

**State Bar of Michigan
Legal Assistants Section
Annual Report 2005-2006**

The Legal Assistants Section of the State Bar of Michigan experienced both success and progress in 2005-2006.

The Section has continued its efforts to achieve the goals set forth in its Mission Statement and Statement of Purpose:

“To provide education, information and analysis about issues of concern through meetings, seminars, our web site, public service programs, and publication of a newsletter”

“To encourage a high order of ethical and professional attainment; to further education among members of the Section; to support and carry out the programs, purposes, aims, and goals of the State Bar of Michigan; and to establish good fellowship among Section members, the State Bar of Michigan, and the members of the legal community at large.”

2005-2006 Officers:

Chair: Vicki Voisin, CLAS, Charlevoix
Chair-Elect: Vacant
Secretary: Denise E. Gau, Royal Oak
Treasurer: Kathy Ann Blunck, Traverse City

2005-2006 Council Members:

Term Expires 2006

Tammy Salzbrenner, Ann Arbor
Cheryl Nodarse, Lansing

Term expires 2007

Jaxine Wintjen, CLA, Lansing
Christine Welton, Traverse City
Jennifer Petty, Detroit

Ex Officio:

Kathleen Kasiorek, CP, Grand Rapids

Committee Chairs

Membership: Kevin Gasiewski, CLAS, Detroit
Job Bank: Margaret Lucas Agius, CLAS, Detroit
Scholarship: Heather Hill, CLAS, Detroit
Public Relations: Linda Jevahirian, Detroit

Commissioner Liaison: Michael S. Hohausser, Esq.

Section Membership:

The Section has approximately 600 members

2005-2006 Section Activities:

2005 Annual Meeting. The Section held its annual meeting on September 23, 2005 at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing. The focus of this event was the celebration of the Section's 15th Anniversary. Linda Jevahirian presented a program on the history of the legal assistant profession and the Section. Founders of the Section were recognized and many were in attendance. Following the business meeting, a presentation was given by Jon D. Vander Ploeg, Esq., of Smith Haughey Rice and Roegge, Grand Rapids. Attorney Vander Ploeg's topic was "Michigan Appellate Courts and Practice: Change Is Here and More Is Coming."

2005-06 Section Council Meetings. The Council has met four times, once in East Lansing, twice in Lansing and once via teleconference. Two additional Council meetings are scheduled for this year. In addition to conducting the business of the Section, the focus of these meetings has been on leadership training and planning for the future of the Section.

The Michigan Paralegal. An Editorial Board has been established for the future planning of the Section's quarterly publication, *The Michigan Paralegal*. Issues published this year have featured many substantive articles of interest to the membership profiles of members of the Section with a focus on their areas of practice. *The Michigan Paralegal* endeavors to provide current news and information to all members.

Annual Day of Education. The Section held its annual education seminar at the State Bar Building on May 5, 2006. Approximately 70 participants attended the seminar. The event began with a keynote address from State Bar Executive Director, John Berry, followed by a general session on legal writing in plain English presented by Jeannette Buttrey, Esq. Breakout sessions in two tracks, litigation and bankruptcy law, were held from 10:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., with a networking luncheon from Noon to 1:00 p.m.

The bankruptcy law track included presentations on Credit Counseling (Jill Stroinski and Rachel Hood), Paralegal Panel Discussion of Changes in Bankruptcy Law, and "Ten Things Every Paralegal Should Know about Bankruptcy under the New Laws" (Stuart Gold, Esq.).

The litigation track included presentations on Identity Theft (Mark Koerner, Esq.), Securities Law (Joseph H. Speigel, Esq.), and Eminent Domain (Michael Woodworth, Esq. and Geoffrey Seidlein, Esq.). The day was highlighted by an afternoon celebration commemorating Legal Assistant/Paralegal Day, which was declared by Governor Granholm as May 3.

Member Communications. The Section continues its efforts to improve communications with members and provide networking opportunities by utilizing the Listserv created through the State Bar and Chardnet. An announcements list is used to provide

important Section information and other relevant news to members. Each member of the Section who has provided an email address is subscribed to this list. Members have the option to unsubscribe. A general list is available to members who wish to subscribe and is used as a means of networking and a way to communicate regarding issues related to the paralegal profession.

The Web Page. The Section's web page continues to serve as an excellent means of communication with members. The web site provides up to date information on Council activities, important news and Section events.

Public Relations. The public relations committee has made significant efforts to promote the Section and the legal assistant profession. The committee has written press releases, coordinated with the media to promote events, and has developed strategies for utilizing Section activities to raise awareness of the Section and the profession.

Scholarships. The Section will, once again, present a scholarship to legal assistant Students at the annual meeting in September. The 2005 winner of this scholarship was Lisa Greenwood, a student at Davenport University.

Job Bank. The Section continues to operate an Internet job bank that is free to employers and job seekers. The job bank is accessible via the Section's web page and is available to members and non-members. As of May 31, 2006, there were more than 80 job postings and other related information.

Policy Manual. In an effort to clarify its policies and procedures, the Council has worked through the year to develop a policy manual. This will be an on-going process, with the end result offering guidance to future officers and Council members.

Legal Assistant/Paralegal. An ad hoc committee was appointed to study steps necessary for the addition of the term "paralegal" to the name of the Section. This issue continues to be important to Section members and the Council has pledged to work with the State Bar to find a resolution.

Leadership Seminars. The Section continues to provide opportunities for Council members to attend leadership seminars, as well as the annual seminars of the national associations for legal assistants. Council members will attend the State Bar Leadership Forum at Mackinac Island in June and the annual convention of the National Association of Legal Assistants in Tampa, Florida in July

Pro Bono Champion Award. The Council will recognize paralegals that have made significant contributions of pro bono services at the Section's Annual Meeting.

Member Involvement. Efforts to increase participation among members include an overall initiative by Council members to invite members to become involved in committee work. Additionally, the listserv and *The Michigan Paralegal* are used to emphasize to members how involvement with the Section can enhance one's career and enrich one's professional life.

Leadership Training. The Section continues to provide opportunities for Council members to attend leadership seminars and annual seminars of the national associations for legal assistants. Council members will be attending the State Bar Leadership Forum at Mackinac Island in June and the Annual Convention of the National Association of Legal Assistants Tampa, Florida in July

2006 Annual Meeting

Plans for the 2006 annual meeting are currently under way. This event will be held on September 15, 2006 in Ypsilanti. Elections and installation of officers and Council members for 2006-07 will be held. In addition, an educational presentation titled "CSI Ypsilanti" will be presented by Mary Dempsey-Knox of the Michigan State Police Forensic Lab.

Respectfully submitted,

Vicki Voisin, CLAS
Chair, 2005-2006