That is up to you, our great Membership, to get the word out there that we are still here and better than ever.

If you were not able to attend our January meeting, you missed a lot. We had all three of our Student Essay winners with us including their parents. I also had the honor of presenting the Paralegal of the Year to Gwen Burgess; a very well deserved recipient if I do say so myself. MPA is a great organization, and I will continue to say that over and over until we get out membership back more than 200 as it has been in the past. Please get out there and tell your colleagues and friends about us. Ask them to join you at a monthly meeting, and I bet they will get hooked like the rest of us. If they need a little coaxing, let me know and maybe the Board can pass on some insight about MPA. The 2011 MPA Board has a great year planned with guest speakers, seminars and of course this being our 30th Anniversary, there is a great attendance incentive to be given away in October – a diamond necklace. Now is that great or what?!

Another great thing that has happened to MPA is that we have been chosen to make the Affiliates' Presentation at the NALA Convention in Dallas, Texas, in July. MPA and Mississippi are HOT, HOT, HOT! We also have a committee working on a presentation to try and entice NALA to Mississippi for the NALA Convention in 2013. Great things are happening in, for and around MPA. Please come join us for the fun and an educational experience second to none. It is a pleasure and honor to again serve MPA as the Vice President of Established Membership. I appreciate your trust and support while serving you. I had Membership Certificates available at the January meeting, and mailed out the ones that were not picked up at that meeting. If you have not received your certificate please let me know. The Board wants all our members to be proud of their membership and post the Certificate in your office. Here's to a great 2011!

Holmes Association of Legal Students



The Holmes Association of Legal Students (HALS) continues to grow in number and in activities. While students are busy working through their education, HALS gives much-needed practical advice to help students in the transition from the academic world to the professional world. As an extra bonus, our educational meetings are approved by NALA for CLE credit. If you would like to be a part of these meetings, you can contact Faculty Advisor, Darleen Dozier, or “friend” us on Facebook – Holmes Association of Legal Students, to be notified of upcoming meetings.

Steven Jones, MPA VP-New Membership, spoke to students in January about the importance of membership and participation in professional organizations. He also spoke about the paralegal career in general and alternate careers for paralegals. In February, Suzanne Faison gave students practical advice in trial preparation from her many years as a litigation paralegal. Students have a chance to ask questions of speakers and begin building their networks of professional relationships during monthly meetings.

The main community service project for HALS this semester is hosting a Relay For Life team through the American Cancer Society. We are taking volunteers to help on all levels of the Ridgeland event, which will be held on Friday, May 20, 2011, at Old Trace Park at the Reservoir. While HALS is hosting the team, we are asking for volunteers from MPA. We will also have opportunities to honor past or present cancer patients. If you would like to walk, help with other fundraisers, or help on the night of the walk, please contact Darleen Dozier at ddozier@holmescc.edu.

Holmes Community College is proud to announce that, as of Fall 2011, we will offer the entire curriculum for an AAS degree in Paralegal Technology *online*. Our online classes offer voice podcasts of lectures, videos, screen shots, etc., to help students work their way through classes. In addition, Holmes faculty is available and willing to help you with any questions you have while in our classes. You can work your way through a regular 2 year process or a part-time 3 year process. Whether you are just beginning to think about a career in the legal field or you are already working in it, the Paralegal Technology degree from Holmes Community College is a great way to enhance your career. We are very excited to offer this new option and would love for you to be a part of it. If you have any questions about the Paralegal Technology program at Holmes Community College, please call Darleen Dozier at 601-605-5279 or ddozier@holmescc.edu.

NALA Liaison:

Sarah L. O'Neal, ACP

WOW, what a year this is turning out to be! We have a new eZine, new board members and Pro Bono under our belts already. I am so privileged to serve as your NALA Liaison this year. This is a big year for NALA as well. During the Convention in July, NALA members will be electing officers for First Vice President, Second Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer for one year terms and Region Directors in Region 3: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Tennessee, Mississippi, Puerto Rico & Virgin Islands; Region 4: Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, & Texas; Region 8: Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Alaska, & Montana. The elected Region Directors will serve a two year term. **Note:** If you will be unable to attend the NALA convention July 27th through 30th in Dallas but would like your vote to be heard and counted, be sure to complete a Designation of Proxy form either on paper or electronically.



NALA is now on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/NALA.Paralegals> check it out and “like” NALA. Check out the [NALA Happenings](#) page for online CLE opportunities that are available.

Don't forget, if you want to take the Certified Paralegal Exam May 1st through 31st, the application deadline is April 1st; however, a late application can be submitted by April 10th.

We are really excited about the new and wonderful things happening right within our own organization, MPA; and we want you to get involved. If you haven't caught **ENTHUSIASM FEVER** yet, what are you waiting for? Catch it and spread it

Student Liaison:

Janie Boyd, CP



I would like to take this time to tell you how much I appreciate the opportunity to serve as Student Liaison for MPA, Inc. this year.

Once again, MPA, Inc. has gotten off to another great start and for those of you who attended our January and February 2011 monthly meetings, I think you would agree! Rachel Nesbit our VP of Education works very hard to secure outstanding speakers for the remainder of the year.

I know you've all heard of the exciting things in store for our membership and I hope that you all will be an active participant; not only during this year in celebrating our 30-year anniversary, but for many years to come.

I look forward to the student essays this year and I encourage you to meet and mentor any paralegal students who may cross your path. I think it's important to take pride in our profession, our work product and our organization and to encourage students and new paralegals to do the same. Don't forget: we as paralegals provide a valuable service to those we support.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to serve as MPA Student Liaison for 2011. I look forward to working with you!

Is Your Career Stuck in the "Someday" Trap?

By Vicki Voisin, ACP
Your Paralegal Mentor

When opportunities come your way, do you usually say, "I'll do that when I have time!"? When you consider your career goals, do you usually think, "I'll get around to that in the future!"? When the sticky notes and piles of papers and files accumulate in your office, do you

usually think "I can't be bothered with this so I'll ignore the clutter for now!"? You may be stuck in the 'someday' trap! The 'someday' trap brings your goals to a standstill. It plays havoc with your future. It kills productivity. It causes procrastination. If you allow yourself to let 'someday' be a part of your thinking you're going to find it very difficult to move your career forward and reach your life goals.

Consider:

- * Someday you'll sit for a certification exam.
- * Someday you'll move to an area of the law that really interests you.
- * Someday you'll join your local association, join a committee and run for office.
- * Someday you'll attend a national convention.
- * Someday you'll take a few continuing education courses.
- * Someday you'll present a CLE course.
- * Someday you'll write an article for a professional journal.



Someday...someday...someday. Stop! Someday is NOT a day of the week. How about a new way of thinking? How about having 'someday' be today?

Here are some simple suggestions for turning 'someday thinking' into 'today thinking': Think, first, about your top 5 short term goals, perhaps what you want to accomplish in the next 90 days. Then examine those goals to determine the steps you'll take to reach them. Once you've done this, schedule the steps so that they get done.

Once you've determined your short term goals, use the same process to determine and accomplish your long term goals (say in the next 3 years), and your really long term goals...what do you want to accomplish in your lifetime. As you're doing this, don't hesitate to dream and to think big. Do not limit yourself. For all these goals, make an appointment in your calendar to get each step done and don't let the 'someday trap' stop you.

You can't do everything at once, of course, so you'll have to make choices. You'll have to choose to do the things that are important to you and your goals and let the other things go.

When you change your thinking to 'today' instead of 'someday' you're not only going to feel better about yourself, but you'll move your career in the right direction: forward. Imagine, seizing opportunities when they come your way. Imagine your office without clutter and piles. Imagine being able to find documents when you need them. Imagine the feeling of accomplishment as you reach your goals. When you imagine that it feels wonderful, right?

Actress Camryn Manheim said it best: "Waiting, waiting, waiting. All my life, I've been waiting for my life to begin, as if somehow my life was ahead of me, and that someday I would arrive at it."

You can't wait for your life to begin or for your paralegal career to be what you want it to be. You have to operate on the premise that you can't wait for someday to make changes. You have to take steps today to make those changes.

What are you waiting for? You have the ability to transform your career and your life beginning today. It's up to you to make that happen and to stop waiting for someday.

What changes will you make? How will you make those changes? Leave a comment below to let me know.
=====

Dedicated to your success!
Vicki

Vicki Voisin, ACP
Your Paralegal Mentor
Ethics Expert, Speaker, Author
Author of the forthcoming book *Excellence Is An Attitude*
Contact me: support@paralegalmentor.com
My website: www.paralegalmentor.com
My blog: www.paralegalmentorblog.com



Vicki Voisin, "The Paralegal Mentor", delivers simple strategies for paralegals and other professionals to create success and satisfaction by achieving goals and determining the direction they will take their careers. Vicki spotlights resources, organizational tips, ethics issues, and other areas of continuing education to help paralegals and others reach their full potential. She publishes a weekly ezine titled Paralegal Strategies and co-hosts The Paralegal Voice, a monthly podcast produced by Legal Talk Network. More information is available at <http://www.paralegalmentor.com>.

CP Coordinator:
Darleen Dozier, CP
ddozier@holmescc.edu



I am pleased to serve MPA this year as CP Coordinator. Mississippi has been slow in turning out CP's within the last few years and we'd like to change that. The format for the CP Exam has changed and is now computerized and can be taken in parts, during the months of January, May and September. You have choices in test sites between ACT testing sites (which will charge an additional fee for testing) and non-ACT testing sites (which do not locally charge an additional fee). You can view these testing sites on NALA's website at www.nala.org then click on Certification. NALA's website also has other information on the exam. If we have enough interest, we will consider beginning a study group through the last part of the summer in preparation for the September exam. Please let me know your interest in taking the CP exam and how MPA can help.

MPA wishes to thank The Riverboat Shop for their donation of balloons for our 30th Anniversary Celebration!



Region I Director:
Bridget Breithaupt, CP

I would like to thank you all for voting for me as the Region I Director this year. As always I am happy to serve on the board. However, our board needs your help. We are always looking for door prizes to be donated from different businesses. If you know of a company that is willing to participate, please email one of us board members. We will be happy to talk with the business manager/owner. By donating a prize, the business is guaranteed great word-of-mouth advertising at our meetings. Also, we will be bidding on the opportunity to host the 2013 NALA convention in Mississippi. If we win, we will need everybody to assist in making this a great event. A tremendous amount of hard work and time is involved in planning and executing a convention with 500+ paralegals in attendance. If everyone helps a little, then no one becomes overwhelmed with the tasks at hand. So, please volunteer your time, ideas, or experience to help MPA.

We have lots of great events planned for this year. First, this is our 30th year anniversary as an organization. Our board members have been working diligently to make this year special. Remember we will be giving away a 1 carat blue and white diamond necklace at the October 27, 2011 annual membership meeting/luncheon. Each time you attend an MPA event your name is included in the drawing bowl. This gives you numerous opportunities to win. Second, the 2011 NALA Convention will be held on July 27 – 30, 2011 at Dallas/Plano, Texas and MPA will be the only presenter during the Affiliated Association Meeting. Sarah O'Neal, ACP, NALA Liaison, and Donna Alderman, ACP, President, will give a presentation about "Attracting and Retaining Members Through Technology and Social Media." It is a huge honor to be the only affiliated entity to present this year. It is also a wonderful opportunity to spread the **Enthusiasm Fever** for MPA.

Highlighting Paralegal Blogs We like:

The Empowered Paralegal

A blog written by Robert E. Mongue, an Assistant Professor of Legal Studies at the University of Mississippi, and the author of the upcoming book *The Empowered Paralegal*. Mr. Mongue discusses issues and news in the paralegal profession.



Check out MPA on Facebook and Twitter.

<http://www.facebook.com/MSParalegals?ref=ts&v=wall>



<https://twitter.com/MSParalegals>



Announcing:

MPA has been selected as the only affiliate presenters during the Affiliates Exchange session at the 2011 NALA Convention and Summer Institute in Dallas, Texas on July 27-30. Sarah O'Neal, 2011 NALA Liaison, and Donna Alderman, 2011 President, will show a PowerPoint presentation highlighting MPA's efforts to increase membership numbers and educate the public about the organization through the use of technology.

Weird Laws and Facts:

It's against the law to pawn your dentures in Las Vegas.

It is illegal to swim in New York City's Central Park.

It is against the law to burp, or sneeze in a church in Omaha, Nebraska.

In Tennessee, it is against the law to drive a car while sleeping.

In Florida, it is against the law to put livestock on a school bus.

In North Carolina, it is against the law for dogs and cats to fight.



MPA 2011 Calendar

<p style="text-align: center;">January</p> <p>1-31 CLA Examination Dates 1 2010 Fourth Quarter Report due to NALA 12 Annual Meeting of Executive Board 27 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">February</p> <p>9 Executive Board Meeting 24 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">March</p> <p>1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Mississippi Lawyer</i> 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Assistant</i> 9 Executive Board Meeting 24 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">April</p> <p>1 Deadline to apply for CLA Exam in May 1 2011 First Quarter Report due to NALA 13 Executive Board Meeting 28 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon and Spring Seminar</p> <p style="text-align: center;">May</p> <p>1-31 CLA Examination Dates 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Mississippi Lawyer</i> 1 Deadline to submit NALA Affiliate Presentation 11 Executive Board Meeting 26 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">June</p> <p>1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Assistant</i> 8 Executive Board Meeting-Report of individual estimates of expenses for NALA Convention 23 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">July</p> <p>1 2011 Second Quarter Report due to NALA 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Mississippi Lawyer</i> 13 Executive Board Meeting 27-30 NALA 2011 Annual Convention in Dallas, Texas 21 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">August</p> <p>1 Deadline to apply for CLA Exam in Sept. 10 Executive Board Meeting 15 Deadline to present budget for FY 2012 15 Deadline to sent letters to schools for Student Essay Contest 25 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon</p> <p style="text-align: center;">September</p> <p>1-30 CLA Examination Dates 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Mississippi Lawyer</i> 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Assistant</i> 14 Executive Board Meeting 9 Paralegal Day 22 Region I Monthly Meeting/Luncheon and Fall Seminar/Vendor Fair 25 Deadline to email Board election ballots to membership 30 Deadline for nomination for Paralegal of the year and Pro Bono Award</p> <p style="text-align: center;">October</p> <p>1 2011 Third Quarter Report due to NALA 1 NALA Affiliate Dues 12 Executive Board Meeting 17 Deadline for submitting Student Essays to Student Liaison 27 Annual Meeting/Luncheon - Election of New Officers</p> <p style="text-align: center;">November</p> <p>1 Deadline for annual dues to be submitted by membership 9 Executive Board Meeting 15 Final deadline to submit Membership Dues No Region I Monthly Meeting</p> <p style="text-align: center;">December</p> <p>1 Deadline to apply for CLA Exam in Jan. 1 Termination of Membership for non-payment of dues 1 Announce Student Essay Contest Winners 1 Deadline to submit articles to <i>The Assistant</i> 14 Executive Board Meeting - University Club 31 Last day to be reinstated with a renewal No Region I Monthly Meeting</p>
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**Mark Your Calendar:
2011 NALA Annual Convention and Exhibition
July 27-30
Dallas, Texas**

**2011 NALA Affiliates Presentation:
ATTRACTING AND RETAINING
MEMBERS THROUGH TECHNOLOGY
AND SOCIAL MEDIA.**



**Presenting on behalf of the
Mississippi Paralegal
Association are Donna
Alderman, ACP, President
and Sarah L. O'Neal, ACP,
NALA Liaison**



Donna C. Alderman, ACP, President of MPA, is a Paralegal Specialist with the Mississippi National Guard's Judge Advocate's Office. Her main focus is military justice law, federal and state tort claims, and contracts. She is the Information Assurance Support Officer for the JAG Office and is Annual State JAG Conference and CLE Coordinator. She has been a paralegal for 15 years in real estate law, family law, tribal law, criminal law, bankruptcy law, personal injury law, mass torts, and probate and estate law. Her ACP is in Contracts Administration/Contracts Management.

Sarah L. O'Neal, ACP, NALA Liaison of MPA, is a paralegal in the Jackson, MS, law firm of Young Williams PA. She has been a paralegal for six years, currently focusing on business law, business organizations, and mergers and acquisitions. She has an AASA Degree in Paralegal Studies from Penn Foster College, and has ACP certification in Business Organizations: Incorporated Entities; Contracts Administration/Contracts Management; and Trademarks. She oversees MPA's new technology installation and improvements, as well as the social networking media outreaches. She has extensive public speaking experience and has been lead speaker at numerous seminars on estate planning while employed as a paralegal with Barnes, Broom, Dallas, and McLeod, PLLC.

Region III Director:

King Farris, CP



Hello from Region III! I'm King Farris, and I'm Ammi Gates' successor as Director. Spring is a time for renewal, and one of the things I'm hoping to do is renew the commitment to a vibrant MPA membership for the paralegals of North-Central Mississippi. This is the perfect time to partner with the MPA: much like the "minutes-played" stat in basketball, our profession is finally beginning to be recognized for its importance to the legal industry, and things can only get better from here. As the region's director, I'm here for all the paralegals in the area; if there's something you see that we can do (or do better), let me know at king_farris@hotmail.edu.

PRO BONO OPPORTUNITIES

Part of succeeding in the professional world is participating in pro bono work.. Steven Jones is the 2011 Chairperson of MPA's Pro Bono Committee. He will be meeting with his committee within the next few weeks to determine pro bono opportunities MPA will offer for its members this year.

In February, MPA assisted with The American Mock Trial Association's Regional Tournament at Mississippi College School of Law. This successful event was an excellent opportunity to spotlight paralegals in Mississippi to future attorneys and to show the law schools and students MPA's commitment to the legal field.



On May 20th, the Holmes Association of Legal Students will have a team for Ridgeland's Relay for Life event. Several activities have been planned throughout the semester to raise money to accomplish the team goal of \$1,000. If you are interested in participating in outside activities or volunteer on the night/morning of the event, please contact Darleen Dozier at ddozier@holmescc.edu.

If you have any pro bono opportunities you would like MPA to consider offering to its membership, please contact Steven Jones at sjones@mikelawms.com.

Do you have “Foot in Mouth” disease too?

By Rhonda Scharf CSP
Friday, December 17th, 2010

I’ve opened my mouth and managed to get both feet in there! Sure, I’ve done that before—we all have—but this time I’ve hurt someone who matters to me and that makes me feel terrible.

I jokingly say that I have a (self-diagnosed) disease that makes my lips work faster than my brain. I have a quick wit and a dry, sarcastic sense of humor that gets in me a lot of trouble. Regularly.

Only this time I wasn’t trying to be funny. It wasn’t a lighthearted conversation that got out of control. I was involved in a deep professional discussion in which there were very strong opinions being shared; there were some fundamental ideological differences that were not just different, they were personal.

We were talking about professional speakers, and how designations are awarded within our professional organization; whether to base it on merit or use a system tied to revenue.

When it was my turn to speak, I shared what I thought. I shared it emphatically, strongly and without compassion for someone with a different viewpoint. I didn’t realize that the woman sitting next to me (we’ll call her Patricia) had a very different opinion from me.

When I was finished, I looked around the room until my eyes fell upon Patricia. She was visibly upset, with tears in her eyes, and I realized that I had said too much, too strongly.

Dumb! Far from professional. A moment in time I instantly wished I could take back. I believed in what I was saying—but the way the message was received was not what I’d intended.

When you’re the person speaking, it is your responsibility to ensure the people you’re speaking to understand what you are trying to say. It is not their fault if they misunderstand. I’ve heard many people say, “You’re not listening to what I’m saying.” Perhaps the issue is not that they aren’t listening, perhaps it is your ability to clearly say what you are trying to say. The person speaking is responsible for ensuring that everyone listening understands the message and the intent. If the words aren’t working, they have to choose new words. Perhaps their tone of voice is interfering with the message.

That isn’t the listener’s fault; it is the speaker’s.

In any case, I messed up. I wasn’t focused on my point, I wasn’t thinking of other points of view. The way I shared my viewpoint wasn’t truly reflective of what I was trying to say. I was speaking, but not thinking about how what I was saying could be interpreted by others.

Because the meeting pretty much ended at that point, I made a point of not even leaving the table before I apologized to her. At this point I was shaken. Not because I felt that my point of view was wrong, but because I’d hurt someone with my viewpoint, which wasn’t my intention.

Like a true professional, Patricia thanked me.

That wasn’t enough for me. I found her again later in the day and I again stressed how sorry I was that my message had sounded so wrong. I took a moment to explain a bit more of what I had been trying to say. Both Patricia and I agreed that we had a different viewpoint, but that it shouldn’t have been expressed in a manner that could be hurtful to someone. It was because we both care so much about the subject we were speaking on that we had become emotional.

We hugged and I truly hope have repaired some of the damage my mouth caused to our professional relationship.

The next time that conversation is continued, I will be far more aware of the potential messages my point of view are conveying. I will take the time to think before I speak. I will be sensitive to the others who are emotionally involved in the conversation as well.

Sometimes all we need to do is wait for the entire message to make it to our brain before we share what is on our mind. However, sometimes we aren’t that patient and when we mess up, we must own the misunderstanding and we must fix it. Then, don’t do it again!

Rhonda Scharf CSP is a professional speaker and trainer specializing in administrative professionals. You can follow her on FaceBook, LinkedIn and Twitter, and register to receive her free educational and entertaining eZine at www.on-the-right-track.com

NALA Happenings

Online CLE	April 2011	
Friday, April 1, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Blue Book Review of Citing</u>	Mary Kubichek, BS, MA, JD Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Tuesday, April 5, 2011 Noon – 2 pm	<u>Patent Prosecution</u>	J. Nevin Shaffer, Jr., P.A. General CLE Intermediate
Wednesday, April 6, 2011 3 – 5 pm	<u>Civil Litigation: Part I</u>	Karen Sanders-West, ACP, JD Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Thursday, April 7, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Trademark Policing</u>	Debra J. Smith, ACP General CLE Intermediate
Friday, April 8, 2011 11 am – 1 pm	<u>Written Communications</u>	Virginia Koerselman Newman, Attorney Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Tuesday, April 12, 2011 11 am – 12:30 pm	<u>Basic Business Organizations</u>	Kelly LaGrave, ACP Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Wednesday, April 13, 2011 3 – 5 pm	<u>Civil Litigation: Part II</u>	Karen Sanders-West, ACP, JD Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Thursday, April 14, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Advanced Ethics</u>	Vicki Voisin, ACP General CLE Advanced; Ethics
Friday, April 15, 2011 11 am – 1 pm	<u>Judgment and Legal Analysis</u>	Virginia Koerselman Newman, Attorney Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Monday, April 18, 2011 Noon – 2 pm	<u>Immigration Court Practice</u>	Nikki Mehrpoo Jacobson, Attorney General CLE
Wednesday, April 20, 2011 3 – 5 pm	<u>Civil Litigation: Part III</u>	Karen Sanders-West, ACP, JD Certified Paralegal Exam Review
Thursday, April 21, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Deciphering the Medical Record</u> <u>Intermediate</u>	Amy Temkin General CLE Intermediate
Tuesday, April 26, 2011 Noon – 2 pm	<u>Employment Eligibility Verification:</u> <u>The Importance of Form I-9</u>	Bobby Rimas General CLE
Wednesday, April 27, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Evictions</u>	Glenn Leier, Attorney General CLE Intermediate
Thursday, April 28, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Spanish for Paralegals:</u> <u>The Initial Consult</u>	Carla M. Valenzuela, CP General CLE
May 2011		
Wednesday, May 4, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Commercial Leases</u>	Glenn Leier, Attorney General CLE Intermediate
Thursday, May 5, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Ethics and Technology</u>	Vicki Voisin, ACP General CLE Intermediate; Ethics
Friday, May 6, 2011 Noon – 2 pm	<u>Intellectual Property: What Every Paralegal Should Know</u>	J. Nevin Shaffer, Jr. P.A. General CLE
Monday, May 9, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>e-Discovery: Catching Up With the Train</u>	Michael Yager General CLE
Tuesday, May 10, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Environmental Law</u>	Rebecca E. Patty General CLE
Wednesday, May 11, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Applicable Exclusion Amount To Offset Federal Gift Taxes and Federal Estate Taxes; Annual Exclusions and Marital Deduction</u>	Ed Armstrong, Attorney General CLE Intermediate
Wednesday, May 18, 2011 Noon – 1:30 pm	<u>Deeds</u>	Glenn Leier, Attorney General CLE Intermediate

PARALEGAL SPOTLIGHT - MPA MEMBER DEBRA HAMMACK; Brunini Law Firm



1. How long have you been a working Paralegal?

As hard as it is for me to believe sometimes, I have been a working Paralegal for 29-1/2 years.

2. What gets you excited for work and/or what do you enjoy most about your job?

Other than winning a case, finding the unexpected in the process of factual research. Digging into every possible resource to find the information you need, or searching and finding the unexpected that helps your case is fun. Many times I find some fact or a new resource that is helpful in a future matter.

3. What activities do you spend the majority of your time on during most work days?

What I spend time doing each day varies tremendously. The day could involve anything from case management tasks, factual research, drafting and/or filing pleadings, to preparing attorneys for depositions or hearings. What I *think* I am going to do on a given day can change very quickly.

4. What advice would you give to Paralegals who are just starting out in their career to help them be successful?

My advice is simple. First, find a mentor. Never be afraid to ask a question. (It is better to ask than do something and later wish you had asked.) Always be open to learning something new or different.

5. What surprised you most about working as a Paralegal that you did not expect when you first started in this field?

When I started working as a Paralegal I was not aware of just how many areas of law one could specialize in. That has continued to evolve with ever-expanding areas of law, part of which is due to the advances of technology.

6. What advances or technology do you feel will impact the future of the Paralegal profession?

As the trend continues to become a paperless society, I think we will all see a variety of things that will impact the profession. As one in litigation, those impacts will continue to be felt in everyday case management, e-discovery, and trial practice. I look forward to the day when all of Mississippi's counties' various records are online, making access so much easier for paralegals in any number of fields.

**STUDENT PARALEGAL SPOTLIGHT -
MPA Member
CHRISTY WEBB; Holmes Community College**



1. Why did you decide on paralegal studies?

I find law to be very complex and interesting. I wanted to go into a field that I knew I could assist in making a difference for others.

2. What area of law would you like to work in and why?

I cannot decide which field is “the one” for me. I have considered criminal defense or working for a corporation. No matter what type of law I end up specializing in, I would like to be a part of a team that makes a difference. In smaller firms with individual clients, I would like to do something I could see helps that client immediately. If I end up working for corporate clients, I would be satisfied knowing I assisted that client in handling the necessary legal documents to continue their business.

3. If you could ask a working paralegal one question, what would you ask?

“Do you believe you have made a difference on one person’s life doing what you do?” I’m aware that sometimes in careers, you start out intending on doing one thing and the reality of that career results in something totally different. I am hoping that by choosing to become a paralegal, the end result of my day is that I did in some way, help the client.

4. Where do you see yourself in the paralegal field 10 years from now?

I hope that in 10 years, I will be a successful paralegal, having worked in the same law office or corporation for majority of those years. I want to have earned the respect of my colleagues because of the work I produce. I hope that my current goal of “helping the client” will still be at the forefront of my drive.

5. What innovation do you think will transform working paralegals daily tasks?

The internet has obviously brought about man changes in every aspect of professional work, including legal work. One advantage I see with the internet is the vast amount of information that can be gained, not only from the office but from home. I think this will assist paralegals in being able to work in many different environments and still get their work completed.

Announcements

Check it out!



Be sure to purchase your raffle tickets from any MPA Board member or at a monthly membership meeting for special prizes to be raffled away including: a Dooney & Bourke handbag, a RCA 4G MP3 player; Sephora gift boxes, and many more! More details coming soon! Don't miss out.

NALA is now on Facebook:
<http://www.facebook.com/NALA.Paralegals>

Our very own Rachel Nesbit was interviewed for the website www.criminaljusticedegreeschools.com
Check it out at : <http://www.criminaljusticedegreeschools.com/mississippi-paralegal-interview/>



Great job Rachel!!

MPA COMMITTEE NEWS

MPA is comprised of various committees which help the organization run smoothly and offer participation by members. If you volunteered to serve on a committee, be expecting to hear from a committee chairperson soon.

The **Membership Committee** will be meeting soon to discuss ways to attract new members, especially in various regions throughout the state. If you have any suggestions, please contact Steven Jones at sjones@mikelawms.com.

2011 MPA Committee Chairpersons (Select Committees)

Membership—Steven Jones and Zenda Heafner
Bar Relations—Rachel Nesbit
Pro Bono—Steven Jones
Education—Rachel Nesbit

Professional Development—Bridgette Breithaupt
Social—Paula Joyner
Public Relations—Sarah O'Neal
Bylaws—Mary Lynn Underwood

MPA's 30th Anniversary Diamond Give-Away

The Mississippi Paralegal Association, Inc. ("MPA") will be celebrating its **30th Anniversary in 2011 and we are celebrating our 30th in a BIG way.** In 2011, we will give away a 1 carat Blue and White Diamond necklace estimated to be worth between \$600 and \$700 dollars. See the Content Rules for all the details on how you can win this beautiful 1 carat Blue and White Diamond necklace and come celebrate 30 years of MPA with us.

Contest Rules

1. You must be a member, in good standing, of MPA. Associate members are not eligible to participate.
2. Each member of MPA, in good standing, will have his/her name entered into the MPA 30th Anniversary Diamond Give-Away drawing once just for being a member. No Purchase is necessary to win.
3. Each time a MPA member attends a monthly luncheon, meeting, or seminar, (either in person, by purchase of MPA online CLE, through live simulcast, or by attending a Region Director meeting) that member's name is entered in the drawing. There is no limit to the number of times you can enter to win, if you participate in MPA activities.
4. The contest will run from January 1, 2011, through October 27, 2011.
5. The drawing for the MPA 30th Anniversary Diamond Give-Away shall take place at the October 27, 2011 Annual Membership meeting/luncheon. You need not be present to win, but it is encouraged.

Get your name in the drawing to win by participating in MPA activities!



No Purchase Necessary to win. The contest is open to MPA members, in good standing. Associate members are not eligible to participate. The prize is not redeemable in cash and must be accepted as awarded. By claiming the prize, the winner authorizes the use, without additional compensation of his or her name and/or likeness and/or voice/photograph and municipality of residence for promotion and/or advertising purposes in any manner and in any medium (including without limitation, radio broadcasts, newspapers and other publications and in television or film releases, slides, videotape, distribution over the internet and picture data storage) which MPA may deem appropriate. In accepting the prize, the winner acknowledges that MPA may not be held liable for any loss, damages or injury associated with accepting or using this prize. Detailed contest rules applicable to this contest, including contest drawing dates, how to enter, and prize value, number and any restrictions applicable to this prize are available upon request from MPA, at 30th Anniversary Diamond Give-Away, Mississippi Paralegal Association, Inc., Post Office Box 996, Jackson, MS 39205. Winners must sign a release form as prepared and accepted by MPA acknowledging their acceptance and understanding of the complete contest rules. MPA retains the rights, in its absolute and sole discretion, to make substitutions of equivalent kind or approximate value in the event of the unavailability of any prize or component of the prize for any reason whatsoever. The winner is solely responsible for all federal, state, local, or other taxes applicable to winning this prize. This contest is subject to all federal, state and local laws. MPA reserves the right to withdraw or terminate this contest at any time without prior notice.

*Attorneys...law firms...
businesses
...take notice....*

***MPA JOB BANK IS AVAILABLE*
TO YOU**

The MPA Job Bank is only viewed by MPA members. Instead of paying for expensive advertising to attract qualified paralegals and assistants, why not advertise with MPA. Let MPA post your job openings and contact information on our Job Bank. Qualified applicants will contact you and you can begin the process of choosing your next employee. Give us a try!

Contact Darleen Dozier at ddozier@holmescc.edu with the information you want posted.

Student Essay Contest Winners:



Left to Right: **Dionne Grant, Courtney Powell, and Kelcey Nelson**

First Place - Kelcey Nelson - University of Southern Mississippi

Family law is a division of law that handles all family related matters, such as, marriage, divorce, alimony, child support, parental rights, spousal abuse and child custody. When I become a paralegal, I feel I could contribute the most to this branch of law. According to *Family Law* by William Statsky, the divorce rate is at roughly 50 percent. This statement means there are few families who have not been affected some way by the trauma and difficulties of a court action. Family law will give me the opportunity to assist people during a very distinct change in their lives.

When I become a paralegal I would like to focus on spousal abuse and child custody. These two areas interest me because I feel like I could help people the most through them. In a child custody case, the child's best interest should always be the main concern. The child's opinion should matter too, to an extent. For example, if the child wants to live with his or her mother because she lets him or her skip school, this would not be acceptable. The parent appointed custody should be the one who consistently keeps the child's best interest in mind and can support him financially and emotionally.

Spousal abuse includes extreme cases of harassment, threats of physical harm, psychological abuse and physical abuse. In the majority of cases, the victim of spousal abuse is female. According to statistics on spousal abuse, one-third to one-half of adult women have been abused by their spouse or significant other. Domestic violence is usually an act by the male in an effort to physically, mentally and/or emotionally, control his female partner

.In family law, instead of a plaintiff side and defendant side, there is a petitioner and respondent. The petitioner files a petition with the court, and it is served on the spouse or the respondent. The respondent has a number of days specified by the court to file an answer to the petition. If the couple cannot agree on certain matters, the court will hold a hearing to resolve the issues. I would rather work on the petitioner's side of the case because they are usually

females who are being mistreated. I am a "people person." I care about people and try to understand them in each situation. I have a compassionate quality that allows others to open up and feel comfortable talking to me. I could empathize with clients through communication, and furthermore help them work their case through the litigation process in a painless manner.

I do not anticipate the occupation of a paralegal to be effortless. I realize I will have many complex tasks to accomplish such as interviewing clients, drafting legal documents, preparing initial pleadings (including petition), preparing motions, setting hearings, calendaring important dates and deadlines, and ultimately assisting the attorney in any way possible. Skillful teamwork between an attorney and paralegal is crucial in order to operate a successful firm. If there is respectable communication between an attorney and a paralegal as teammates, clients will come to rely on both the attorney and paralegal to handle their case.

The root of family law comes from marriage. Marriage is something which affects us all at some point in our lives. Marriage is a very serious commitment that is meant to last forever. Before getting married, one must be ready to fulfill such a long, lasting commitment. According to the divorce rates, our society no longer sees marriage as a promise but more as a possibility. One day I will have a family of my own to care for, thus knowing my rights and responsibilities will be beneficial. I look forward to becoming a paralegal and helping people through difficult times.

It will be a very rewarding occupation, and I know I will absolutely love it.

Second Place - Courtney Powell - University of Southern Mississippi

Family Law

In today's society, "family law consists of law that deals with marriage, divorce, custody, adoption, support, paternity, and other domestic relations issues. Within the broad spectrum that encompasses family law it deals with the rights and obligations of individuals in the formation, continuation, and dissolution of marriages and other familial relationships" (Wilson 5). As a paralegal in this area of law, one must be prepared to take on tasks that involve all of those issues, as well as showing competency for any and all work relating to such matters.

First and foremost, paralegal professionals must acknowledge that when working for an attorney whose focus is primarily family law, they will more often than not have clients who are experiencing extreme emotional stress and difficulty. Dealing with clients who at times may become overzealous about their cases and overwhelmed going through the process is one aspect of client relations that legal assistants should make themselves aware of and become familiar with how to cope with and maintain professionalism at all costs. It is also important to know and abide by all ethical codes and standards set forth by the American Bar Association as well as NALA and NFPA. Having a strong set of ethics to go by will make client relations that much easier and less stringent for all parties involved. When dealing with divorce cases, it is important that paralegals maintain their ethics and professional conduct. It is vital that paralegals make it known that they are not the attorney and do not cross over boundaries laid out by ethical guidelines. The attorney-client privilege and conflicts of interest rules may seem hard to maintain at times within family law practices but a good paralegal should always abide by such rules.

Duties within the law office may consist of office management, interviewing potential clients for conflicts of interest, maintaining communication with clients, preparing forms and documents necessary for the client's specific case, analyzing property inventories and credit reports, drafting pleadings, motions, letters to clients, etc. Other duties aside from knowing and being thorough with client relations include legal research, knowing and abiding by deadlines provided, being familiar with the local court systems in the area in which one works, and any other interoffice duties such as contracts and basic paperwork to be filed regarding a client's case. Diligence and competence is extremely important for paralegals when dealing with family, or any kind of law.

The rate of divorce in America is said to be, currently, at forty to fifty percent. Most people when discussing family law assume that divorce is the main topic of interest and in most firms that practice in family law that is certainly the case. When a client enters a firm it is important to know whose side the attorney and paralegal will represent. In matters such as a divorce case, I personally would have to say I would prefer to take the plaintiff's side but really, most times with regard to family law one may not be given a choice. In dealing with wills, trusts, and estate matters there typically is not going to be a plaintiff or defendant but if there should be, in those types of cases I would prefer to be defending the decedent and their will or the owner of the trust fund. Which side a person may take or which they prefer depends on the type of case, in the scope of family law there is no definite answer to the question of "which side would you choose to be on?"

Why would I choose to work in family law? Simply to help; people get married, they get divorced, they adopt children and they need someone to aid in creating their will for the day they die. It is an area of law that once a person becomes familiar with and is able to exceed in all areas relating to familial matters, they can be confident and at ease most days within their work and at the end of the week know that they did their best to help make the situations of those they represent more manageable.

Works Cited

Wilson, Mary E. *Family Law for the Paralegal: Concepts and Applications*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2009. Print.

Third Place - Dionne Grant – University of Southern Mississippi Family Matters

Family law is an area of litigation that involves a variety of issues between family members and other relationships. A paralegal working in family law assists its attorney in providing many family law services such as divorce matters, child custody, wills and estates, and adoption, restraining orders, and emancipation. In any field of family law, a paralegal may draft any necessary documents, attend interviews with the attorney, collect background information on a client, assist their attorney at trial, and perform many other important duties to support the attorney in client cases.

More particularly, in a divorce case, the paralegal handles tasks that help to finalize a divorce. The paralegal will prepare interrogatories, gather information needed from the other spouse, draft documents that discuss child custody, support, and division of property, and schedule mediations to help the parties come to agreement on any unresolved issues.

In an adoption case, the paralegal will have duties such as drafting petitions for adoption, organizing meetings and court hearings, and obtaining other information to support the adoption process. An adoption is an instance in which a paralegal may have the responsibility of collecting background information on a client.

Wills and estate responsibilities for a paralegal include helping clients draft legal documents that state their desires should they die. The paralegal must talk to the client in order to gather information about issues such as who the client would want to act as guardians for their minor children, how their estate is to be divided, and any other issues the client may wish to have taken care of after their death.

If I were to work in this particular area of law, I would not have a preference as to which side, plaintiff or defendant, I would want to work for. Many people believe that in lawsuits, the plaintiff in the suit is the person that is “right”. In family law cases, the plaintiff is not always the one wronged, nor is he/she always the person who is right in the situation, particularly in divorce cases. I do believe I would enjoy working for either side. Because clients in family law turn to family law attorneys and their paralegals to provide guidance through a difficult situation, I would most likely be working to resolve an issue rather than “win” the case in most instances, no matter if I am working for the defendant or the plaintiff.

I have always wanted to make sure that I enjoy and have a passion for whatever it is I do as far as my career. I truly enjoy learning about and helping people in any way I can. Family law would allow me to combine my passion for law with my love of helping and learning about other people. This is why I believe working in this area of law would feel the most rewarding to me. A family law paralegal often hears the day-to-day undertakings of their clients and the client’s personal daily struggles, and develops a very unique relationship with their clients. I think I would enjoy this type of relationship. A paralegal, having this type of relationship with a client, could possibly have some influence on their supervising attorney on the issues involving the client, helping to move the case along more smoothly.

Although there are sides of this area of law, such as divorce proceedings and child custody cases, that can tend to be a little stressful for all those involved, including the paralegal, other aspects of family law can prove to be very satisfying, such as adoptions. The adoption of a child can be a very wonderful thing. I know I would enjoy being a part of these types of experiences.

In any case, the issues that arise in family law can often be complicated and emotionally charged. However, they oftentimes can be very rewarding to a paralegal involved, especially one who is committed and passionate about what they are doing for a client during what can be a very important or difficult time in their life.

MEMBER'S CORNER

What is happening with MPA members?

January's Meeting



February's Meeting



Did you "spot" yourself in a picture?

When You Die, What Does a Will do? By Stuart Simpson

I know it may sound simple, but there are things a Will does and certain things it cannot do. Most people don't have a will and don't even want to talk about it since it relates to death. A lot of people don't even have life insurance, either. I had a boss that was speaking to his accountant one time, "If I die-" started my boss, and his accountant said, "There is no "IF", its just "WHEN". We all will die and it would be nice to have a will to help your family decide what to do with your money and belongings.

Why do you need a will? Would you rather probate courts decide the fate of your children? The court decides where the kids are sent for foster care. That should be enough to scare you out of your shoes. The court will also decide what happens to your assets. Yes, all your stuff and money. So you may have money and a nice house, then its all gone and the kids are sent to the state home. I know, it sounds harsh. So what can a will do for me?

First, a will can indicate where your assets and property go. You can also name a guardian for your children and their property. You can also name an executor to administer the will. This executor can be given powers and compensation for taking care of your estate.

But here's the tricky part a will can't override anything with a named beneficiary. For example, your life insurance has a beneficiary that was established at the time you wrote the policy. Also, a will can't nullify the terms of a trust you've established.

So what should you do? Inventory your assets that will pass through the will. Like checking accounts, CD's, stocks, bonds, real estate, etc. These are called probate assets. Nonprobate assets would include things like your life insurance. These items have named beneficiaries.

Make a list of your beneficiaries and decide what you want them to have. If you have children from your current marriage, then the decision would probably be very easy □ give the items to your spouse. If you have kids from a previous marriage, plan carefully and list them as well as their relationship so the executor will have no questions and will hopefully limit anyone contesting the will.

I hope this gave you some idea as to why a will is an important planning tool not for you, but for your family. You don't make a will for yourself, as you will be dead, you make one for your survivors

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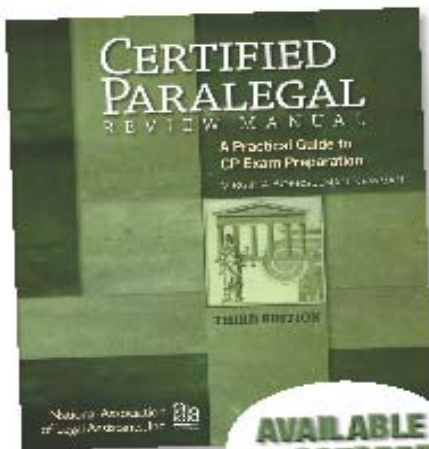
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Ole Miss was one of the winning teams that will go on to the National Championship in Memphis. MC Law School students were awarded the prestigious "Spirit of AMTA Award"! This award is bestowed upon the team that received the highest scores from their competitors displaying the highest ideals of civility, integrity and fair play.

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Paralegal Pùblicum is published quarterly with issues in the Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter.

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Jackson, Mississippi 39205***

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