



THE VERDICT

Affiliate of the National Association of Legal Assistants ❖ Affiliate of the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations

JANUARY 2010

Volume XXIII, No. 1

HAPPY NEW YEAR!!

From the VCPA Board

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President's Message

by Jami Knupp, VCPA President

HAPPY NEW YEAR and WELCOME TO 2010!

As the clock struck midnight on New Year's Eve, I found myself thinking about where I've been, what I've done, what I wanted to accomplish in the new year, and anticipating all that the new year would bring about.

Among the many personal resolutions and hopes I have for myself for 2010, I also have hopes for VCPA and its members. My main hope is that 2010 is a kind year to everyone and brings to you all of the best things you could want. Personally, I plan to try new things this year, most especially those things that I have hesitated to try in the past or that, for whatever reasons, I have talked myself out of trying. I would like to learn at least one new skill this year, both personally and professionally. I encourage each of you to try just one new thing personally and/or professionally that you have hesitated to do in the past. For VCPA I hope for the continued growth and success of our organization.

The new year brings some new changes for VCPA. Among the changes is our experimentation with new venues and days for our monthly general meetings. Your feedback is encouraged.

Planning for our annual Springtime MCLE Conference is in full swing. Please mark March 27, 2010, on your calendars to join us for a day of networking and education. Another change for VCPA this year is that Santa Barbara Paralegal Association will not be co-hosting this year's MCLE Conference. Rather, VCPA is tackling this event solo and we are very excited that 100% of our efforts and hard work will remain with VCPA to support our association and members.

I continue to encourage all of you to lend your time and talents to VCPA, its board, and chairpersons. As the MCLE conference date nears, I am sure Vivian and Laura will find a place for your time and talent in the planning and execution of the conference.

Our newsletter editor is always looking for interesting articles to fill the space. Please contact Maria Godinez at vcpa.newsletter.editor@gmail.com if you would like to submit an article or read an article that you feel would be of interest to our members.

I look forward to seeing all of you at the January General Meeting. See the flyer enclosed for the program information.

Cheers to each of you!

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

By Jessica Baca Domingo, VCPA Second Vice-President/Membership

*****REMEMBER TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP*****

Visit www.vcparalegal.org and click "Members Only" to view the Membership Roster. For more information and if you are a member and do not know the current user name and password to access the roster, contact Jessica Domingo one at (805) 654-0911 or by E-mail at: vcpamembership@gmail.com

PLEASE NOTE:

If you are a member of the Ventura County Paralegal Association and you would like to be added to our email list (or if your email address has changed), for future announcements, please send an email to: vcpamembership@gmail.com

If you are a member and currently receive announcements, you will not automatically be added to the job posting email list. This request must be made separately and you must be an active member to be on this list.

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Report on National Alliance of Legal Assistants (NALA)

By Cyndi Hitsman, ACP, VCPA NALA Liaison

At the end of the newsletter find a half-page color ad, and a full-page color ad regarding the Spring Semester for the NALACampus Live! courses.

Also a half-page and full-page color ad for the 2010 Annual Meeting in Jacksonville, Florida, along with a press release detailing NALA's educational programs for the coming year.

For more information please visit NALA's website at <http://www.nala.org/onlineed.aspx>.

Report on Education

By Sharon L. Rishel

The Ventura County Paralegal Association is continuing its longstanding tradition of giving back to the legal community by offering two scholarships each year to residents of Ventura County. Once again, students in good standing at one of our three local paralegal/legal assistant programs are invited to apply for VCPA's \$400.00 scholarship. Likewise, paralegals who meet the requirements of Business and Professions Code section 6450, and desire to become certified or obtain advanced certification, are invited to apply for VCPA's \$250.00 scholarship. Look for a copy of the scholarship application in this month's edition of The Verdict. The application is also available on our web site at <http://www.vcparalegal.org>.

All applications must be postmarked no later than March 19, 2010.

Good luck to each prospective applicant!

CLASSIFIEDS

THE CLASSIFIED DIRECTORY IS FREE TO VCPA MEMBERS!

Do you have a service to offer, something to sell, something you've been looking for? Advertise for three months in the Classified Directory. Fax or e-mail information to Maria Godinez, VCPA Newsletter Editor, (805) 988-9886 ext. 134; FAX: (805) 988-1937, E-mail: VCPA.newsletter.editor@gmail.com.

Paralegal T-shirts for Sale \$10.00 (\$15.00 if they need to be mailed), "Paralegals - the Real Power of Attorney". Contact Jami Knupp with sizes at VCPAPresident@gmail.com.

WAYS and MEANS

By Vivian K. Christianson, CP

The planning has started for our annual education conference. The five CLE unit conference will be held on March 27, 2010, at the Four Points Sheraton in the beautiful Ventura Harbor. Volunteers are needed to assist with various planning items and on the day of the event. Tasks are available to accommodate short or extended time commitments, whichever your schedule will allow. Please contact Vivian Christiansen at vkc@staker.com if you would like to help.

The planning for our annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction Event will begin in early January. The event is scheduled for May 6, 2010, also at the Four Points Sheraton in the beautiful Ventura Harbor. Committee volunteers are needed to assist with various planning items and on the evening of the event. Please contact Vivian Christiansen at vkc@staker.com if you would like to be a part of the committee, to receive notices of the planning meetings, or to offer your assistance on an as-needed basis.

GETTING TO KNOW THE BOARD

SIMPLY THE BEST

By: Deborah A. Perkins

Let me introduce you to the person that every lawyer wishes she had as a paralegal - Jessica Domingo. Jessica keeps track of the details to make sure you never miss a deadline. She connects with the clients and makes each one feel important. She transforms client documents into professional, court-ready pleadings. Jessica is always at the ready when you need her, organized and dependable. In short, my practice would not be the same without her.

Having received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Liberal Arts and Sciences English from San Diego State University, Jessica went on to complete the Legal Assistantship Professional Certificate Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara. After working as a paralegal in Santa Barbara, Jessica joined the Norman Dowler, LLP family. She has been a paralegal with us for approximately the last six years (and we hope many more)! Jessica's work focuses primarily on family law and estate and trust matters.

Let me introduce you to the person you wish was your friend. Jessica is the kind of person that makes sure you feel special on your birthday (just ask our secretary whose work area was covered with signs and balloons recently). She invites you into her life to share those extra special moments like getting married and having a baby. Jessica takes an honest interest in others and is quick to offer a kind word and support. She is truly a caring and genuine person.

Of the many things that make Jessica unique, I am most impressed with her ability to navigate Disneyland with her eyes closed (her second home), to dissect all of the blueberries out of a blueberry bagel (her preferred method for eating such), to whip up a birthday cake for her beloved doggy (she offered me the recipe), and to build a ramp in her living room in which to catapult her one-year old son (not to worry, the child is fine). As you can see, Jessica is a very interesting person!

Congratulations to the membership for electing such a fine new Board member. Armed with a wealth of knowledge, common sense, warmth, and a sense of humor, Jessica will make an excellent 2nd Vice President of Membership!



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Our Fabulous Volunteers

By Cyndi Hitsman

I heard this essay from Erma Bombeck recently...she calls it The Volunteer.

"I had a dream the other night that every volunteer in this country, disillusioned with the lack of compassion, had set sail for another country.

As I stood there smiling on the pier, I shouted, "Goodbye, creamed chicken. Goodbye phone committees. So long disease of the month. No more saving old egg cartons. No more getting out the vote. Aurevoir playground duty, bake sales and three hour meetings."

As the boat got smaller and they could no longer hear my shouts, I reflected, "Serves them right. A bunch of 'yes' people. All they had to do was put their tongue firmly against the roof of their mouth and make an "O" sound.

Nnnnnnnoooooooooooo. Nnnnnnnoooooooooooo. Nnmo No! It would certainly spare them a lot of grief. Oh well. Who needs them!"

The hospital was quiet as I passed by it. Rooms were void of books, flowers and voices. The children's wing held no clowns, no laughter. The reception desk was empty.

The home for the aged was like a tomb. The blind listened for a voice that never came. The infirm were imprisoned on wheelchairs that never moved. Food grew cold on trays that would never reach the mouths of the hungry.

All the social agencies closed their doors unable to implement their programs of Scouting, recreation, drug control. Big Sisters, Big Brothers, YWCA, YMCA, the crippled, the lonely and the abandoned.

The Health agencies had signs in the windows: "Cure for cancer, muscular dystrophy, birth defects, MS, heart diseases etc...have been cancelled due to lack of interest."

The schools were strangely quiet with no field trips and no volunteer aides on the playground or in the classrooms...as were the colleges where scholarships and financial support were no more.

Churches no longer functioned and had to close their doors.

The saddest part of the journey was the symphony hall, which was dark and would remain that way. So were the art museums, which had been built and stocked by volunteers.

I fought in my sleep to regain a glimpse of the ship of volunteers just one more time. It was to be my last glimpse of civilization as we were meant to be - a civilization that makes a deliberate difference.

That essay hit home to me as I am a chronic "volunteer." Civilization would not be as we know it without those who give of their time, talent and treasure. A world devoid these types of people and service organizations would be devastating."

-Erma Bombeck

When I look at other paralegal associations around the State and I see some fall to the wayside while others thrive. Those that succeed do so because of the quality of their members and volunteers. Yes, VCPA is a volunteer organization. But it is a reflection of the amazing commitment our members have to the paralegal profession and to furthering our careers – and even more, of the giving of your time, your talent and your treasure.

When I look at our organization, I don't see the things we do, I see the people behind them. When I look at the MCLE Conference, I don't see 5.0 hours of credit, I see Vivian and Delaina and Laura and Julie. When I look at the Winetasting, I don't see items on which to bid, I see Don and Maria and Jami and Elvira. When I look at our monthly meetings, the Law Day 5k Run, the Annual Charity Meeting, the employment referrals, the answered legal questions, and the wonderful friendships

formed, I see people - Ventura paralegals who make a difference.

So as I move forward this year into 2010, I will look at what I can give of my time, my talent and my treasure. How can I be of service to my Association that has given me so much? I know that which I give back to my profession is just a small reflection of a career that has given me so much.

YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS AND OPINIONS ARE IMPORTANT TO US!

If you would like to write an article or if you've read something interesting pertaining to the legal profession, send it in for future publication. Whenever possible, please submit articles by e-mail (in WordPerfect 11 or MS Word format). If you send a copy of an article from a printed source, please include the name of the publication, the name of the author and date it was published. Articles must be received by the 15th of each month to be included in the following month's issue. Please send articles, ideas, opinions and comments to: Maria Godinez, VCPA Newsletter Editor, FAX: (805) 654-0911, or E-mail: vcpa.newsletter.editor@gmail.com.

The Verdict is a monthly publication of The Ventura County Paralegal Association. The statements and opinions printed in the newsletter are those of the contributors only and are not necessarily those of VCPA. Publication does not imply endorsement. This newsletter is designed to provide accurate information only and should not be relied on as a substitute for legal advice.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY 2010

20 Clerks' Night presented by Ventura County Legal Professionals Association
Questions or Reservations: Please call Laurie Richardson at (805) 659-2387 or email:
laurie_ann_richardson@hotmail.com

FEBRUARY 2010

11th VCPA Monthly Board Meeting - 6:00 pm
Meeting is held at the offices of Norman Dowler, LLP, Ventura. Contact Jami Knupp, VCPA President, at:
VCPA.President@gmail.com for more information.

MARCH 2010

11th VCPA Monthly Board Meeting - 6:00 pm
Meeting is held at the offices of Norman Dowler, LLP, Ventura. Contact Jami Knupp, VCPA President, at:
VCPA.President@gmail.com for more information.

12th Registration for VCPA Springtime MCLE Conference

27th Springtime MCLE
Questions or Reservations, please contact Vivian Christensen at (805) 482-2282 or VKC@Staker.com

LOOKING AHEAD

May 22, 2010 - The Law Day 5K
June 26, 2010 - CAPA Annual Education Conference in San Diego
September - Election of VCPA 2010-11 Board of Directors
October - Installation of 2010-11 Board of Directors
November - CAPA Board Meeting

Learn How to Climb Outside of Your Comfort Zone

By Stacey Hunt, CLA, CAS, and Mark Gorkin, "The Stress Doc"

(Originally appeared in print in *Paralegal Today* May/June 2006)

A paralegal stands alone on a street corner in downtown San Francisco, miles from home. A realization hits her: She agreed — for reasons now unfathomable — to present a seminar on trial assisting to a group of top-notch, big-city paralegals who probably know more about the subject than she does. For the first time, she will use a Microsoft PowerPoint slide show as she speaks, and she has no idea how to connect the computer to the projector. As she walks down the sidewalk trying to figure out which skyscraper she needs to go into, it occurs to her that she is utterly outside of her comfort zone.

A psychotherapist struggling to build a stress management workshop business signs up to do a weekly feature on a cable television magazine show. Although he has never been in front of a television camera, the psychotherapist attempts to reassure himself with the knowledge that he is an experienced public speaker. D-day arrives and he finds himself in a sweltering room under blinding lights with no TelePrompTer. Feeling like he is facing a firing squad, he begins a live demonstration of stage fright morphing into oral paralysis.

These two examples are true stories that happened to us, the authors of this article. Stacey's seminar went off without a hitch and was well-received. Mark recovered from his initial fumble and finished his 12-week show with good reviews. Both learned they could take enormous personal risks, learn from them and come out ahead.

The fear of failure holds many of us back and keeps us from exploring our true potential. This article provides key strategies for confronting and overcoming your fears, and developing your risk-taking potential.

The Benefits of Risk Taking

For most people, having to speak formally in public is a nightmare. They would rather contemplate their own deaths than risk possible embarrassment or humiliation. This fear keeps us trapped in our own comfort zones, afraid to take chances that might lead to new opportunities. As Jonas Salk, the great scientific pioneer, observed, "Evolution is about getting up one more time than we fall down, being courageous one more time than we are fearful ... trusting one more time than being anxious." Without taking on an occasional challenge, you will cease to evolve, both as a paralegal and as a person.

Today, you can take baby steps to overcome your doubts and

stroll with confidence outside of your comfort zone. The benefits are enormous and include increased self-confidence, satisfaction and a sense of accomplishment, as well as a heightened awareness of your growing abilities. Each new success will give you a sense of euphoria and encourage you to continue pushing the envelope.

The Risk-Taking Self-Assessment Quiz

To evaluate how much of a risk taker you are, answer the following questions. Be honest with yourself. There are no right or wrong answers. This quiz will let you explore your personal feelings and gain some insight into areas of strength and vulnerability when in or out of your comfort zone.

- . Do you associate failure more with a learning opportunity instead of with feelings of humiliation, guilt or being a "loser?"
- . Do you tend to see things as shades of gray rather than black or white?
- . Can you usually work effectively on a problem despite feeling anxious?
- . In general, are you relatively comfortable with uncertainty or ambiguity?
- . When you are wrong, can you publicly acknowledge an error or mistake instead of attempting to cover it up?
- . Do you tend to become more focused under time or performance pressure?
- . Are you self-motivated rather than needing to be motivated by other people, structured goals and rewards?
- . During times of meaningful change, do you feel positively excited and curious rather than feeling anxiously out of control?
- . In general, do you like to explore new paths or procedures instead of following well-practiced or trusted paths?
- . Are you able to see or reframe a problem as an opportunity?
- . When it comes to problem-solving, do you tend to be more logical instead of intuitive?
- . Do you make decisions quickly and easily without fearing that you might be wrong or make a mistake?

If you answered "yes" to a majority of the above questions, you tend to feel comfortable with uncertainty, performance anxiety, change, i.e., taking risks. If you answered "no" to more than

half of the questions, or have two or three big “no’s,” it’s time to develop risk-taking characteristics and explore a larger world.

The Traits of Risk Takers

To be a conscious and productive risk taker you must be willing to hear the boos, to let go of a “secure” image while recognizing gaps, unfilled needs and outdated rules underlying operating procedures. Here are five vital traits of risk takers.

Acknowledge mistakes and accept social disapproval. Risk takers have a lot of practice admitting error. When you are dissatisfied or disillusioned with all the “be safe” messages and messengers, and you are tired of plodding along the “way it always has been” path, you might want to test limits and boundaries. Explore what is possible despite the potential for criticism or rejection, being a lonely voice and having to confront your fear of exposure.

Have a strong enough ego. A sense of confidence and competence is essential if risk taking is to be purposeful and productive as opposed to impulsive or irrational. Possessing a strong ego doesn’t guarantee results. It does mean that a risk taker can sort out the pros and cons regarding his or her enterprise. And while preplanning is needed, realize that you can’t anticipate every mistake or deviation before embarking on a new venture. A strong ego means you are not seduced by perfection. You recognize that staying on a narrow, safe course only yields the illusion of achievement and control, and in the long run can lead to boredom or stagnation. Moving outside of your comfort zone can open up new challenges and opportunities. Once you are positively rewarded for risk, you just might be ready to take a new risk.

Analyze and learn from trial and error. When error is seen as vital feedback, you can assess the adequacy or insufficiency of your skills and strategy along with your emotional and personnel resources. Of course, this isn’t usually one-trial learning, but by purposefully analyzing your choices and taking much-needed risks, you can shorten the time and heighten the payoff of a learning curve process.

Ponder a range of possibilities rather than perfection. When you understand there isn’t one fixed or ideal outcome, then you are in the position to see with fresh eyes. You are not biased or constrained by custom or habit. You can build on past learning and also reflect a new, “out of the box” environment. In fact, open people see error and feedback as fuel for on-going self-organization and useful reorganization.

Build a support system. Being a productive risk taker takes considerable physical, mental and emotional energy. It’s essential to cultivate a select group of trustworthy and objective people — a colleague, a supervisor, mentor or a close friend — who can embark with you on that road less traveled or let you know when it’s time to take a pit stop to rest or reflect on errors

and successes. We all need people who can tell us when to come up for air, especially during challenging undertakings. We need people who can provide tender loving criticism and tough loving care.

Taking Baby Steps Outside of Your Comfort Zone

Most of us don’t want to be stagnant or complacent. We recognize the need to continue growing and honing new skills to stay competitive at work and for personal growth. Sometimes we have personal goals that we just don’t have the courage to tackle. How do we give ourselves the boost we need to take baby steps to becoming more exploratory and risk-taking individuals?

Redefine success. Too often people don’t explore because they presume they will not be successful or there is no tangible reward in sight. For example, paralegals have said they are not interested in making the effort to become a Certified Legal Assistant or Registered Paralegal because they don’t believe their firm will recognize or financially reward their achievement. Are these paralegals’ definitions of success monetary gain, or is success only success when it’s observed by others? In the law firm environment, it’s common to define success by material wealth. In his book “The Seven Spiritual Laws of Success,” Deepak Chopra wrote: “There are many aspects to success; material wealth is only one component. Moreover, success is a journey, not a destination. Material abundance, in all its expressions, happens to be one of those things that makes the journey more enjoyable. But success also includes good health, energy and enthusiasm for life, fulfilling relationships, creative freedom, emotional and psychological stability, a sense of well-being and peace of mind.”

By limiting your definition of success in terms of tangible rewards or recognition by others, you will miss out on many chances for that intangible feeling of self-fulfillment and a journey well made. The sense of self-satisfaction and the increase in confidence that comes with achieving a difficult goal, such as certification, can jump start your enthusiasm for your work. The people you might meet in a preparatory study group can open doors to new professional relationships that will make the journey more pleasant.

Confront old voices. The beliefs, expectations and values internalized from past significant people, such as family members and teachers, can provide an anchor of stability and tradition in our day-to-day lives or during a troubled storm. However, if the anchor is so heavy or rigidly placed, your lifeboat might never leave the harbor.

For example, Mark worked with a client, a paralegal named Carol, who had contracted degenerative muscle disease as a child. Carol’s mother had been quite protective and also subtly critical. Not surprisingly, Carol had some self-esteem issues.

She never truly confronted her mother's behavior partly because of the "sacrifices" she felt her mother had made for her. And for Carol, being critical was a sign of disloyalty. These issues later impacted her professionally. When Carol began therapy with Mark she was laboring in a fairly dysfunctional law firm. For a few years, a circle of colleagues and friends helped her cope. However, because of the progressively deteriorating working conditions, one by one her support group jumped ship. But Carol stayed because she had unwarranted doubts about her competence and skills. She also was overly grateful for her position. Despite the fact that a couple of senior partners piled on overtime assignments without commensurate pay, she remained loyal. Fortunately, a year of therapy and gradually learning to stand up and set limits with authority figures helped her break the chains of low self-esteem. Carol gained a more realistic sense of her strengths and need for support along with a greater willingness to shake up her career puzzle. She eventually found a paralegal/administrative position with a nonprofit organization that advocated for individuals with disabilities.

You might never explore new waters or uncharted territories because those old voices are saying, "don't risk failure or embarrassment," "don't do anything that will threaten your job or financial security" or "this is our family's standard and nothing else is acceptable." While those old beliefs might have gotten you this far, it's time to trust your own judgment and instincts.

Hang out. A powerful motivator for risk taking, good and bad, is hanging out with a peer group. In particular, keep company with folks a bit outside your normal comfort zone. If there are more advanced-level paralegals in your office, take breaks with them or invite them to lunch. Pick their brains about how they tackled difficult projects or talked the boss into letting them try something new. As you get to know them better, ask them if there were situations where some project went sideways and what the consequences were for them. Soon you will begin to see that your peers have overcome failures and setbacks. For example, perhaps they got fired, overcame their fears, learned from them and continued to grow as paralegals and employees.

Be an awkward beginner. People who have mastered a profession through the requisite blood, sweat and tears, as well as the investment of ego, time and money, often abhor the thought of starting over. They recall the anxieties of an earlier age and don't ever want to feel so vulnerable or inadequate again. This sort of "bunker mentality" can keep us stuck in a dead-end job or working for a boss we don't particularly like. The fear of the unknown always is worse than discomfort with the known. The fear of having to start over with a new firm, learn a new practice area or work with a new attorney often will cause paralegals to rationalize that they are not really that unhappy where they are. Of course it's awkward at first starting in a new position, learning the laws of a new state or switching

practice areas. It's difficult to return to the feeling of being a novice, but you must not let that fear of awkwardness prevent you from beginning a new and better path for your career. Be focused on your needs and -not on your fears.

Find a coach. A key component to exploration and growing in new directions is working with a coach. You never see a sports figure who isn't working with a coach, no matter how famous. The same concept can apply to your career. Find someone who is an experienced expert who walks the talk. Then trust must evolve. If the coaching relationship is to be maximally productive, the student will need to accept both supportive feedback and constructive criticism. Places to look for possible coaches are attorneys or other paralegals, both inside and outside your law firm. Perhaps a favorite teacher from your paralegal program can serve as a coach. Professional career coaches can be hired to help you set and reach goals. Friends don't necessarily make good coaches, as they often have a difficult time delivering constructive criticism. You need someone who has enough distance to be able to view you with a critical eye and push you to achieve your goals.

Be gentle with yourself. Errors of judgment or design don't irrevocably mean you are incompetent. They more likely reveal inexperience or immaturity, perhaps even boldness. For example, suppose you have been asked to design a numbering system for a mega-documents case. After reviewing the potential types and sources of documents, you decide on an alpha-numeric system, with the first letter assigned pursuant to the name of the producing party. After you have implemented this system, you realize it's inadequate. Different departments within a corporate defendant are producing different records and it has become critical to know exactly where they came from. With the system you have in place, you can't identify exactly which department was the original source. This doesn't mean you are an incompetent paralegal. It might mean you got into a case so large it was outside your experience, or it could mean you were not given enough information from the attorneys from the start. You were bold enough to accept the responsibility for a difficult assignment, but for whatever reason, your design didn't meet the needs of the case. Learn from this situation, do your best to come up with a plan to remedy it and make a mental note not to make the same mistake again. Don't write yourself off.

Our so-called failures can be channeled as guiding streams of opportunity and experience that so often enrich, widen and deepen the risk-taking passage. If you make mistakes, learn from them and move on. Don't dwell on them and allow them to stall your efforts to broaden your horizons. Although you might imagine people are laughing at you, many of your peers secretly admire those who can dust themselves off and get back in the saddle.

Strive to Survive the Climb

There is no guarantee when grappling with new heights or depths, but four fail-safe measures apply:

Strive high and embrace failure. Failure isn't a sign of unworthiness. Consider failure simply as a gap between a future ideal and your present reality. It's a transitional space that fosters growth rather than absolute mastery.

Develop a realistic time frame. Remember, establishing a beachhead doesn't mean you have conquered the island. Recognize that many battles are fought and lost before a major undertaking is won.

Be tenaciously honest. Continuously assess the impact of outcomes, changes within yourself and your environment. An objective coach can help you with this process.

Establish a support system of caring friends and colleagues.

Imagine a life without the limitations we have set for ourselves. You now are ready to get out there and see just what you can do. As the ancient Roman poet Horace said, "To begin is to be half done. Dare to know — start!"

Stacey Hunt, CLA, CAS, is a freelance paralegal in the San Luis Obispo, Calif., area. She is the co-author of "Hot Docs and Smoking Guns: Managing Document Production and Document Organization" (Clark, Boardman, Callaghan, 1994) and "The Successful Paralegal Job Search Guide" (West, 2000). Hunt is an instructor for the paralegal studies program at California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo. She is the immediate past president of the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations and recipient of the NALA 2001 Affiliated Associations National Achievement Award.

Mark Gorkin, "The Stress Doc," a licensed clinical social worker, is a keynote speaker, "motivational humorist" and a team building and organizational development consultant. Gorkin is the author of "Practice Safe Stress" and "The Four Faces of Anger." For more information, e-mail stressdoc@aol.com, call (301) 946-0865 or visit www.stressdoc.com.

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VCPA Employment Job Bank Policy and Procedure

If you would like to be added to the job postings email, please send an email to Elvira R. Abdon at vcpaemploy@yahoo.com.

If you are looking for a job or have a job opening:

1. Any VCPA member who wishes to be informed of employment opportunities which become known to VCPA should contact the VCPA Employment Chairperson(s) who will maintain a confidential list of persons seeking employment. When a job opening becomes known to the Employment Chairperson(s), all the persons on the employment list will be informed of the position within 24 hours, regardless of the job seekers' qualifications and the requirements of the opening.

2. Any other VCPA Board Member who is made aware of employment opportunities or who is contacted by members wishing to be on the employment list, will pass on the information to the Employment Chairperson(s) within 24 hours of notification.

3. All employment opportunities will be posted on VCPA's website at www.vcpaalegal.org for 30 days or until filled, whichever occurs first. It is the responsibility of the Employment Chairperson(s) to notify the Web Administrator whether a posted position has been filled.

4. The Employment Chairperson(s) will not utilize employment opportunities for their own benefit.

5. Access to employment opportunities which are made known to VCPA are available to VCPA members only. Anyone may advertise a legal assistant employment opportunity within VCPA. There is no fee for this service. Personnel agencies may advertise specific employment opportunities free of charge; however, information regarding general services available via personnel agencies must be made through paid advertising in VCPA's newsletter.

If you are a student looking for an internship, or have an internship to offer:

1. Internships are valuable for students enrolled in legal assistant certificate programs who wish to gain supervised practical experience in a law office or other environment where legal assistants are utilized. Interested persons should contact the VCPA Employment Chairperson(s) who will maintain a list of students seeking internships. When an internship becomes known to the Employment Chairperson(s), all the students on the internship list will be informed of the position within 24 hours, regardless of the students' qualifications and the requirements of the opening, if any.

2. Any other VCPA Board Member who is made aware of interning opportunities or who is contacted by student members wishing to be on the internship list, will pass on the information to the Employment Chairperson(s) within 24 hours of notification.

3. All interning opportunities will be posted on VCPA's website at www.vcpaalegal.org for 30 days or until filled, whichever occurs first. It is the responsibility of the Employment Chairperson(s) to notify the Web Administrator whether a posted position has been filled.

4. Access to interning opportunities which are made known to VCPA are available to VCPA members only. Anyone may advertise a legal assistant interning opportunity with VCPA. There is no fee for this service.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN VCPA

- ☞ Dinner meetings, open to members and guests each month with informative guest speakers and in many cases, MCLE credit.
- ☞ Monthly newsletter, The Verdict
- ☞ Employment referrals and résumé bank
- ☞ Members only access to most current job listings on website: www.vcparalegal.org
- ☞ Networking opportunities
- ☞ Three months free advertising in the Classified section of The Verdict
- ☞ Medical, dental, vision, COBRA conversion, life insurance, group plans by Independent
- ☞ Preferred home financing provided by Partners Funding Corporation
- ☞ Educational and seminar discounts including UCSB and other CLAE/MCLE courses and VCPA-sponsored CLA Review Courses
- ☞ Affiliate membership in the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations
- ☞ Affiliate membership in the National Association of Legal Assistants
- ☞ Student membership discount
- ☞ Annual Wine Tasting and Silent Auction
- ☞ Annual Springtime MCLE Educational Seminar
- ☞ Up-to-date news pertaining to the profession on local, state and national levels

For more information or to receive a membership application, please contact Jesssica Domingo, VCPA's Second Vice-President/Membership at vcpamembership@gmail.com.

VCPA'S CODE OF ETHICS & PROFESSIONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The canons of ethics set forth hereafter are adopted by the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc., as a general guide intended to aid legal assistants and attorneys. The enumeration of these rules does not mean there are not others of equal importance, although not specifically mentioned. Court rules, agency rules and statutes must be taken into consideration when interpreting the canons. (Note: Legal Assistant and paralegal are used interchangeably.)

CANON I A legal assistant must not perform any of the duties that attorneys only may perform or take any actions that attorneys may not take.

CANON II A legal assistant may perform any task which is properly delegated and supervised by an attorney, as long as the attorney is ultimately responsible to the client, maintains a direct relationship with the client, and assumes professional responsibility for the work product. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Sections IV and VII.)

CANON III A legal assistant must not (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section VI):

(a) engage in, encourage, or contribute to any act which could constitute the unauthorized practice of law;

(b) establish attorney-client relationships, set fees, give legal opinions or advice or represent a client before a court or agency unless so authorized by that court or agency; and

© engage in conduct or take any action which would assist or involve the attorney in a violation of professional ethics or give the appearance of professional impropriety.

CANON IV A legal assistant must use discretion and professional judgment commensurate with knowledge and experience but must not render independent legal judgment in place of an attorney. The services of an attorney are essential in the public interest whenever such legal judgment is required. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section VII.)

CANON V A legal assistant must disclose his or her status as a legal assistant at the outset of any professional relationship with a client, attorney, a court or administrative agency or personnel thereof, or a member of the general public. A legal assistant must act prudently in determining the extent to which a client may be assisted without the presence of an attorney. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section V.)

CANON VI A legal assistant must strive to maintain integrity and a high degree of competency through education and training with respect to professional responsibility, local rules and practice, and through continuing education in substantive areas of law to better assist the legal profession in fulfilling its duty to provide legal services.

CANON VII A legal assistant must protect the confidences of a client and must not violate any rule or statute now in effect or hereafter enacted controlling the doctrine of privileged communications between a client and an attorney. (See NALA Model Standards and Guidelines for Utilization of Legal Assistants, Section V.)

CANON VIII A legal assistant must do all other things incidental, necessary, or expedient for the attainment of the ethics and responsibilities as defined by statute or rule of court.

CANON IX A legal assistant's conduct is guided by bar associations' code of professional responsibility and rules of professional conduct

VCPA

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If you are interested in serving on a committee, please contact Jami Knupp, CP.
Visit VCPA on the Web at: www.vcparalegal.org

VENTURA COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION (VCPA) APPLICATION FOR SCHOLARSHIP

APPLICATION DEADLINE: MARCH 19, 2010

INTRODUCTION

VCPA offers two scholarships each fiscal year to support individuals with a commitment to the legal field: One Student Scholarship for \$400.00 and one Examination Scholarship for \$250.00. In addition, the successful applicants will receive a free one-year student or associate membership in VCPA.

Eligibility Requirements: All applicants must be a resident of Ventura County, California. In addition, applicants must either: (1) meet the requirements of *California Business and Professions Code* section 6450 (for the Examination Scholarship) and be registered to take the National Association of Legal Assistants' CLA/CP or CAS examination; or (2) be a student (for the Student Scholarship). Student Scholarship applicants must be a current student in good standing enrolled in the legal assistant/paralegal certificate program at Oxnard College, the University of California, Santa Barbara -- Ventura Campus, or Santa Barbara Business College -- Ventura Campus. Information provided by applicants will be kept confidential. A VCPA Board member may not apply for either scholarship during his or her term of office.

Required Attachments to Application: (1) Two letters of recommendation, one of which must be from your current employer or instructor. (2) A personal statement as described on the application.

Deadline: All applications must be submitted to VCPA Scholarship Committee, P.O. Box 24229, Ventura, CA 93002 and postmarked no later than March 19, 2010. The applicants selected to receive a scholarship will be notified shortly.

APPLICATION

I am applying for (please check only one):

____ Student Scholarship (Proof of enrollment is required before disbursement of scholarship award to the successful applicant.)

____ Examination Scholarship (Attach proof of registration for any 2010 CLA/CP or CAS exam.)

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No(s): _____

Are you currently a member of VCPA? Yes ____ No ____

Present Employer: _____

Address: _____

Telephone No(s): _____

Description of Job Duties/Occupation: _____

Legal Assistant/Paralegal Program currently attending: _____

Grade Point Average: _____

Number of Legal Assistant/Paralegal Courses Completed, if any: _____

Attach a personal statement about yourself indicating educational background, study intentions, and/or career goals. You may also include any additional information that you would like the Scholarship Committee to consider. Please limit your statement to no more than 250 words.

I hereby certify that the foregoing information is true and correct.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Please type or print name: _____

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Basic Business Organizations February 9
Corporations: Mergers & Acquisitions March 23

Estate Planning

Applicable Exclusion Amount to Offset Federal
Gift Taxes and Federal Estate Taxes April 14
Generation Skipping Transfers March 31

Ethics**

Advanced Ethics March 11
Basic Ethics: Part 1 February 11
Basic Ethics: Part 2 February 25
Ethics & Technology March 25

General – Career Skills*

Concordance 2007 May 25
Jump Start Your Hard Drive February 15
Public Speaking April 21
Time Management April 15
When I Grow Up I Want To Be April 29

General – Practice Areas and Skills

American Legal System: Part 1 March 9
American Legal System: Part 2 March 11
Elder Law Intermediate April 22
Judgment and Legal Analysis March 5
Written Communications February 26

Immigration

Employment Eligibility Verification:
The Importance of Form I-9 May 6
H-1b Visas May 11
US Citizenship and Naturalization February 23

Intellectual Property

IP: What Every Paralegal Should Know February 18
New gTLDs February 4
Trademark Policing April 8
Trademark Prosecution April 13

Legal Research

Blue Book Review of Citing March 12
Legal Research February 5

Litigation – Trial Preparation

Advanced Discovery Techniques April 19
Civil Litigation: Part 1 February 11
Civil Litigation: Part 2 February 18
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Evidence–Advanced March 30
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Basic Ethics: Part 1	Civil Litigation: Part 3
Basic Ethics: Part 2	Judgment and Legal Analysis
	Legal Research
	Written Communications

* Courses qualify for non-substantive credit

** Courses qualify for Ethics credit

Registration is \$80 per session for NALA members, and \$105 for non-members. Special fees are offered for multiple participants at single sites. Members will be advised by e-mail of upcoming courses and given hyperlinks to the registration screen. Participants will be sent reminders a day before scheduled sessions, and again an hour prior to the session beginning. Visit www.nala.org to stay abreast of courses, presenters, and special offerings.



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Legal Research

Blue Book Review of Citing*
Legal Research

Real Estate

Commercial
Legal Descriptions
Title Closings
Title Searches

Ethics**

Basic Ethics (1&2)*
Ethics & Technology

Specialty Areas & Skills

American Legal System (1&2)
Elder Law (Intermediate)
Judgment & Legal Analysis*
Written Communications*

Litigation–Trial Preparation

Advanced Discovery Techniques
Civil Litigation (1,2,&3)*
Electronic Discovery
Evidence (Basic–Advanced)
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Paralegals as Jury Consultants
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Estate Planning

Applicable Exclusion Amount to
Offset Gift & Federal Estate Taxes

Immigration

Employment Eligibility: Form I-9
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What Every Paralegal Should Know
About IP
New gTLDs
Trademark Policing
Trademark Prosecution

* Suitable for CP exam preparation

** Courses qualify for Ethics credit

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