

## Message from the Chair

In the paralegal/legal assistant profession, there are a number of skills and qualities a person must possess to not only be “good” at her job, but to be successful and marketable. While there are a number of skills and qualities a person must possess, this message will only discuss two that I believe are at the top of the list.

The first skill/quality a good paralegal/legal assistant must have is the ability to network with other professionals in and around the legal area. The second skill/quality a good paralegal/legal assistant must have is the desire to mentor other paralegals/legal assistants in their quest for achieving greater success.

Why do these two top my list? Well....

Networking provides us with an opportunity to establish new relationships with other professionals. These contacts may lead to a new job opportunity, a more effective way of “doing business,” or a resource to go to if we’re struggling to tackle a new area of law we are just learning. In addition, you will establish lasting friendships that will span your professional career and can give you an avenue to resolve issues and conflicts. In this area we have chosen to make our career, networking becomes important because, as most of us know, word of mouth about our skills, abilities, and dedication can take us a long way.

Mentoring provides us with a way to challenge ourselves and to help our peers, who may need direction and assistance in navigating their career path. Being the wet-behind-the-ears paralegal can be scary and challenging when faced with attorneys who want what they want NOW. Not only are you learning a new job, but new personalities as well. As a seasoned

paralegal, you have an opportunity to assist a new professional to achieve his own success. You also have an opportunity to impart your vast knowledge to him and watch him blossom with your guidance and support. From mentoring, you gain a knowledgeable colleague who will begin to challenge you and provide you with resources as well.

I am fortunate enough to say that I had and have a wonderful mentor who provided me with guidance, patience, and respect as I grew in my profession. She challenged me and offered words of wisdom that only come from doing the job in the stellar way that she performs her job. I was fortunate to have met her during a LAAM event which I attended while still completing my paralegal degree. It was through this networking opportunity that I was able to land my first paralegal/legal assistant job. Thank you, Cheryl!

In wrapping up, challenge yourself! Get out of the rut and move outside of your comfort zone. Find those opportunities to network and broaden your professional circle. Examine what you are giving back to the profession that has given you so much, and mentor someone. She will never forget you for it, and you will never regret the service you are giving her.

And, if you don’t know where to start, attend the SBM Annual Meeting or the SBM Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section’s Annual Day of Education, offer to volunteer on the Board, or just volunteer to assist the Board with coordinating the meetings and events. These few suggestions are a good place to start.

—Nicole Cook

Issue 2, 2009

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#### Disclaimer

Articles and columns that appear in the *Michigan Paralegal* do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan, and their publication does not constitute an endorsement of views that may be expressed. Publication and editing are at the discretion of the editor. The *Michigan Paralegal* encourages republication and dissemination of articles it publishes. For information regarding permission to reprint articles, please address inquiries to the editor.

#### Editor's Note

The newsletter is published quarterly.

Newsletter submissions (Calendar Events/Items, Letters to the Editor, Section News and Business, Section Committee News/Reports, National and International News, State and Local News) and Advertising should be sent to the attention of KathyAnn Blunck at [kblunck@shrr.com](mailto:kblunck@shrr.com).

#### Section Mission

The Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan provides education, information and analysis about issues of concern through meetings, seminars, the website, public service programs, and publication of a newsletter. Membership in the Section is open to qualified paralegals, legal assistants, and to all members of the State Bar of Michigan. Statements made on behalf of the Section do not necessarily reflect the views of the State Bar of Michigan.

## 2008-2009 Council and Committee Directory

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(517) 896-1016, [hba1977@yahoo.com](mailto:hba1977@yahoo.com)

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**Website**—Kathleen D. Kasiorek, CP, Chair

# 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act

By Joel Farrar, Esq., Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, PC

On February 17, 2009, President Barack Obama signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (the "Act"). The Act's full text is available at [http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111\\_cong\\_bills&docid=f:h1enr.txt.pdf](http://frwebgate.access.gpo.gov/cgi-bin/getdoc.cgi?dbname=111_cong_bills&docid=f:h1enr.txt.pdf)

The following is a brief summary of some of the major provisions of the Act that might affect your firm's clients.

**Bonus Depreciation.** Last year, Congress temporarily allowed certain businesses to recover the costs of capital expenditures made in 2008 faster than the ordinary depreciation schedule would allow by permitting such businesses to immediately write off 50 percent of certain of those costs. The Act extends this temporary benefit for capital expenses incurred in 2009. Additionally, the cap on first-year depreciation for new vehicles placed into service in 2009 was again increased from the regular cap of \$2,960 to \$10,960 (\$11,160 for certain vehicles), at least where the Act's bonus depreciation is elected.

**Small Business Expensing (Section 179).** Small business taxpayers may elect to write off the cost of certain capital expenses in the year of acquisition in lieu of depreciating the property over time. Last year, Congress temporarily increased the amount that small businesses could write off for capital expenditures incurred in 2008 to \$250,000 and increased the phase-out threshold for 2008 to \$800,000. The Act extends these temporary increases for capital expenditures incurred in 2009.

**Net Operating Losses.** Under pre-Act law, net operating losses (NOLs), the amount by which a taxpayer's business deductions exceed its gross income, could be carried back to the 2 years before the year in which the loss arose and carried forward for 20 years. The Act permits small businesses with gross receipts of \$15 million or less to elect to extend the maximum NOL carryback period from two years to five years for an applicable 2008 NOL. Taxpayers must affirmatively elect the increased carryback. Absent an election, the regular NOL carry-

back rules apply.

For those businesses that qualify, the extended carryback provision could be very helpful in two ways. First, a carryback can generate a refund because it allows the taxpayer to offset income that has already been taxed in prior years. Second, the extended carryback period will make temporary investment incentives such as bonus depreciation and expensing more effective. That is because businesses that are unable to absorb their current losses with past tax payments do not receive immediate benefits from investment tax incentives such as expensing or bonus depreciation. The longer carryback period will allow a company to absorb its 2008 losses with five years of prior tax payments.

**S corporations.** The Act temporarily shortens the holding period for assets that are subject to the built-in gains tax from 10 years to 7 years with respect to assets that are sold in tax years that begin in 2009 and 2010. The built-in-gains tax only applies to property that is sold by a corporation that has converted from a C corporation to an S corporation in the past 10 years, and then only to the gain on the property that arose prior to the conversion. In effect, the new provision may permit a tax advantaged sale of assets that would not otherwise be available until as late as 2013.

**Qualified small business stock.** The Act increases the exclusion for gain from the sale of certain small business stock that has been held for more than five years from 50 percent to 75 percent, but only if the stock is issued after the Act's enactment date and before 2011.

**AMT and R&D credits in lieu of bonus depreciation.** The Act extends the provision of the Foreclosure Prevention Act of 2008 that allowed Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) and loss taxpayers to

receive 20 percent of the value of their historic AMT or research and development credits to the extent that such taxpayers invest in assets that qualify for bonus depreciation. The Act extends this opportunity to all property that qualifies for bonus depreciation and is placed in service in 2009.

**Delayed recognition of certain cancellation of debt income.** To benefit certain businesses that buy their own debt at a discount, the Act lets the businesses recognize cancellation of debt income (CODI) over 10 years for certain types of business debt that is repurchased in 2009 or 2010. This permits such businesses to defer tax on CODI for the first four or five years and recognize this income ratably over the following five tax years.

**Repeal of IRS's built-in loss rules.** The Act provides a prospective repeal of Notice 2008-83, the controversial IRS guidance that provided that if a bank recognizes a loss from the disposition of a loan or takes a bad debt deduction after a change in ownership under the specific charge-off or reserve methods of accounting, that loss or deduction will not be treated as a built-in loss attributable to the pre-acquisition period.

**Small Business Estimated Taxes.** Current law requires an annual payment of estimated taxes of the lesser of 90 percent of the tax shown on the return or 100 percent of the tax shown on the return for the prior taxable year (or 110 percent if the taxpayer's adjusted gross income [AGI] was greater than \$150,000). The Act provides that, for tax years beginning in 2009, the annual estimated tax payments shall not be more than 90 percent of the tax shown on the return for the prior taxable year. This only applies, however, to individuals who had AGI of less than \$500,000 (\$250,000 if married filing separately) in the prior tax year and who certify that at least 50 percent of the individual's gross income was from a trade or business that employed no more than 500 persons during the prior tax year.

**Incentives to hire unemployed veterans and disconnected youth.** The Act expands the categories of targeted groups under the existing work opportunity tax credit, which allows a credit equal to 40 percent of

the first \$6,000 of wages paid to employees within such targeted groups. For 2009 and 2010, the Act expands the work opportunity tax credit to include two new targeted groups: unemployed veterans and disconnected youth. Individuals qualify as unemployed veterans if they were discharged or released from active duty from the armed forces during 2008, 2009, or 2010 and received unemployment compensation for more than four weeks during the year before being hired. Individuals qualify as disconnected youths if they are between the ages of 16 and 25 and have not been regularly employed or attended school in the past six months.

**"Making Work Pay" credit.** The Act creates a new income tax credit that is available to eligible individuals for the next two years (tax years beginning in 2009 and 2010). The new credit is the lesser of (1) 6.2 percent of an individual's earned income or (2) \$400 (\$800 in the case of a joint return). Wage earners who do not earn enough to pay income taxes may claim the unused credit as a tax refund. The IRS will adjust withholding tables soon to provide for approximately \$13 a week less being withheld from their paychecks starting around June, and approximately \$7.70 per week next year. Nonresident aliens do not qualify for this credit. Neither do estates, trusts, or individuals who can be claimed as a dependent on someone else's return. The credit is phased out for individuals with AGI above \$75,000 (\$150,000 for joint returns) at a rate of 2 percent, so no credit is allowed for individuals with AGI of \$100,000 or more, or for joint filers with AGI of \$200,000 or more.

**Long-term extension and modification of renewable energy production tax credit.** The new legislation extends the placed-in-service date for wind facilities for three years (through December 31, 2012). It also extends the placed-in-service date through December 31, 2013 for certain other qualifying facilities, including closed-loop biomass, open-loop biomass, geothermal, small irrigation, hydropower, landfill gas, waste-to-energy, and marine renewable facilities.

**Temporary election to claim the investment tax credit in lieu of the production tax credit.** Facilities that produce solar electricity are eligible to take a 30 percent investment tax credit in the year that the facility is placed in service. Facilities that produce electricity from wind,

closed-loop biomass, open-loop biomass, geothermal, small irrigation, hydropower, landfill gas, waste-to-energy, and marine renewable facilities are eligible for a production tax credit, payable over a 10-year period. The Act provides a temporary election to claim the investment tax credit in lieu of the production tax credit.

**Business energy credit.** The Act enhances the business energy credit by eliminating the cap on small wind property and repealing the basis reduction requirement for subsidized energy financing.

**Energy-efficient existing homes.** The Act extends the tax credit for improvements to energy-efficient existing homes through 2010. For 2009 and 2010, the amount of the tax credit is increased from 10 percent to 30 percent of the amount paid or incurred by the taxpayer for qualified energy efficiency improvements during the tax year. The property-by-property dollar caps on the tax credit are also eliminated, and an aggregate \$1,500 cap applies to all property qualifying for the credit.

**Residential energy property.** The Act removes the dollar limitations on certain energy credits, e.g., for qualified small wind energy property (\$4,000 cap), for qualified solar water heating property (\$2,000 cap), and qualified geothermal heat pumps (\$2,000).

**Tax credits for alternative fuel pumps.** The Act provides an increase for 2009 and 2010 in the 30 percent alternative refueling property credit for businesses (previously capped at \$30,000) to 50 percent (now capped at \$50,000).

**Credit for investment in advanced energy facilities.** The Act establishes a new manufacturing investment tax credit for investment in advanced energy facilities, such as facilities that manufacture components for the production of renewable energy, advanced battery technology, and other innovative next-generation green technologies.

**Vehicles.** The Act permits taxpayers an above-the-line deduction for state and local sales and excise taxes paid on the purchase in 2009 of new cars, light trucks, recreational vehicles, and motorcycles. This deduction is phased out for taxpayers with AGI in excess of \$125,000 (\$250,000 in the case of a joint return). It is also limited to the portion of the tax that is attributable to the first \$49,500 of the purchase price of the new vehicle.

Additionally, the Act provides a tax credit for purchases of plug-in electric drive vehicles ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500 depending on battery capacity. The Act also restores and updates the electric vehicle credit for plug-in electric vehicles that would not otherwise qualify for the larger plug-in electric drive vehicle credit and provides a tax credit for plug-in electric drive conversion kits. While the changes to the plug-in electric vehicle tax credit are perhaps not of immediate concern since the plug-in electric vehicles covered by the credit are still a couple of years away from reaching showrooms, the credit may affect customers' car-buying plans in the future.

**COBRA Benefits.** The Act permits individuals who involuntarily separate from employment between September 1, 2008 and January 1, 2010 to elect to pay 35 percent of their COBRA premiums and be deemed to have paid the full amount. The former employer must pay the remaining 65 percent, although the employer may credit such amounts against income tax withholding and pay roll taxes. This temporary subsidy includes a number of highly technical rules.

We hope that you have found this brief summary helpful and informative. This summary does not address the many niceties of the Act or current law. If you would like to discuss any of these issues further, contact Joel Farrar, Esq. of Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, PC at (517) 371-8305 or by e-mail at [jfarrar@fosterswift.com](mailto:jfarrar@fosterswift.com).

## Meet a Section Member



Virginia (Virgie) N. Roth

I have 18 years of experience working at law firms in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Michigan. I studied for and passed the PP exam through NALS in July 2005. I was one of the first members to earn PP certification on my first attempt at all 4 sections of the exam. I continue to attend monthly chapter meetings, local seminars, state NALS meetings, and online study group sessions to earn CLE credits to maintain my certification.

I have been a member of the West Michigan chapter of NALS of Michigan since 2003, and held the office of treasurer during the 2006-2007 fiscal year. I have been chairperson on several committees, including: Award of Excellence, Legal Professional of the Year, Employment; Law Day; and 2009 Annual Meeting Awards Banquet. I am the recipient of the 2008 NALS of West Michigan chapter's Award of Excellence.

I have been a member of the State Bar of Michigan Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section since 2008, and have been a council member since September 2008.

I am active in my community and passionate about several worthy causes. I have served as a board member of the Seven Pine Owners' Association where I live, holding the positions of treasurer (2002-2007) and secretary (2002-2008). I am also an advocate for the treatment, prevention, and awareness of breast cancer, psoriasis, and Huntington disease. Since 1996, I have participated in the annual Breast Cancer Network of Strength/Y-ME Mother's Day Race held in Chicago, Illinois.

I enjoy spending time with my friends and family, especially my daughter, Jane, and Bichon, Zoe. I enjoy traveling - usually to Pittsburgh and Chicago - to visit family and friends.

## Calendar of Events

### July 2009

July 8-11

NALA 34<sup>TH</sup> Annual Convention  
San Diego, CA. [www.nala.org](http://www.nala.org)

July 24-25

NALS Region 3 Conference, LaPorte, Inc. [www.nala.org](http://www.nala.org)

### August, 2009

August 23-27

ILTA Conference '09. International Legal Technology Conference, Gaylord National Resort & Conference Center, Near Washington, D.C. [www.ILTA.org](http://www.ILTA.org)

### September 2009

September 16-18

State Bar of Michigan Annual Meeting and ICLE Solo & Small Firm Institute. Dearborn, MI  
[www.michbar.org](http://www.michbar.org)

### October, 2009

October 8-11

NALS 58<sup>TH</sup> Annual Education Conference & National Forum Irvine, CA. [www.nals.org](http://www.nals.org)

October 10-29

NFPA<sup>®</sup> National Federation of Paralegals Annual Convention, Portland, OR. [www.paralegals.org](http://www.paralegals.org)

If you would like to post your event, please email me at [kblunck@shrr.com](mailto:kblunck@shrr.com).

# How to Win At Interviewing

By Jeanie Shaw, PP, PLS

The interview is designed for one purpose: to find the “best” person for the job. The best person may not be the one with the most experience or knowledge but one that fits in well with the other employees and with the company philosophy. Getting an interview is only a start. You must know how to present yourself and your experience to win at interviewing.

**One-Minute Résumé** The first thing most prospective employers say is, “Tell me about yourself.” Your answer will set the tone for the rest of the interview. Develop a one-minute résumé and practice it. This résumé will show you are comfortable with yourself and put the interviewer at ease. You begin to control the interview. Don’t brag; simply tell a short story about yourself. Example: “I grew up in Kansas on a very small farm and learned at an early age to improvise to get the job done. I have always had an interest in law and in computers, so I found a way to combine the two. I frequently teach how-to classes on computers, specifically on Microsoft Word and WordPerfect usage in the law office. I am a member of a national association for legal professions which allows me to network worldwide and to constantly increase my job knowledge and skills. I feel that my training and work experience along with my knowledge of computers would make me a perfect fit for your company.”

**Positive Attitude** A positive attitude is a major part of having a successful interview. You have an advantage over the interviewer because you know the subject matter better than anyone. The interview is about YOU; it’s your turn to show all that is great about you. Remember the old adage, “Résumés don’t hire; people do.” Be prepared for difficult questions and unexpected events, such as delays. Remember Dale Thomas Smith’s saying: “You don’t have to let other people’s actions affect your attitude.”

**Research** Be prepared. Preparation for an interview is crucial to success. Know what the company does; i.e., that law firm’s specialty. Is

it an insurance defense firm? A plaintiff’s firm? Does it do a lot of litigation, or does it write contracts? Martindale-Hubbell is one source. There are a number of online resources similar to those for finding a lawyer which tell you about the firm, the lawyers, and the areas of practice. Talk to others in your community who have worked there in the past. Prepare three to four questions to ask, but avoid those relating directly to salary.

**Dress for Success** Ask the company you are interviewing with about its dress code. If they say business casual, you should ask if the code applies to interviewing as well. The important thing is to blend into the organizational culture. For example, you might not want to wear a three-piece double-breasted suit to an interview with an Internet company, but you might to an interview at a bank. It is important to check out the culture of the company before you interview. Regardless of the culture, there are a few rules you can follow.

Rule 1: Select clothing of good quality that will stand up to wear and tear. Calculate what you can afford to spend. Quality is your priority, but you don’t want to “outdress” the interviewer. Men need at least two dress shirts, a tie, a belt, and shoes. (Belt and shoes should match in color. Belts should be leather, not fabric.) Women need at least two blouses, undergarments, hosiery and a pair of pumps (not open toed). All clothing should fit well, be clean and pressed, and shoes shined. The color should be conservative and versatile, and skirts should be knee-length—too long or too short is too trendy.

Rule 2: Pay attention to finishing touches—avoid over-accessorizing. As with so many things, less is more. Go for quality over quantity. Shoes should be comfortable for walking and wearing for two- to three-hour stretches. A dress belt must be worn with trousers at all times. Avoid large buckles with logos. Keep jewelry to a minimum. One ring per hand is plenty. Earrings should be small and understated and only one set.

How to Win . . .  
Continued from page 7

## Why Being a Paralegal for an Attorney Who Works Abroad Works

By Casey Mobley, Paralegal

**Thank You Letter** “All deals are sealed in writing . . .” It is important to follow up your interview with a thank-you note. Writing a thank-you note is not an exercise in tradition; this is your opportunity to highlight additional skills and qualifications you may have for the job. It will show that you follow through and that you have class. It is important that you let the interviewer know your interest in the position. In addition, it will bring your interview and résumé back to the interviewer and just like TV advertising, the more times he thinks about you and your qualifications, the more likely he is to select you.

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“About 30 million Americans—one-fifth of the nation’s workforce—spend significant time working outside the typical office, plant or factory.”<sup>1</sup> As paralegals, we may think that having our attorneys working outside the office while keeping the office functioning normally would be a nearly impossible feat. However, with today’s technology, and proper planning, a law office can operate normally while having the attorney working from home, or from abroad.

Some of you may be objecting to this idea, and the thought of “unauthorized practice of law” may be bouncing through your head. Let me assure you that if your office is set up properly, having your attorney work outside the office should not have a significant impact on most of the daily office functions. At our firm, the attorney spends a significant amount of time working overseas, yet the firm continues to function as usual. This can be accomplished largely because of technology. Instead of being able to physically conference with my attorney, we have digital conferences via the Internet. We can see and hear each other without delay through web cameras that are set up to monitor. Clients are also able to meet with our attorney using this technology. Clients set up an appointment just as they always would, come to our office, and have a digital meeting. The only difference is that she is not physically in the room. The technology is not expensive, and it is a reliable way to visually and verbally communicate.

Naturally, our office uses e-mail and phone communication as well. We have set up a Vonage™ phone con-

nection which allows us to call our attorney’s number here in the United States, and it will ring at her office abroad. There are no international call fees, and a conference call meeting may be held.

As a paralegal, my duties and ethical responsibilities are the same as they would be with an attorney physically present in the office. I draft or prepare the documents for attorney review, but instead of leaving them in her in-box, I scan each page and e-mail to her. If a document is too large to be e-mailed, it is mailed via UPS™, and it normally arrives within three to four days. She reviews and edits all documents and correspondence as she would if she were here, and then sends them back to the office. We can also set up digital meetings to conference and review the documents together. If forms or documents need the attorney’s signature, a signature stamp can be used. However, it is only used after authorization has been given and careful records are kept to show what documents received the signature stamp.

There are a few tasks that cannot be performed while an attorney is abroad, and those matters can be referred to on-call counsel with whom our office has a pre-arranged agreement. These are some basic rules to remember if your attorney decides to work outside the office:

- The most important thing for a paralegal to remember is that planning and organization are key. Organized and timely office filing of everything from bills that have been paid, to incoming mail, is necessary. All these things need to be kept neat for the attorney to be able to

review upon his return to the office, unless the attorney deems them urgent and requires you to send the documents to him.

- Keeping track of important dates and reminding the attorney of these upcoming events is critical.
- All communication tools must be set up and tested.
- The attorney should provide you with an office manual, lists of office procedures, and clear instructions on how matters should be handled. Your office may have already given you these items, but they should be revised to reflect new working conditions.
- All phone calls and communications need to be documented, and the attorney must be given daily updates.

Of course, these are just some suggestions, as each office is different, and each attorney will have his own procedures. As a paralegal, you must remain motivated and be able to work independently if you seek a job at an office where the attorney works from outside the office either part- or full-time. Whether or not you decide to work in a traditional or non-traditional office setting, remember to use the resources available to you to the fullest, and continue to abide by your ethical and moral responsibilities.

*Casey Mobley is a council member on the Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan.*

### Endnotes

- 1 Landphair, T. (2009 March). More Americans Go to Work Outside the Office. *Landphair Report*. Retrieved June 23, 2009 from <http://www.voanews.com/english/archive/2009-03/2009-03-02-voa21.cfm?moddate=2009-03-02>

## State News

### GRBA

The Grand Rapids Bar Association Legal Assistant Section has elected its 2009 Board members. Please contact any of them for more information on the activities and membership in their association.

#### **Nancy S. Lentner, Chair**

[nlentner@shrr.com](mailto:nlentner@shrr.com)

200 Calder Plaza Building  
250 Monroe Avenue NW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
(616) 458-8439

#### **Erin O'Rourke, Secretary**

[ErinORourke@lwr.com](mailto:ErinORourke@lwr.com)

333 Bridge St NW # 800  
Grand Rapids, MI 49504

#### **Renee J. May, Chair-elect**

[rjmay@choiceonemail.com](mailto:rjmay@choiceonemail.com)

1 46 Monroe Center, Suite 1110  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503  
Carolyn Gaston & Associates, PC  
(616) 243-3331

### OCBA

The Oakland County Bar Association Paralegal Committee wrapped up the season with: "The Main Event: A Paralegal Social" on Wednesday, June 10, 2009 from 6:00–8:00 pm at the BlackFinn Restaurant & Saloon in Royal Oak. Paralegals celebrated their profession, networked with alumni, met new members, and listened as Lin Klaassen, one of the Midwest's leading Face Readers, taught them how to read faces! For further information about the committee, contact Candice Russ at [cle@ocba.org](mailto:cle@ocba.org) or (248) 334-3400.

# Council News - Highlights of Council Meetings\*

By Jeanne Nyhuis

**February 21, 2009:** The council met at the Hubbard, Fox, Thomas, White & Bengtson law offices, in Lansing, Michigan, on Saturday, Feb. 21, 2009, at 11 a.m. The treasurer reported a fund balance of \$29,823.76, following receipt of \$12,175 in annual dues for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. The council decided to reserve a block of rooms at the Ramada Plaza, on 28<sup>th</sup> Street in Grand Rapids, to accommodate out-of-town guests attending the 2009 Annual Day of Education, to be held on May 1, 2009, at Davenport University. Vanessa Lozzi, program chair of the Association of Litigation Support Paralegals (ALSP), which is offering a technology track for the event, proposed an alternative format for the Thursday evening vendor event—a cocktail party at the B.O.B., in downtown Grand Rapids, instead of Las Vegas Night in the Ramada Plaza ballroom. No decision was made. Chair Nicole Cook shared the list of topics and speakers. Council members decided that, rather than offer scholarships for the 2009 Annual Day of Education, all registration fees should be reduced in view of the ailing economy. This year's registration fees will be \$40 for section members and \$60 for non-section members. Membership Committee Chair Denise Gau advised that, based upon dues received October 2008 through January 2009, 487 people have joined the section or renewed their memberships. Scholarship Committee Chair Rebecca Opipari stated that an announcement of this year's scholarships will be mailed to each Michigan school with a paralegal program within the next week. Last year, the section received 27 applications.

**March 21, 2009:** The council met via teleconference on Saturday, March 21, 2009, at 10 a.m., to plan the 2009 Annual Day of Education. Chair Nicole Cook announced that a block of rooms has been reserved at the Ramada Plaza. Council members decided to waive registration fees for Davenport University students, given that Davenport is donating the use of its facilities, and to charge all other paralegal/legal assistant students \$15, to cover the cost of the luncheon. All speaker slots have been filled. The brochure should be finalized next week. The council decided to join with the ALSP in sponsoring a Thursday night vendor event at the B.O.B., in downtown Grand Rapids. *In other business:* The council

voted to send council members Marianne Delaney and Jeanne Nyhuis to this year's SBM Leadership Forum on Mackinac Island June 12-13, and to send two council members to the NALA 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention and Educational Event in San Diego July 8-11. Public Relations Committee Chair Linda Jevahirian has petitioned the governor's office to declare May 3 Legal Assistant/Paralegal Day.

**April 30, 2009:** The council met at the Ramada Plaza, in Grand Rapids, Michigan, on Thursday, April 30, 2009, at 4:45 p.m., on the eve of the 2009 Annual Day of Education. Chair Nicole Cook announced that approximately 70 people have registered for the event. This year's registration fees are: (a) \$15 to attend the Thursday evening vendor reception at the B.O.B. and (b) \$60 for non-section/non-ALSP members, \$40 for section/ALSP members, \$15 for non-Davenport University students, and \$0 for Davenport University students. Scholarship Committee Chair Rebecca Opipari announced that the deadline for this year's scholarship applications is June 1, 2009.

**June 23, 2009:** The council met via teleconference on Tuesday, June 23, 2009, at 12 noon. The treasurer reported a fund balance of \$27,943.41 as of May 31, 2009. Scholarship Committee Chair Rebecca Opipari announced that 16 applications for the section's annual scholarships have been received, all from non-section members. The council voted to award one \$750 scholarship and three \$500 scholarships to the top four applicants. The council discussed changing the scholarship rules to eliminate the requirement that one scholarship go to a section member given that, under the bylaws, section membership is limited to persons who have been employed as paralegals. The council will vote via e-mail on whether to participate in the September 2009 ICLE Solo & Small Firm Institute or to offer its own separate program. Declarations of candidacy for the five open council seats for 2009-2010 (chair-elect, treasurer, and three regular council seats) are due July 15, 2009.

\* Complete minutes are available to section members upon request to the section secretary.

**Notice of Call for Declaration of Candidacy for Officers and Members of the Section's Council**

**To:** All Members of the Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan

Officers and members of the Council, listed below, will be elected by the members of the Section, voting either by mail or in person at the Annual Meeting in Dearborn on September 18, 2009. Ballots will be tallied by the Nominations and Elections Committee prior to the annual meeting. Ballots cast at the annual meeting will be tallied and added to this count and the election results will be announced at the annual meeting. A term year runs from the end of the Annual Meeting to the end of the following Annual Meeting.

The positions to be filled are:

- Chairperson-Elect .....3-year term  
*(1 year Chair-Elect, 1 year Chair, 1 year Ex-Officio)*
- Treasurer..... 2-year term
- Three Members of the Council .....2-year term

This is a notice of call for declaration of candidacy. Any member of the Section who wishes to declare himself or herself a candidate for an office or a member position on the Council must complete and submit the Declaration of Candidacy form. Excerpts from the Section's Bylaws regarding the duties of officers and members of the Council should be reviewed before responding (a copy of which can be found on the Section's website at [www.michbar.org](http://www.michbar.org)).

The Section's Nominations and Elections Committee, by authority under the Bylaws, may nominate additional candidates. The Bylaws also permit other nominations for the same offices to be made from the floor at the Annual Meeting of the Section. If you have any questions, please call any member of the Nominations and Elections Committee.

**NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE**

Cheryl Nodarse -(517) 886-7130 – [cnodarse@hubbardlaw.com](mailto:cnodarse@hubbardlaw.com)  
 Nicole M. Cook - (517) 896-1016 – [hba1977@yahoo.com](mailto:hba1977@yahoo.com)  
 Denise E. Gau - (313) 983-7402 – [dgau1800@wowway.com](mailto:dgau1800@wowway.com)

Dated: June 25, 2009

**DECLARATION OF CANDIDACY**

I hereby declare my candidacy for the position checked below:

- 3-year term as Chairperson-Elect, Chairperson, and Ex-Officio
- 2-year term as Treasurer
- 2-year term as Member of the Council

of the Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section of the State Bar of Michigan and consent to the placing of my name and information about me on the slate of candidates to be prepared prior to and in conjunction with the elections at the Annual Meeting in Dearborn on September 18, 2009.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Member No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Employer: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone No.: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Area(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of qualifications for office (100 words or less):

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Dated: \_\_\_\_\_

I would like to serve on the following committees. CHECK as many as you wish. You DO NOT need to run for office to serve on a committee.

- Newsletter       Education       Pro Bono
- Public Relations       Membership       Scholarship

Return by July 30, 2009 to:

Nicole M. Cook  
 701 N Oakland  
 Laingsburg, MI 48848  
 E-mail: [hba1977@yahoo.com](mailto:hba1977@yahoo.com)

This form can also be found on the section website at <http://www.michbar.org/legalassistants/pdfs/declaration.pdf>

## Day of Education 2009

The 2009 Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section's Annual Day of Education kicked off in an exciting way. The event began Thursday evening as an intersection between paralegals, litigation support professionals, and a variety of vendors at the Crush Nightclub located in the B.O.B in Grand Rapids. This intersection was spearheaded and hosted by ALSP and provided attendees an opportunity to catch up with old friends and colleagues and also allowed for a fantastic atmosphere for making new contacts in the legal arena. Near the close of the event, attendees were graciously awarded a number of raffled gifts provided by a variety of the vendors. Overall, the evening was well attended and enjoyed by all.

The following morning started bright and early with registration and breakfast beginning at 7:45 a.m. at Davenport University in Grand Rapids for the Annual Day of Education, and from there, the day kept moving forward in the same fashion. Aggressive tracks of sessions were offered, in which there were a total of 15 topics during the course of the day. These topics included Legal Research, Constitutional Law, E-Discovery, and a look at the Michigan Court Rules as they deal with ESI. Just shy of the midway point, a sandwich buffet luncheon was provided for attendees and speakers, which allowed for another great opportunity to network, and, in celebration of Paralegal/Legal Assistant Day in Michigan (May 3), Marcy Jankovich provided everyone with a truly enjoyable and entertaining keynote speech on the history of legal assistants/paralegals and the history of how May 3 became Paralegal/Legal Assistant Day in Michigan.

Following the keynote speech attendees were encouraged to view the 2009 Proclamation signed by the governor, and to enjoy the celebratory cake provided by Linda Jevaharian, president of Legal Search and Management, Inc. Many groups took advantage of this opportunity and posed for photographs with the Proclamation.

After the lunch break, sessions resumed and learning was under way. During the breaks, many people had an opportunity to stop by and visit with a number of vendors who were on hand and had table displays to discuss upcoming trends and provide information on the services each



company offered.

By the end of the day, everyone had taken in about as much information as was possible in one long day. Farewells were made and prizes were given. A lot of the comments in parting were in compliment to the beautiful campus at Davenport, the knowledge of the speakers, and to the excitement of attending next year's Annual Day of Education!

All in all, it was an event that provided a lot of educational, professional, and networking benefits.

