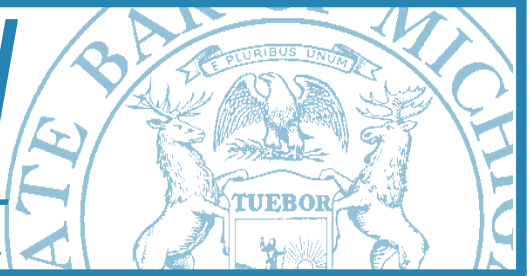


Michigan Legal Assistant



Fall 2003

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New and Improved Section Job Bank!

By Margaret Lucas Agius, CLA



The Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan introduces its new and improved Internet Job Bank at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/la_sbm_jobs/

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Calendar of 2003 Events

Date	Description
Jan 15	National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) Deadline for filing applications for March 26-27, 2004 CLA Examinations
Mar 26-27	National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) CLA Exam For info regarding testing sites contact NALA at (918) 587-6828
May 15	National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) Deadline for filing applications for July 23-24, 2004 CLA Examinations
July 14-17	NALA 29TH Annual Convention Reno, NV
July 23-24	National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) CLA Exam For info regarding testing sites contact NALA at (918) 587-6828

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

This last year as Chair-Elect just flew by. As I get older, I am amazed at how fast a year goes by. I am truly excited to be the Chair of the Legal Assistants Section this year. I have been on the council for many years and I know that experience has prepared me for the year to come. I have learned much about leadership from my fellow council members and I have some pretty awesome shoes to fill.

The Legal Assistants Section is comprised of 560 members. The Council wants this association to be able to provide to members education, networking, scholarships and information regarding current legal events. In order to do this, we must have input from you regarding topics of interest, suggestions for speakers, good locations for seminars and ideas about anything that interests you or other legal professionals.

In addition to your ideas, we need assistance on many of the committees. Help is needed on legal education, scholarship, annual meeting and our publication, *Michigan Legal Assistant*. Please contact me or anyone on the Council if you would like to assist on any of the committees.

We also have pressing issues to investigate and research. The Council has heard from many of the members that they would prefer to change the name of the Section from Legal Assistants Section to Paralegal Section. The ballot for the annual meeting included a question to poll members regarding changing the Section's name to Paralegal Section. We received 112 votes in favor and 77 against changing the name of the Section. The Council will investigate the procedures required for a change and present it to the membership for action in the near future.

In addition, our profession needs to keep current regarding regulation. We will continue to keep you informed about how Michigan and other states are handling this issue.

As a Section, many of us have felt the need to give back to our communities. We want to use the skills that we have developed in our profession to accomplish this. We will be looking at ways that we can offer pro bono assistance. Kathleen Kasiorok is our Pro Bono Committee Chairperson and I know that she would like to hear from our members to volunteer or if they have ideas to share. It is imperative that all of us work together to further our profession. I would encourage everyone to take an active role in the Section, attend seminars, work on committees, give us your ideas and get involved. It is our profession and our organization and all voices count.

Please contact me with suggestions or comments. I promise to take the time to respond to you and bring your ideas to the Council for consideration. Please email me at kblunck@shrr.com.

With another busy year at an end and a new year beginning, I hope all members had a great holiday season and have a happy, prosperous new year.

Kathy Ann Blunck

Editor's Note: *The section newsletter is published quarterly.*

The deadline for submission of articles, calendar items, and letters to the editor for the Winter 2004 issue is March 15, 2004. Please make all submissions to Kevin Dennis Gasiewski, CLAS, Managing Editor, by e-mail (kgasiews@ford.com) or facsimile [(313) 323-2647]. Thank you.

The views expressed in this column, as well as other expressions of opinions published in the Newsletter from time to time, do not necessarily state or reflect the official position of the State Bar of Michigan Legal Assistants Section, nor does their publication constitute endorsement of the views expressed.

ASK LINDA

Dear Linda: I work for a firm that has a very casual attitude about performance evaluations. I would like to see them employ a more structured format. Do you have any suggestions on how to get started with something like this?

Every legal assistant deserves feedback on a regular basis, and yes, it should be structured to include how you have performed, encouragement to improve and be promoted to more specialized tasks, opportunity to inform the attorneys about changes you would like to make, and understanding the connection between your compensation and your productivity.

There is no magic to a performance evaluation. It should be a very objective checklist of your behavior, work product, application of skills, your relationships inside and outside of the firm, recognition of any special projects you have worked on and your goals for continuing education and improvement. Each element should be rated and I suggest gauging performance on a scale of one to five to reflect levels of satisfaction and improvement needed.

The evaluation should also include a subjective analysis of your performance. The attorneys should have a chance to add additional comments and explain their conclusions. The results should be presented to you verbally, and in written form. You should keep copies for future reference. Typically performance evaluations coincide with compensation increases and take place at the end of the calendar or fiscal year, or on your anniversary date. You may want to set up a system for being reviewed more often, or to include mini evaluations at the close of special projects. Sometimes it makes sense to get feedback right away because people forget. At best get the attorney and/or client's comments in writing to be discussed at a later date.

A good performance evaluation should include :

- Number of billable hours expected, actualized and realized
- Ability to meet deadlines and timeliness
- Communication, organization, technology and practice specific skills
- Quality of work
- Specific, special and pro bono projects and assignments
- Relationships with people
- Professional demeanor and work ethic
- Continuing legal education
- Responsibilities that were new that year
- Association work and other recognition

You will want to customize your evaluation to the work you do. Think about including:

- Follow through and keeping attorneys apprised of status of assignments
- Instilling confidence in clients and attorneys
- Accepting and applying suggestions and criticism
- Flexibility and ability to handle variety and stress
- A specific analysis of each and every facet of your job

One of the most important aspects of a performance review is your goals for the next year. You should have a road map into the future at all times. Consider what skills you would like to renew, add to your collection and/or what areas you would like to discontinue. Include your aspirations for continued schooling and proposals for your involvement in professional associations and presentations at your place of employment.

Your evaluation should include a frank discussion about changes in your compensation, including a direct connection to how you have added to the profit and value of the firm. As an integral part of the profit team, you are entitled to know what you have contributed and how you are being rewarded. Discussions about salary and bonuses are stressful and burdensome but they are inevitable. You should be given an opportunity to ask questions and to respond accordingly.

Attorneys want to be around people who are continually striving for new goals. Make your evaluation a time when you can prove you are worth the investment they are making in you and go for the gold.

Linda S. Jevahirian is the Founder and President of Legal Search & Management, Inc. LS&M is a specialty firm that provides temporary and permanent recruiting to firms and corporations interested in improving their practice through the use of legal assistants.

Linda is a noted speaker, trainer and author. Her articles have appeared in numerous legal publications, including, the *Michigan Bar Journal*, *Michigan Lawyers Weekly*, *The National Law Journal* and *Legal Assistant Today*.

Linda speaks regularly to legal assistants on job-related issues. For further information you can contact her at 248-471-3443 or lindajev@aol.com. Watch for LS&M's new web site at legalsearchonline.net.



Annual Meeting Seminar: Gregory Conyers and Ellen Brisson Motivate Legal Assistants to do Pro Bono Work

By Kathleen Kasiorek, CLA

Gregory Conyers and Ellen Brisson addressed the Legal Assistants Section at the annual meeting on September 12, 2003 regarding pro bono opportunities for legal assistants. Mr. Conyers opened by illustrating the need for access to justice in our society. He likened the rendering of legal services to the poor to the rendering of health care services to the poor. Our society places a high degree of importance on access to health care. For example, a sick person sitting outside the doors of a hospital will likely receive care regardless of his or her effort or ability to pay. In this regard, access to health care is relatively easy to obtain. Access to civil justice, on the other hand, is not as easy to obtain. (Access to justice in criminal cases is, of course, available to all criminal defendants in our society.) A poor person who has been wrongly evicted is not as likely to receive the legal services he or she needs.

Mr. Conyers, along with the State Bar and the Pro Bono Involvement Committee (PBIC), is working to change that. And the Legal Assistants Section is trying to help. As you know, the Pro Bono Committee of the Legal Assistants Section is working to develop a program to provide opportunities for legal assistants to help with pro bono cases. A database is being created that will be used to match legal assistants with pro bono attorneys.

Mr. Conyers went on to describe other ways that legal assistants can provide pro bono services as well. One way is to contact the legal services providers in one's community. These organizations are always seeking assistance and would likely be thrilled to work with someone with the skills and talents possessed by a legal assistant. A list of legal services providers is available in the State Bar's Pro Bono Reference Manual, which is available at the State Bar's web site www.michbar.org. (click on "Access to Justice").

Another way to get involved is to find out what your firm or company is doing in the area of pro bono and ask if you can help. Some firms may even give billable credit for the time you spend on pro bono matters for the firm.

Mr. Conyers added that there is great personal satisfaction in doing pro bono work. Knowing that you have helped those in need is more than worth the time and effort put forth in doing so.

While the satisfaction of helping others is rewarding, the State Bar feels that recognition is important as well. Recognition not only makes one feel valuable and worthy, but it encourages others to give as well. That is why the State Bar and the Legal Assistants Section plan to develop a recognition program to reward those legal assistants that provide pro bono legal services.

Ellen Brisson followed Mr. Conyers' comments with enthusiasm and encouragement. She discussed the importance of doing pro bono work in spite of the fact that it is "non-billable" work and echoed Mr. Conyers remarks about the satisfaction of doing pro bono work. According to Ms. Brisson, knowing that you are a valuable part of your community is extremely important and can even help you to excel in your career.

Ms. Brisson gave examples of volunteer opportunities in which a legal assistant can use his or her skills and talents. Examples include Adopt-A-Highway, the Arthritis Foundation, Big Brothers Big Sisters, block clubs, The Bone Marrow Registry, Boys and Girls Club, Cancer Society, civic clean-up projects, Common Ground, environmental issues, foster parenting, foster a dog or cat, Habitat for Humanity, homeless shelters, interpret using a second language, learn and transcribe Braille, learn sign language, Leukemia Foundation, Meals on Wheels, mentoring a teen or a co-worker, Motor City Blight Busters, neighborhood watch groups, participate in local government, pet rescue groups, political campaigns, Red Cross blood drives, share a hobby, soup kitchens, speak at career day, Special Olympics, start a new group of your own, teaching, tutoring, United Way, women's shelters, YMCA, and YWCA.

Fortunately, Ms. Brisson also discussed how to fit it all in! According to her, the rewards of doing pro bono and volunteer work make it worth the effort of finding ways to make time for it. Ironically, one way to do this is to learn to say no. It's important to give of your time, but you should spend it doing something you enjoy and for a cause that you truly care about. If your plate is full of volunteer activities that you don't enjoy then you will likely be too "burned out" for the causes to which you want to contribute. Learn to say no to every single request for your time and you will be more effective and will truly enjoy the time you spend working on the causes that are near and dear to your heart!

Those who attended the meeting were encouraged and inspired. We hope that legal assistants throughout Michigan will also be fired up and ready to start putting their skills and talents to good work through pro bono and volunteer work. For more information on the section's pro bono database project, please contact:

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2003 ANNUAL MEETING & SEMINAR

LANSING CENTER

LANSING, MICHIGAN

The Legal Assistants Section held its Annual Meeting in conjunction with the State Bar on Friday, September 12, 2003 at the Lansing Center.

The annual election of counsel members was conducted. The following individuals were elected to office:

- Chair/Chair Elect/Chair Ex-Officio: Kathleen D. Kasiorek, CLA
- Secretary: Marianne B. Delaney
- Treasurer: Kevin D. Gasiewski, CLAS
- Two-Year Council Member: Randy L. Mitnick
Sheree L. Pratt
Cami M. McEvers

The counsel presented Kevin Gasiewski with the 2003 Mentor Award. Past recipients of the award present at the meeting, Sharon Werner and Vicki Voisin were acknowledged. The counsel presented certificates of appreciation for past services to Kathleen Kasiorek, John Stone, Patricia Towers and Marianne Delaney.

The Section announced the following 2003 Scholarship recipients:

- Michelle Ouwinga of Byron Center, Michigan
- Susan Cumming of Westland, Michigan
- Jennifer Clark of Okemos, Michigan
- Hillary Paauwe of Allendale, Michigan



Check out these Web Sites



- American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE) <http://www.aafpe.org>
- American Bar Association Standing Committee
on Legal Assistants <http://www.abanet.org/legalassts/home.html>
- Grand Rapids Bar Association <http://www.grbar.org/>
- Legal Assistant Management Association <http://www.lamanet.org>
- Legal Assistant Today <http://legalassistanttoday.com>
- Legal Assistants Association of Michigan, Inc. (LAAM) <http://www.laamnet.org>
- Legal Assistants Section of the Macomb County Bar Association http://www.macombbar.org/las_pg.html
- Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan <http://www.michbar.org/sections/legalassist>
- Legal Assistants Section Job Bank <http://firms.findlaw.com/SBMjobbank/index.htm>
- Michiana Paralegal Association, Inc. (MPA) <http://paralegals.org/Michiana/home.html>
- National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc. (NALA) <http://www.nala.org>
- National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc. (NFPA) <http://www.paralegals.org>
- Oakland County Bar Association <http://www.ocba.org/>
- State Bar of Michigan <http://www.michbar.org>

The Section operates the Job Bank as a benefit to its members and the legal community. It is free of charge to both paralegal job seekers and prospective employers. The new Job Bank's main feature, a message board containing information about and links to paralegal job postings, is open to the public; no membership is required. The Bank's other features are available by joining as a member with a Yahoo! ID. Membership is open, and there is no charge to join. One members-only feature is an extensive collection of career-related links in the following categories:

- Career Development
- General Online Career Centers (National and Michigan-based)
- Legal Online Career Centers
- Legal Staffing Firms (National and Michigan-based)
- Michigan Newspapers Online Help-Wanted Classifieds

The Job Bank debuted in 1999, under the direction of John Norris Stone. Since that time, the section has posted dozens of jobs in all areas of Michigan: Detroit, Lansing, Grand Rapids, and beyond. Major law firms and other employers, such as Miller Canfield and the State Bar of Michigan itself, have had openings listed on this Web site.

If you are looking for a new job, or your employer is looking for a new paralegal, please check out the Section Job Bank at: http://groups.yahoo.com/group/la_sbm_jobs/

Recommend it to your human resources department or legal assistant coordinator. Job postings for legal assistants and paralegals may be sent by electronic mail to the author at: mlagius@myway.com.



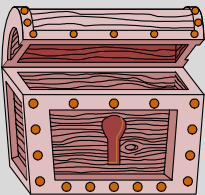
Margaret Lucas Agius, CLA, is currently a legal assistant with the Product Safety Practice Group of Miller, Canfield, Paddock and Stone, P.L.C., Ann Arbor, Michigan. Margaret is a former section council member, and former editor of the Michigan Legal Assistant.

Check out the Member Services and Products at www.michbar.org under Member Resources

The screenshot shows the website's navigation bar with links for Contact Info, Links of Interest, Opinions, Public Resources, and Member Resources. The main heading is "Member Services & Products".

Copying & Printing Services	Insurance
<p>Copying & Digital Printing Service You can look to CopyMax for all of your copying and digital printing needs. Members of the State Bar of Michigan receive 20% off CopyMax services. As a member of the State Bar of Michigan you will save money at all 1,000 CopyMax stores located inside OfficeMax. Click here to learn more about this program.</p> 	 <p>The State Bar of Michigan has a full-range of insurance programs available, including health and reduced auto insurance. For more information call the Goebel Group at (800) 632-4591.</p>
Office Supplies & Furniture	Car Rental
<p>The OfficeMax Guaranteed Savings Program will save you money on office supplies, business furniture and business machines. This program has been specifically designed for members of the State Bar of Michigan. Click here to learn more about this program.</p>	<p>Through the State Bar's discount car rental program, you qualify for special daily contract rates, as well as discounts on weekly and weekend rentals. When reserving a car, be sure to give the State Bar's identification number (located in red after the phone number for reservations) and ask each company for their best rate.</p>

Of General Interest



Maurine Payne is our section historian. Should you have pictures or articles for the history books, you may contact Maurine at: Lewis & Munday, P.C., 660 Woodward Avenue, 1300 First National Building, Detroit, Michigan 48226
Phone: 313-961-2007, ext. 159 Fax: 313-961-1270.

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Dearborn, MI

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