

THE PARAVIEW

Quarterly Publication of the
Metrolina Paralegal Association



2009

*P.O. Box 36260
Charlotte, NC 28236
www.charlotteareaparalegals.com*

SECOND QUARTER
EDITION

FROM THE EDITOR

Spring is in the air and spring cleaning is (possibly) on your agenda! It's time to get organized both professionally and personally. This spring issue includes tips on organizing your "to do" lists as well as helpful hints in reducing your stress level. April is National Stress Awareness Month and considering all the dire news that we hear about the state of the economy and unemployment, some stress relief is greatly needed.

The MPA Annual Seminar occurred on February 12th and this issue provides a comprehensive recap of all of the activities, the diverse and interesting array of speakers, and the exhibitions of MPA patrons.

MPA officer elections occur this month so we have also provided biographical information on our nominees for MPA Officer positions in 2009-2010. There are currently three open positions.

If you have any ideas or suggestions for the *Paraview*, please contact me.

Satyra L. Riggins, CLA
sriggins@rbh.com



The rainbows of life follow the storm.



THE PARAVIEW
The Metrolina Paralegal Association,
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ADVERTISING RATES

The Metrolina Paralegal Association publishes *The Paraview*, which includes substantive legal articles of interest and general news for the career paralegal. This publication is distributed to approximately 250 members of the MPA in the Charlotte area. The membership of the MPA includes paralegals from private law firms, corporations, title companies, government agencies, local community colleges, educators, and paralegal students. Advertising is available in *The Paraview*, which is the only local professional publication of this type in the Metrolina area. Our magazine will keep your display advertisement circulating in the legal community for a three-month period.

Our display ad rates per issue are as follows:

1/8 page size (business card)	\$35.00
1/4 page size	\$60.00
1/2 page size	\$110.00
Full page size	\$150.00
Back cover inside	\$175.00

For more information contact: Paraview Editor c/o: Metrolina Paralegal Association
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MARK YOUR CALENDARS



2nd Quarter 2009



APRIL 2009

- Apr 1-MPA Executive Board Meeting
- Apr. 9-MPA Monthly Meeting/Elections
- Apr. 15-Tax Day 
- Apr. 18-NCCP Exam at UNC-Charlotte
- Apr. 22-Earth Day and Administrative Professionals' Day

JUNE 2009

- Jun. 3-MPA Executive Board Meeting
- Jun. 11-MPA Monthly Meeting
- Jun. 14-Flag Day
- Jun. 21-Father's Day and 1st Day of Summer
- Jun. 23-Public Service Day



MAY 2009

- May 1-Law Day 
- May 6-MPA Executive Board Meeting
- May 10-Mother's Day
- May 14-MPA Monthly Meeting
- May 15-Application deadline for NALA CLA/CP Exam
- May 25-Memorial Day

June 2009 MPA MEETING-IT'S A SURPRISE!

The speaker for June will be determined at a later date.

Come join us on Thursday, June 11, 2009 at our monthly meeting to see what interesting subject matter awaits you.



IT'S ELECTION TIME ...LET'S VOTE!!



BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON NOMINEES FOR MPA OFFICER POSITIONS FOR 2009-2010

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Micah E. DeCamp, NCCP, has been with Mayer Brown LLP since May 2007 where he works in the area of commercial real estate. Prior to that, he was with Dechert LLP for 2-1/2 years, where he worked in the areas of commercial real estate and securitization lending, and with Parker, Poe, Adams & Bernstein LLP for over six years, where he also worked in the area of commercial real estate. He received his legal training from the United States Army received his North Carolina Paralegal Certification in June 2007. Micah is a member of Metrolina Paralegal Association and the Paralegal Division of the North Carolina Bar Association. He is currently serving as Student/School Liaison.

OFFICE OF THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Penny H. Higdon, NCCP, graduated from UNC-Chapel Hill in 1985. Penny has worked as a real estate paralegal for more than 20 years, the last 15 at Robinson, Bradshaw and Hinson, P.A. She has been a member of the Metrolina Paralegal Association since 2005. Penny is married and has two children. She volunteers with Girl Scouts of America and spends an inordinate amount of time on the sidelines of baseball and volleyball games.

OFFICE OF THE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

April N. Ritter, CLA, NCCP has been a real estate paralegal at Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson, P.A. for fourteen years. Her work comprises mainly of commercial real estate transactions. She graduated from UNC Charlotte in 1994 and received a certificate from the National Center for Paralegal Training in Atlanta, GA that same year. She earned her Certified Legal Assistant designation in 1997 and became a North Carolina State Bar Certified Paralegal in 2006. She has served the MPA in the past as Historian, Parliamentarian, Treasurer, and Audit Committee Chair. She is currently serving as the Second Vice President in charge of programs.

OFFICE OF THE THIRD VICE PRESIDENT

Christina J. Lee, has worked for McGuire Woods, LLP for over 2 years in the litigation group focusing on complex commercial and civil litigation cases both in the state and federal courts. She relocated to the Charlotte area from Michigan where she had more than 17 years of experience in the legal field including practice areas of labor and employment, family law, immigration, and probate and estates. She is an officer of the Metrolina Paralegal Association managing the job bank and association website, and has worked closely with many members and perspective employers making connections in this tough economy.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION ON NOMINEES FOR MPA OFFICER POSITIONS FOR 2009-2010-CONT.

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

THERE ARE NO NOMINEES FOR THIS POSITION AT THIS TIME

The secretary shall be responsible for keeping accurate minutes of all meetings of the Executive Board and membership and shall see that all notices required by the Bylaws are duly given.

OFFICE OF THE TREASURER

Anne H. Patterson, NCCP, has been with Johnston, Allison & Hord, P.A. since 1999 where she works in the areas of estate planning, probate and corporate law. She received an Associate's Degree in Paralegal Studies from Central Piedmont Community College and received her North Carolina Paralegal Certification in January 2006. Anne is a member of Metrolina Paralegal Association, North Carolina Paralegal Association and The National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). She served as Historian of the Metrolina Paralegal Association from 2005 through 2007 and is currently serving as President.

OFFICE OF PARLIAMENTARIAN

THERE ARE NO NOMINEES FOR THIS POSITION AT THIS TIME

The parliamentarian shall be familiar with Bylaws of the Association and the NALA Bylaws and shall be responsible for parliamentary procedures at all meeting of the Executive Board and membership.

OFFICE OF THE HISTORIAN

THERE ARE NO NOMINEES FOR THIS POSITION AT THIS TIME

The historian shall keep a photographic and written history of the activities of the Association.

OFFICE OF THE NALA LIAISON

Candace Russell, CP, NCCP, has been a litigation paralegal for the past 15 years, she has been employed with Nexsen Pruet, PLLC since 2006. She received an Associate Degree from Waukesha County Technical College in 1991, a certificate in paralegal studies from Milwaukee Business Training Institute in 1994, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Criminal Justice from Concordia University of Wisconsin in 2002. Candace became a North Carolina Certified Paralegal in 2005, and recently earned her Certified Paralegal designation in 2008. She is a member of the National Association of Legal Assistants and Metrolina Paralegal Association. Candace also serves on her home owner's association board and volunteers to judge North Carolina and South Carolina DECA state competitions.



REPORT FROM THE MPA BOARD AND EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

First Vice President (Membership): There are currently 280 members of MPA. There are 76 new members and 13 of the new members are students. The updated membership application is currently on the website. The renewal application will only be available on the website during the MPA renewal period which runs from June 1st –July 31st. I have thoroughly enjoyed the position with MPA and hope that membership will continue to grow.

Christine Sigmon, NCCP

Second Vice President (Programs): The MPA Annual Seminar on February 12th was a great success. Thanks to all the MPA members and other attendees who provided great feedback for potential speakers for upcoming seminars and our monthly meetings. Office elections for 2009-2010 will occur in April. Officer installations for 2009-2010 will occur in May.

April Ritter, CLA, NCCP

Treasurer: It has been a pleasure serving the MPA as its 2008-09 Treasurer. I have enjoyed participating in our monthly MPA Board meetings and working to put together the 2009-2010 Budget. The MPA Board is a great group of folks! I also have enjoyed getting to know MPA members while checking everyone in at our monthly luncheons. A big thank you to all for your patience as you wait in line for me to check you in and take your money. I'm looking forward to sitting with you all at lunch this next year and getting to know you even better. One note: if any of you owe the MPA for lunches that you missed despite making a reservation, please send us that money before April 30 so it can be included in the 2009-09 budget figures. Mail it to our P.O. box or hand it to an MPA Board member as soon as possible.

Thanks for allowing me to serve as the MPA Treasurer.

Susan G. Randolph, CLA, NCCP

Secretary: The office of Secretary is vital to the history of an organization. Metrolina Paralegal Association has grown over the years and built up a lot of information which is retained and ultimately passed on to successive generations of the association. Serving as its Secretary is a very important role because institutional memory is essential to the effective operation of any organization. I have enjoyed serving the organization and getting to know some of my fellow MPA members more than I would have during the brief once-a-month lunch meeting. It is only because of heightened job demands that I am unable to run for another term, but I would encourage anyone who is interested in knowing about the organization to serve as its secretary.

Sheila T. Etheridge-Boddie, NCCP

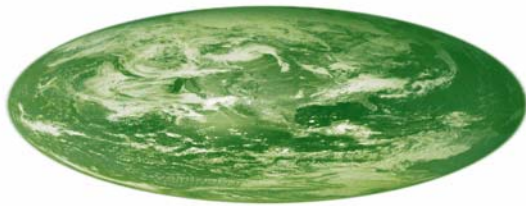
Student/School Liaison: Mentoring does not take a lot of time so MPA members should make a more concerted effort to support and encourage the paralegal students. An hour per month of telephone calls, email exchanges, or lunch meetings is a small gesture that can make a positive impact on a paralegal student's confidence level and professional goals.

As you can see from above, the MPA Executive Committee and the MPA Board are hard at work for you and the organization.

MARCH MPA MEETING RECAP

Stewart Espey, Business/Commercial Recycling Senior Environmental Specialist of Mecklenburg County Land Use and Environmental Services Agency was the featured speaker at the March 12th MPA monthly meeting. Mr. Espey educated us on recycling and waste reduction efforts in Mecklenburg County and the surrounding areas. Mr. Espey implored us to be more conscious when trashing items since 80% of what is thrown away can be recycled. Mr. Espey provided answers to many questions from the attendees on recycle efforts in Mecklenburg County and the surrounding areas.

For more information, please contact Mr. Espey at (704) 432-0400 or stewart.espey@mecklenburgcountync.gov



Green Awards on April 15, 2009 at Charlotte Convention Center

The Charlotte Business Journal and the Charlotte Chapter of the US Green Building Council want to recognize those who are going green. The 2009 Green Awards and Expo event on April 15 will honor those in the Charlotte area who make efforts to incorporate environmentally sustainable practices into their businesses and community work. By doing so, they show others how to strengthen the environmental health of our region.

The Green Awards will recognize individuals, businesses, government leaders and entities, and nonprofit organizations in three main categories – General Awards for Individuals, General Awards for Business/Non-Profit/Government and Green Building Awards. Work or projects completed from January 2008 to December 2008 will be considered.

For event information, call Dory Rogers at (704) 973-1143.



Avon Foundation Walk the Course Against Domestic Violence on April 28, 2009 at Quail Hollow

Make a difference in the lives of thousands who are affected by domestic violence in North Carolina by participating in the inaugural Avon Foundation Walk the Course Against Domestic Violence! Walk 9 holes (2.5 miles) or 18 holes (5.0 miles) on the exclusive Quail Hollow Club golf course, site of the 2009 Quail Hollow Championship, while raising funds and awareness to help end the cycle of domestic violence. This is the first-ever walk on a PGA TOUR course! Anyone can walk--solo or as team—so sign up for this non-competitive, family-friendly event! Go to http://info.avonfoundation.org/site/PageServer?pagename=wtc_home for more information.

The money raised will be managed and disbursed by the Avon Foundation to Domestic Violence organizations in North Carolina, including United Family Services Shelter for Battered Women and The Shelter of Gaston County to support education, prevention, and direct service programs for those in need. Participants are encouraged to fundraise or donate at least \$75 to help the cause, and top fundraisers will earn fabulous prizes!

FEBRUARY 12, 2009 MPA ANNUAL SEMINAR RECAP



Alison VanDyke, a paralegal with McGuireWoods provides tips and advice on the ethical dilemmas that paralegals may face. Many heads were nodding at the real-world scenarios both funny and scary that Alison provided. "Double and triple check emails and attachments before you send!!!"



Kary Watson, a family law attorney with Horack Talley Pharr & Lowndes, provides eye-opening insight on custody, child support, alimony, and equitable distribution issues. Ms. Watson also discussed the vital role that family law paralegals play in sorting through financial records.



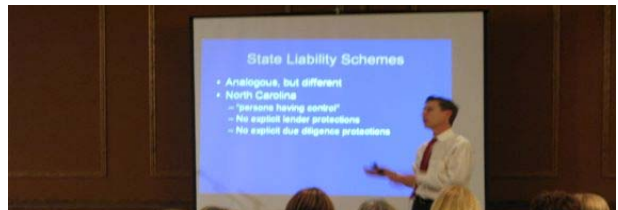
Matthew Hoefling, a white-collar attorney with McGuireWoods, gives an overview of the basics of white collar crime and the vital role that paralegals can play in these type of cases.



Peter Buck, a corporate attorney with Robinson Bradshaw & Hinson, gives an overview of the legal problems for distressed companies and the steps that corporate counsel can take to get a company through challenging times.



Calley Gerber, an animal law attorney with the Gerber Animal Law Center, discusses the current state of animal rights law in North Carolina and beyond. Ms. Gerber's very informative discussion left some looking for a vegetarian lunch.



William Toole, an environmental attorney with Robinson, Bradshaw & Hinson, gives an overview of environmental law including pre-acquisition due diligence and the implications of compliance and noncompliance with environmental regulations.

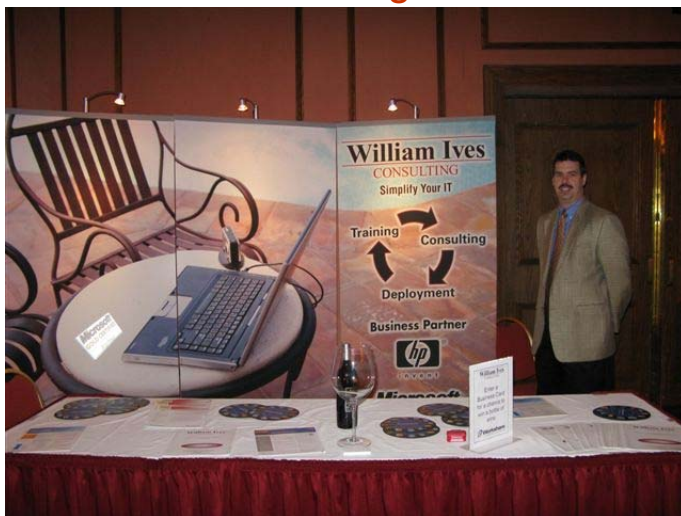
MPA ANNUAL SEMINAR RECAP-CONT. PATRONS



Choice Translating



National Digital Forensics, Inc.



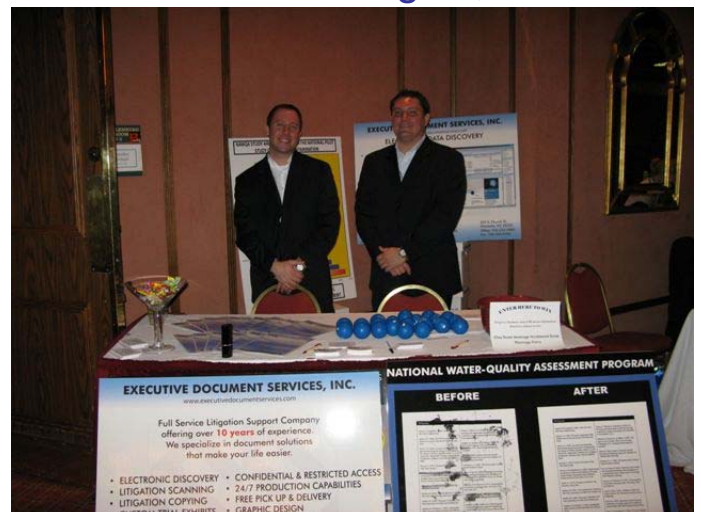
William Ives Consulting



Document Technologies, Inc.



National Corporate Research

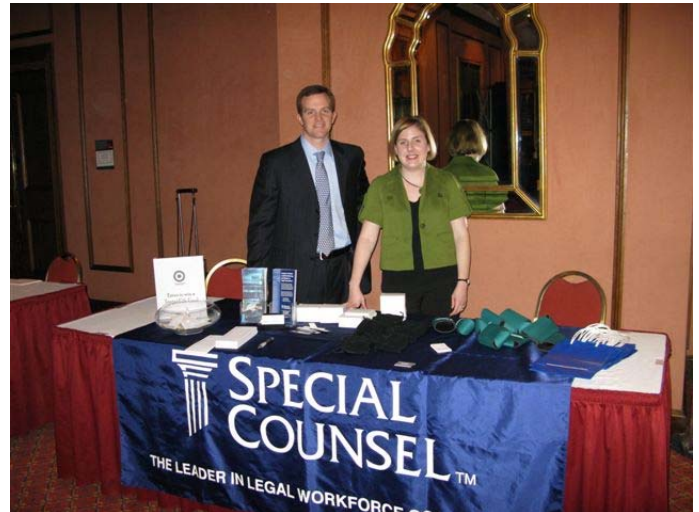


Executive Document Services

MPA ANNUAL SEMINAR RECAP—CONT. MORE PATRONS



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R.B. Pharr & Assocs., P.A.

MPA would also like to thank Capitol Services, Inc., Huseby, Inc., First American Title of the Carolinas, Chicago Title Insurance Company, and Ivize for their attendance and participation in the 2009 Annual Seminar. We would also like to thank all the patrons for their generous door prizes!! We look forward to seeing you soon at our monthly MPA meetings and the upcoming fall seminar.



GOOD NEWS!!!



- Belated congratulations to Candace Russell, CP and Jennifer B. Sawtell-Day, CP who earned their CP designation.
- Congratulations to Roxanne M. Crouch, CP, MPA's Patron Chair, on recently earning her CP designation.
- Congratulations to D'wan L. Burkins, CP on recently earning CP designation.
- Congratulations to Heather Carpenter, NCCP, on her new addition to her family. Her son, Grayson Reid, was born on February 1, 2009. Both Heather and Baby Grayson are doing well.
- Congratulations to the law firm of Womble Carlyle for being named the "Best in Show" in North Carolina Lawyers Weekly's listing of Best North Carolina Law firm websites for 2009.
- According to a survey conducted by the legal staffing agency of Robert Half Legal, one in four law firms will add staff in 2009.

It so nice to hear some happy news in the current gloom and doom environment!



STAY ON TRACK WITH THESE HELPFUL TOOLS



LEGISLATION

The National Center for State Courts' *Gavel to Gavel* newsletter, thanks to an agreement with Lexis-Nexis, provides access legislative bill tracking information and provides updates throughout the legislative sessions. Because of the sheer volume of bills and resolutions introduced every year addressing the courts, *Gavel to Gavel* will not be able to track and report on every bill, but will be able to provide a general analysis of what is happening throughout all 50 states.

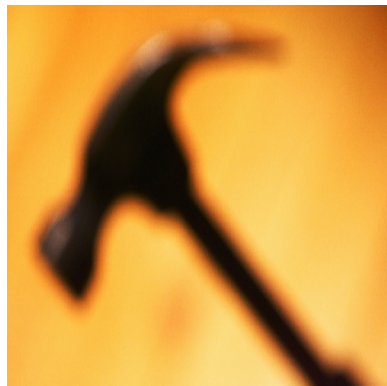
To search the **free** legislation database, go to http://www.ncsconline.org/D_Research/gaveltogavel/Bills.asp

NORTH CAROLINA BUSINESS LITIGATION

Do you or your attorneys need to keep up-to date on cases involving issues of significance to North Carolina business law and/or the day-to-day practice of business litigation in North Carolina courts. Check out the North Carolina Business Litigation Report at <http://www.ncbusinesslitigationreport.com/>. This report is a blog by attorney Mack Sperling at Brooks Pierce which summarizes North Carolina court decisions of the North Carolina Business Court, the North Carolina Court of Appeals, and the North Carolina Supreme Court.

"WAY BACK MACHINE" FOR WEBSITE RESEARCH

If you or your attorneys need to conduct fact-based research on a company's website, you can go to www.archive.org and click on the "Waybackmachine" tab. Once you type in the website that you want to search, you are able to see older versions of many company websites. There are approximately 85 billion web pages archived from 1996 through 2008. This technology will allow you to see what changes/revisions have been made to a company's website which may be helpful to your clients.



NALA NEWS

NALA Live Schedule for April 2009-May 2009

Tuesday, April 7th **Deciphering the Medical Record** with Amy Temkin from 11am-12:30 pm (CST)

Thursday, April 9th **Basic Evidence** with Karen Sanders-West, ACP, JD from 3-5 pm (CST)

Thursday, April 16th **Ethics and Technology** with Vicki Voisin, ACP from 12-1:30 pm (CST)

Monday, April 20th **Storyboarding Your Case** with Patricia Gustin, CP, CFEI from 11am-1pm (CST)

Tuesday, April 21st **Corporations: Mergers and Acquisitions** with Sharon Werner, ACP from 11am-12:30 pm (CST)

Thursday, April 23rd **Intellectual Property Law: What Every Paralegal Should Know** with Nevin Shaffer from 12-2 pm (CST)

Tuesday, April 28th **Advanced Discovery Techniques** with Rhonda Reid from 12-2pm (CST)

Monday, May 4th **Powerpoint for Paralegals** with Karen Miller, CAS, ACP from 11am-12:30pm (CST)

Wednesday, May 6th **Back to Basics: Resume, Cover Letter and Professional Portfolios** with Terry Halstead, ACP from 12-1:30 pm (CST)

Monday, May 11th **Power Up Your Powerpoint 2007** with Karen Miller, CAS, ACP from 11am-1pm (CST)

Friday, May 15th **Real Estate Title Searches** with Glenn Leier, Attorney from 12-1:30 pm (CST)

Thursday, May 21st **Time Management Techniques and Strategies** with Vicki Voisin, ACP from 12-1:30 pm (CST)

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For a complete schedule, course information, and registration links please visit www.nalacampus.com. The cost of a NALA Campus LIVE! course is \$80 for NALA members and \$105 for non-NALA members.

Discount for Group Registrations – A minimum of two people from the same site is required to qualify as a group. Group members must use the same telephone line and same computer. The first registrant is full price (\$80 for NALA members and \$105 for non-NALA members) and each additional registrant is \$45. To register your group or if you have questions concerning group registration contact Mariah Williams (mwilliams@nala.org) at NALA Headquarters.

CLE Credit- Many of these courses are approved by the NALA Certifying Board toward maintaining the CLA/CP credential. Most courses have also been approved by the Texas Board of Legal Specialization, Montana State Bar, State Bar of California, the **North Carolina State Bar**, and for Florida Registered Paralegals. For more information please visit www.nala.org or contact NALA at 918-587-6828 or nalanet@nala.org.

Join NALA in San Diego, California, July 8-11, 2009, for NALA's 34th Annual Convention and Educational Event. This year's institutes are on Human Resources, and the Mock Trial for litigation paralegals. Tracks include Entertainment Law, Family Law, Hot Topics, and the Essential Skills program, a condensed version of the CLA/CP exam review course. For registration details and the educational program descriptions, visit <http://www.nala.org/09convention/general.htm>.



MPA SPOTLIGHT



MPA Spotlight for the spring quarter is Ellen Hilton Hamilton, NCCP. Ellen is a Public Benefits Advocate Paralegal at Legal Services of the Southern Piedmont.

Ellen came to paralegal field as means of testing the water to see if in fact she wanted to be an attorney. She wanted to make sure of her career choice before investing the time and money in law school. Ellen has now been a paralegal for 17 years.

Her favorite part of being a paralegal is helping clients get benefits when they have exhausted all means and still have not been successful.

Ellen's most memorable experience as a paralegal was winning a social security overpayment hearing and getting a refund of all of the money that had been collected from the client. The amount collected included an income tax refund and a stimulus check that had been intercepted because the Social Security administration had not updated their records regarding the appropriate waiver.

Ellen has been a member of MPA since 1990. She joined the organization as a student member while at Central Piedmont Community College.

Ellen is the mother of two daughters. Her older daughter is working on her Master's degree at the Documentary Institute at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Ellen's older daughter worked for three years as a producer for an NBC affiliate in Pittsburgh before deciding to pursue her master's degree. Ellen's younger daughter is a recent graduate of the University of North Carolina at Greensboro where she earned a degree in graphic design. Ellen's younger daughter is an entrepreneur and owns her own company called Kaleidoscope Designs.

Ellen's hobbies include reading and crossword puzzles. Her favorite TV shows are all of the legal and medical themed shows. Ellen is very involved in the community. She is a member of the board of directors for Samaritan House, a respite care home for homeless citizens who have had a medical procedure and are in need of recuperative care. She is also active in various organizations at her church, Marvin AME Zion Church in Marvin, North Carolina.



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A DAY IN THE LIFE... OF A LITIGATION PARALEGAL



Antoine L. Robinson, NCCP, a senior litigation paralegal at McGuireWoods LLP provides a behind the scenes look at the life of a litigation paralegal for this quarter's column.

TYPICAL DAY

Typical workday starts around 8:30 a.m. I check voice mail (if any) along with emails. Usually, the night before I create a list of tasks to be completed for next work day. I check my calendar of events for tasks to be completed. Depending on the events for a particular day, I'll begin by conferencing with attorneys and secretaries regarding pending projects. I'm never good with inputting my billable time each evening before I leave so I generally give myself 30-45 minutes each morning to input my time from the previous day. The afternoons are rather smooth times unless you're dealing with particular deadlines. Each day as a litigation paralegal varies from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute depending on your caseload and **THE ATTORNEYS YOU WORK WITH.**

TASKS

The typical tasks included with my position are possessing knowledge of the rules of civil procedure both state and federal. Additional tasks are drafting summons' and complaints; drafting discovery requests to opposing counsel and drafting discovery responses. I also interact with attorneys giving my opinions on how to proceed with particular matters we are handling. Moreover, being a seasoned litigation paralegal, I pride myself on my interaction with different courts throughout the state of North Carolina and South Carolina and my interaction with other paralegals from different law firms or state agencies.

PROS/CONS OF BEING A LITIGATION PARALEGAL

My favorite part of being a litigation paralegal is helping our clients. My least favorite part of being a litigation paralegal is sometimes not receiving credit or respect from attorneys for **DOING YOUR JOB** or attorneys giving their secretaries tasks that should be completed by a paralegal.

REWARDS

My most rewarding experience as a litigation paralegal was when I worked as a Lead Paint Trial Paralegal for Motley Rice LLC. We had a three week trial in Cleveland, Ohio and received a huge jury verdict for our client. When you work hard with your attorneys and other staff members to achieve justice for your client, it's a rewarding experience.

SPECIALITY CHANGE?

The only specialty I might like to try is being an In-House paralegal. I would like to know the ends and out of working in-house instead of working in the private sector. Other than that, I love my position and wouldn't trade it for the world unless I won the **LOTTERY!!**



Five Steps for Effective To-Do Lists

Kristin White del Rosso – Pea Organizing Services, Inc. SM

Are personal activities and work projects overwhelming you or affecting your productivity? It is never too late to start a to-do list to tackle work tasks and personal goals. However, it is important not to let your to-do list be a band-aid for stress, but rather a useful tool that you use on a regular basis. Be careful not to be counterproductive or become overwhelmed if you are not accomplishing the intended activities. One of the biggest barriers for tackling a to-do list is multitasking. In fact, research shows that a worker's productivity decreases by 20 to 40 percent every time they multitask or perform "task switching." Consider the following five tips to keep a productive to-do list so that you can be more efficient at accomplishing your tasks and goals:

- 1. Be as specific as possible** – An effective to-do list needs to literally tell you "to do" something. Always use active and clear verbs to get the message across. Avoid ambiguity such as "make money," but rather show steps you would take to achieve this goal. There should be a definable beginning and end time for each step such as, "register for one networking event" or "call two prospects."
- 2. Reflect what is important** – A to-do list should not include activities you do not need to do, or cannot do. The goal is to stay on top of short-term tasks or projects you are committed to completing. Before adding a task, ask yourself: Is this the best use of my time? Should I be doing this task? What would happen if I did not do this right now? If the task can be completed at a later date, create a "someday" list or folder with the long-term action items. Also, consider using software such as the Microsoft Outlook calendar to remind you of long-term deadlines and projects.
- 3. Go for a quick task first** – There is no better feeling than crossing an item off your to-do list. So, start each day by getting at least one task done early to help avoid the feeling of being overwhelmed. This will also help energize you into getting a larger or dreaded task done. Consider grouping similar tasks – such as phone calls, e-mails and filing – together to get them done more quickly and create fewer disruptions throughout the day.
- 4. Decide the best format for you** – Consider your personal style when choosing a to-do list format. Hand-held electronic devices save paper and can be easily updated. If you prefer having a written list, keep only one list in a small notebook or daily organizer rather than on various sticky notes and other scattered paper.
- 5. Be realistic with time** – Consider a typical day for you when planning your to-do list since time lost switching among tasks increases with the complexity of the tasks. If you have a busy day of meetings, build in non-interrupted time. Be sure to include real time for items such as running errands or going to a meeting, and add "cushion" time for driving, traffic and waiting time.

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Kristin White del Rosso, President of Pea Organizing Services, Inc. is Certified Professional Organizer (CPO®) from the Board of Certification for Professional Organizers. For more information, call 704-344-0210 or visit www.thepea.com. White del Rosso is a member of the NAPO Golden Circle and a Certified Paper Tiger Authorized Consultant (PTAC™) from the Hemphill Productivity Institute. She has also earned a Certificate of Study in Basic Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) Issues, a Certificate of Study in Chronic Disorganization, and a Certificate of Study in Learning Styles and Modalities from the National Study Group of Chronic Disorganization (NSGCD). In addition to the National Study Group of Chronic Disorganization, Pea Organizing Services is a member of ADD Consults, ADD Resources, and the National Association of Professional Organizers (NAPOTM).

Effective Tools for Managing Stress in the Law Office

by Jeannie S. Johnston

Is stress really different for those of us who work in a law office? There may be people who tend to think that stress is stress is stress...however, I've worked within a law office and I've worked in non-legal environments and my first hand experience leads me to believe it is a different type of stress. Especially if you are a legal assistant (i.e. a Paralegal or Legal Secretary). Anyone who has worked anywhere knows that the "bad stuff" all runs downhill and those of us who are on the lower end of the totem poll tend to bear the brunt of what accumulates at the bottom of that hill!

Does this sound familiar? We've spent days reviewing documents, organizing the same in immaculate detail, prepared an index, a report and a memo outlining everything that has been accomplished and are expecting not only a pat on the back, but a small cash bonus for our trouble. Instead, we're met with, "Why didn't you do x, y and z while you were at it??!! Now get me a cup of coffee!" Okay, so maybe that's not the scenario for everyone but, I am sure you can offer something similar or even worse!

So, what's a Paralegal (or Legal Secretary) to do? There are actually some great techniques you can use to help manage all that stress, and you don't even have to leave your chair. I recently spoke with a certified yoga instructor, who has advised me on the many different methods of "coming to your breath."

"Deep, conscious breaths are very important," she says, "as they not only ground you in the present but, they also release endorphins within the brain, similar to that which a runner may experience after a long run."

These endorphins give us an immediate sense of calm and well-being that not only help to alleviate stress but have actually been shown to heal our bodies in many ways. There many ways to "come to your breath" from the convenience of your chair:

•**Alternate nostril breath:** While sitting with your eyes closed, place your left hand in your lap palm up. Take your right hand and place it near your face with the palm facing your nose. Pinch off your right nostril with your thumb and take a deep breath in, filling your lungs completely, and then hold. Pinch off your left nostril with your pinky finger, and release all of the air in your lungs, slowly and deliberately. Take in another deep breath and hold. Pinch off your right nostril with your thumb and release the air. You can do this for several minutes and the results are truly astounding!

•**Controlled deep breathing:** Sitting with your eyes closed, palms facing up, take in a deep breath, completely filling your lungs with as much air as you think they can hold. Release what you think is a third of the air and hold. Release another third and hold. Release the remaining air slowly and completely. Repeat this several times and also repeat it doing the opposite (breathe in a third and hold and then release the air completely).

While both of these exercises may seem simplistic, the truth is, they allow us to step away from the circumstances that are causing our stress and allow us to focus. Once we have taken control back, we can make decisions based on calm, rational thinking and not react to the circumstances. This not only allows us to lower our stress levels, but it also prevents us from allowing outside influences to steal our power from us. Your energy IS your power.

Well, there you have it. A couple of office-friendly and on-demand tools you can use to maybe help ease a bit of your daily stress while working in the law office. The next time your lawyer has blown his/her top and is sweeping the halls looking for someone to release the frustration on, I hope you'll remember this. I can liken it to catching on fire. Instead of stop, drop and roll, you can sit, breathe and take control!

Jeannie S. Johnston is originally from Warner Robins, Georgia. She attended Athens Technical College (ABA Approved) in Athens, Georgia where she obtained her Associate of Science degree in Paralegal Studies. She has worked as a Paralegal for over 15 years, has written articles for Legal Assistant Today and has spoken at Paralegal Conferences Nationwide. Additionally, Jeannie is the Founder of ParalegalGateway.com, the largest Paralegal information portal on the World Wide Web. Jeannie lives in suburban Atlanta, Georgia with her husband, Daniel and their four furry children Trickysy (the dog) , Riley (the cat), Carson (the cat) and Mr. Smithers (the cat).



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