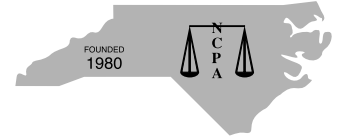




Summer 2010

North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc.

# Forum



*noun* [C]; *för-əm*  
an occasion or a place for talking about a matter of public interest

# NCPA

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### IN THIS ISSUE...

- Worst of Times...Best of Times
- Less Paper in Our Law Firm
- Law Firms & Email Scams
- Standing Rules & Bylaw Amendments



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Opinions expressed in articles and features herein are those of the author, and do not necessarily reflect the views of NCPA. The Editor strongly encourages the submission of materials for publication. The Editor reserves the right to edit material and accept or reject materials submitted.



**Table of Contents**

President's Message .....2

Chairman's Message .....2

2nd Vice President's Report (Membership) .....4

Editor's Court .....5

Law Firms Need to be Aware of Email Scams Too .....6

Standing Rules & Bylaw Amendments .....8

2010 Meredith R. Pollette, ACP Scholarship Award .....9

Statewide News .....11

Less Paper in Our Law Firm .....12-13

Worst of Times...Best of Times .....16-17

Calendar of Events .....18

Annual Meeting 2010 .....21

NCPA Member Birthdays .....22

Worker Bee List .....26

*Moving?* **Be sure to let us know!**

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## President's Message

Patricia F. Clapper, ACP, NCCP



As we move past NCPA's celebration of its 30th anniversary, I look to the next 30 years and wonder what it will be like. I believe one of the biggest things to happen to NCPA in the last 30 years was the move to voluntary certification. I can only imagine what is in store for our profession in the coming years.

NCPA's Education Committee is already hard at work planning our Midyear Seminar and CLA/NCCP Review Course in Asheville on September 10 & 11 at the beautiful Asheville Renaissance. Look for information online sometime in August.

Did you know NCPA has a Facebook page and a Twitter account? We post information about the seminars and meet and greets. Our Facebook page is North Carolina Paralegal Association. To follow us on Twitter, look for ncpaparelegal\_org.

I am preparing to attend my first ever NALA conference in July. I am excited about meeting other legal professionals from around the country and making new connections. We have a small group going so if you are interested in carpooling, please let me know.

Have a great Summer!

*Patricia F. Clapper, ACP, NCCP*

## Chairman's Message

Diane N. Morgan, CP, NCCP



It is hard to believe another Annual Seminar has come and gone! It was so good to see so many people this year enjoying the scenic beauty and relaxing atmosphere of Wrightsville Beach, especially since the meeting was in my backyard, so to speak, in District I. More importantly, networking with peers and staying current in our substantive areas is especially significant in our profession. NCPA

strives to bring you, as members, these educational, networking and fellowship opportunities at a reasonable cost. Please take an opportunity to provide feedback to your District Directors or me regarding the programs and activities that interest you or you would like NCPA to offer - either locally or at one the state-wide level seminars. Our goal for the upcoming year is to engage and build our membership!

Please checking the website for information regarding the Mid-Year Seminar in September. This fall, NCPA is moving from the coast to scenic North Carolina mountains in Asheville!! I hope to see many of you there. If you cannot make it to Mid-Year, please take the time to participate in local NCPA events. NCPA needs you and your voice!

Have a safe and enjoyable summer.

All the best,

*Diane N. Morgan, CP, NCCP*





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# Second Vice President's Report Membership

Yolanda N. Smith, ACP, NCCP

The current membership breakdown as of April 30, 2010 is as follows:

General members:	312
Associate members:	38
Student members:	91
Sustaining Members:	12
Affiliate members:	4
Educational Program members:	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>461</b>

We would like to acknowledge our newest (G)eneral, (A)ssociate, and (S)tudent members joining from October 27, 2009 - January 25, 2010:

- |  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Abigail E. Butler, Tarawa Terrace, NC (S)  | Danielle R. Girard, Raleigh, NC (S)           | Linda R. Wetherbee, Lexington, NC (G)      |
| Adrienne Simpkins, Raleigh, NC (S)         | Deborah L. Black, Wilmington, NC (G)          | M. Arnette Jones-McNamara, Cary, NC (S)    |
| Alaina K. Thum, Rural Hall, NC (S)         | Dee K. Sanders, Durham, NC (G)                | Maegan M. Armendariz, Jacksonville, NC (S) |
| Amy M. Barber, Raleigh, NC (S)             | Denise J. Hall, Elon, NC (S)                  | Margaret Pickett, Raleigh, NC (S)          |
| Amy Mitchell, Apex, NC (S)                 | Donna H. Wall, Raleigh, NC (G)                | Marie Julien-Webb, Apex, NC (S)            |
| Angela Carter, Louisburg, NC (G)           | Donna L. Cooper, Mills River, NC (G)          | Marilyn F. Carter, Charlotte, NC (S)       |
| Angela F. Grant, Apex, NC (A)              | Elizabeth A. Martinez, Jacksonville, NC (S)   | Marvena C. Wheeler, Hickory, NC (S)        |
| Ann C. Rogers, Matthews, NC (G)            | Ginny Tallent, Forest City, NC (G)            | Mary G. Schindo, Raleigh, NC (S)           |
| Asher Munger, Apex, NC (S)                 | Glenda B. Parker, Charlotte, NC (G)           | Meghann Rutherford, Durham, NC (S)         |
| Ashley Hibbard, Raleigh, NC (S)            | Gloria M. Boyles, Monroe, NC (S)              | Michelle S. McLamb, Durham, NC (S)         |
| Audrey Moore, Rock Hill, SC (S)            | Gwendolyn R. Bailey, Wake Forest, NC (S)      | Natalie S. Copeland, Raleigh, NC (S)       |
| Beverly B. Ipock, Gastonia, NC (G)         | Jade M. Sawyers, Mt. Airy, NC (S)             | Olivia Swigart, Durham, NC (S)             |
| Bradley J. Berthold, Chapel Hill, NC (A)   | James D. Boyd, III, Bolivia, NC (S)           | Pamela N. Tobin, Charlotte, NC (G)         |
| Candy M. DeBusk, Swansboro, NC (S)         | Jennifer G. Smith-Sutphin, Greensboro, NC (G) | Patrice V. Watkins, Fuquay-Varina, NC (S)  |
| Carrie A. Nichols, Jacksonville, NC (S)    | Jennifer M. Eason, Durham, NC (S)             | Rebecca A. Nichols, Greensboro NC (S)      |
| Catherine L. Haynes, Raleigh, NC (S)       | Jennifer M. Greenlee, Charlotte, NC (S)       | Rebecca S. Reitz, Beaufort, NC (A)         |
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| Christen E. Mull, Beaufort, NC (G)         | Jessica N. Spaugh, East Bend, NC (S)          | Sabrina V. Eckels, Wilmington, NC (S)      |
| Christine N. Mead, Mooresville, NC (G)     | Jessica Tryon, Fayetteville, NC (S)           | Sara M. Fortier, Richlands, NC (S)         |
| Christine Reeves, Morrisville, NC (G)      | Jessie Pereira-Leonard, Jacksonville, NC (S)  | Sheila-Renee Walton, Raleigh, NC (S)       |
| Cindy L. Caudill, Thurmond, NC (S)         | Joann A. Darnell, Ronda, NC (S)               | Tammy M. Hughes, Cary, NC (S)              |
| Clifford J. Fulmer, Concord, NC (S)        | John H. Banks, Greensboro, NC (G)             | Tara J. Schaeffer, Raleigh, NC (G)         |
| Craig P. Snively, Cary, NC (A)             | Joseph J. Donnan, Cary, NC (A)                | Vanessa Brewster, Pineville, NC (S)        |
| Crystal Ayers Pence, King, NC (S)          | Julie B. Tomlin, Raleigh, NC (G)              | Veronica K. Lynch, New Bern, NC (G)        |
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**NCPA would also like to recognize our Affiliate and Educational Program members:**

Alamance County Paralegal Association, Caldwell Community College and Technical Institute, Carteret Community College, Cumberland County Paralegal Association, Guilford Paralegal Association, Guilford Technical Community College, Miller-Motte College, and Research Triangle Paralegal Association.

Feel free to contact me at any time if you have questions about membership in NCPA.

Yolanda N. Smith, ACP, NCCP  
Second Vice President, Membership Chair



## Editor's Court

Brandon L. Ruth, NCSB/CP

Well here we are getting into May and already we've had a few days that would qualify as the "dog days" of August! I don't know about all of you, but being from New York I absolutely love that it gets so hot down here this quickly. On the topic of great weather, I hope you all had the chance to get on the beach and enjoy the great weekend we had during the Annual this year. As much as I enjoyed working with everyone and taking part in the learning experience that the Annual provided, I couldn't wait to get out of those meetings and into the outdoor pool.

With the help of all the wonderful people involved in NCPA, my first issue as Senior Editor of the FORUM was a great success! We're going to keep that going, with some excellent

articles about how technology affects the paralegal profession. In this issue you'll be able to learn about how e-mail scams can happen to law firms just as easily as they can happen to anyone else, as well as how the continued movement towards a "paperless" world is changing the way law firms operate. Finally, we have a great piece from Vicki Voisin about how our profession has been and is being affected by the economic struggles our country has been facing.

Finally, anyone who plans on taking the CLA or ACP exam needs to check out the ad for the Meredith R. Pollette scholarship contest. There are two awards available, one covering the fee for each exam. As always, please ensure that you check out the Calendar of Events, and don't forget to register for the Mid-Year Seminar, coming up on September 11th and 12th at the Marriott Renaissance in Asheville. The info will be posted to the web site on August 1st, but if you want to do some early research, check out the hotel's web site - that will guarantee you make the trip!

Regards, *Brandon L. Ruth, NCSB/CP*

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# Law Firms Need to Be Aware of Email Scams Too

*From Patti's Paralegal Page By Patti Clapper*

I dont know about your firm, but we seemed to have been inundated with scam emails this past month. Most come in the same form but I did have one unique one we almost fell for. I want to share my stories with you so you don't fall for either one.

The first one, and the one we continue to receive, comes from an overseas parts company who claims to have done business with a US Company and has not been paid. They will email you legitimate invoices and will even use companies you can google and verify are true (or so it seemed). The debtor company will kindly pay once you send them a letter. Your client will then tell you to take your fee out of the settlement and send them the rest. What you don't know is that that certified check is fraudulent and you are now out whatever money you have already sent to you client. If you are like my firm, however, this would not happen. When we receive funds, unless they are paid by credit card, we require a 3-4 day window (sometimes more) before we cut any money back off of it to ensure the payment is good. This is a good practice to have and any legitimate client will understand.


Speaking of legitimate clients, this one was a bit tricky and we almost fell for it. Potential client emails that (s)he is owed money under a settlement agreement and wants us to collect on it. I

email asking for documents for our review and I get a very generic looking form (like what you can get off the internet) that looks like a settlement agreement, complete with signatures. When I send our firm's retainer agreement, all of the sudden we have moved to this client telling me that the debtor has agreed to pay and is sending a certified check to our office. This was my first clue - we hadn't even send the debtor a letter demanding payment! The next clue was when I asked for contact information many times and didn't get it (all I had to this point was an email @hotmail.com). I discussed this with my boss and we agreed that this was going to end up with the same scenario as our "parts company client" from the other emails. We kindly declined to represent this person further. I suspect a fraudulent certified check is already on its way to our office.

If you receive any email like this, involve your boss and investigate thoroughly. Best practice, in my opinion, is to have a hold policy in place and NEVER give out wiring instructions unless it's someone you have done business with before or its a bank with whom you are doing business (such as for a real estate closing).

Scammers are getting more creative and apparently have no qualms about involving attorney's offices.

<http://lglduck.blogspot.com/2010/03/law-firms-need-to-be-aware-of-email.html>

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# STANDING RULES AND BYLAW AMENDMENTS

## Amendment to NCPA Standing Rules

The following Amendment to NCPA's Standing Rules was approved by unanimous vote during a joint meeting of the Board of Directors and Executive Board of NCPA at its January 17, 2010 meeting. In accordance with NCPA Standing Rules Article XXV, the amendment provided below is not in conflict with NALA Standing Rules.

### AMENDING STANDING RULE IV(B):

#### IV. Affiliate Membership

##### B. Membership Requirements

5. If an individual registering for NCPA'S Annual meeting and Seminar or NCPA's Mid-Year Seminar is not an NCPA member but is a member of an Affiliated Association then said individual shall receive 10% off the non-member rate for the seminar. [Effective February 1, 2010]

The following Amendment to NCPA's Bylaws was approved by unanimous vote at NCPA's Annual Meeting on March 19, 2010. In accordance with NCPA Bylaws Article XVIII, the amendment provided below is not in conflict with NALA Bylaws.

### AMENDING BYLAW ARTICLE VI

#### Article VI, Dues and Assessments

2. MEMBERSHIP REFUNDS. All request for Membership Refunds will be directed to the Board of Directors and will be issued at the discretion of the Board based on length of membership, and circumstances surrounding the request of the refund. [effective March 19, 2010].

Respectfully submitted,

Beverly K. Moore, NCCP  
Parliamentarian 2009-2010

## NORTH CAROLINA LAWYERS WEEKLY

Dear Paralegal,

I am happy to inform you that **Carolina Paralegal News (CPN)**, a special publication of *North Carolina Lawyers Weekly*, will now be published monthly. As many of you know, this product started out as a quarterly publication, and then went to bimonthly and now monthly due to increased demands and content popularity.

I personally wanted to thank you for your continued support of **CPN**, which has allowed us to provide the large paralegal community in two states with important news, information, profiles and industry trends.

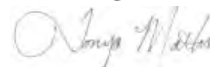
As of January 2010, **CPN** will be available to you each month for \$5.00 per issue. Subscribers to *North Carolina Lawyers Weekly* will continue

to see **CPN** inserted in their mailed copies. Also, a PDF version of **CPN** will be available online at [www.nclawyersweekly.com](http://www.nclawyersweekly.com).

Please call our office toll-free at 877-577-6221 to order copies of **CPN**, which will be available the last Monday of each month.

Again, thank you very much for your support in growing this product and I hope you have a successful new year!

Kind regards,



Tonya Mathis  
Publisher

#### Distribution dates:

Jan. 25	July 26
Feb. 22	Aug. 30
Mar. 29	Sept. 27
Apr. 26	Oct. 25
May 31	Nov. 29
June 28	Dec. 27

# 2010 MEREDITH R. POLLETTE, ACP SCHOLARSHIP AWARD

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## CLA EXAM FEE AWARD

Submit an essay on one of the following topics:

**“Discuss the Advantages and Disadvantages of Certification  
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or

**“What the CLA Designation and the  
CLA Program Mean to Me”**

## ACP EXAM FEE AWARD

Submit an essay on

**“I am pursuing the ACP designation because...”**

All essays must be a **1,000 to 1,500 words** in length, typewritten and  
postmarked on or before **August 15, 2010**

Participants do not need to be NALA members, but must be NCPA members in good standing and meet the  
eligibility criteria for sitting for the CLA/CP or APC exam. Finalists will be notified by September 15, 2010.

Scholarship fees will be paid directly to NALA and the finalists will have one year from the date of the award  
to sit for the exams. The fees will be refunded to NCPA if the finalists do not sit for the exam within the one-  
year time requirement.

**Send your typewritten essays by August 15, 2010 to:**

North Carolina Paralegal Association, Inc.

c/o Chairman of the Board

P.O. Box 36264 Charlotte, NC 28236-6264

For additional information, please email:  
NALA Liaison Jacqueline M. Thurman, CP, NCCP, [jacqueline.thurman@yahoo.com](mailto:jacqueline.thurman@yahoo.com)

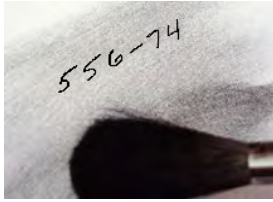
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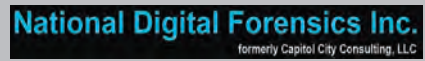


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# STATEWIDE NEWS

## *DISTRICT IV NEWS*

Alamance County Paralegal Association (ACPA), an NCPA affiliate, hosted a 3 hour seminar on Saturday, February 20, 2010. Lawson Brown spoke to those in attendance on the subject of Ethics; Kimberly Hamilton spoke on private process serving; and Judge Roberson spoke on matters of the Court.

The Guilford Paralegal Association will hold its next meeting on Tuesday, June 8, 2010, beginning at 6:30 p.m. at the offices of Wyatt Early Harris Wheeler LLP 1912 Eastchester Drive, 4th Floor Conference Room, High Point, North Carolina 27265. This meeting will include the election of officers for the 2010-2011 fiscal year, so be sure to attend!

## *NCPA 2010 PARALEGAL UTILIZATION AND COMPENSATION SURVEY*

All paralegals working in North Carolina may participate - you do not need to be a member of NCPA. Please invite your paralegal colleagues and friends to respond and consider joining NCPA. All responses will be anonymous. Go to the NCPA home page and follow the link!

## *MENTORING PROGRAM*

If you were at the Annual, you heard that the NCPA Mentoring Program is quickly becoming a huge success! The purpose of the NCPA Mentoring Program is to develop and promote the career development and professionalism of future paralegals. It is vitally important that seasoned paralegals help foster the growth of its newer members as a means to meet the needs of our ever growing profession and to set the standard for our future. We need mentors! Please consider volunteering a few hours of your time to this program. It cannot succeed without you. Thanks!



## My Assignment: To List the Benefits of Less Paper in Our Law Firm

“Reprinted with permission of Lynne J. DeVenny  
Author/Blogger at *Practical Paralegalism*  
<http://www.practicalparalegalism.com/>

*“Going paperless is a simple matter of buying a scanner and using it. Being paperless means adopting practices and procedures that maximize efficiency and minimize cost.”*

~ *The Paperless (Law) Office (Lawyerist Media, LLC, 2009)*

My boss (he hates to be called that) asked me to write a memo explaining the benefits of going paperless in our law firm, or at least the benefits of reducing the paper we deal with now. As much as I've always hated paper, this is a very desirable assignment for me. But some of my colleagues have really embraced their inner paper hoarder over the years, and could be much harder sells than, say, me. (I even hate yellow legal pads).

I thought I'd list the benefits from my preliminary research, and then ask my readers if I missed any compelling arguments for scanning every piece of paper that comes into our office and saving it electronically - and eliminating many of our hard files. (But I still haven't figured out how to get people to stop sending us paper, or how to get rid of those pesky paper exhibits for most trials.)

Here are my points of persuasion for the paper lovers so far:

**Find any document quickly** simply by accessing your computer - from anywhere. No more lost time (and frustration) hunting for hard copies through overflowing (or the wrong) files, towering (and mysterious) piles of paper on top of desks, scattered willy-nilly all over conference rooms, buried deep in storage facilities, hiding in any one of multiple briefcases, and in worst case scenarios, stuffed under the seats of someone's car. It takes less time to scan and save a digital file than it does to look for a hard copy, and you can search for documents with a few keystrokes. (Also, no more paper cuts.)

**Save money.** No more long hours filing and re-filing; organizing physical client files; buying expensive binders and accordion files, reams of copy paper, toner, letterhead, envelopes and exhibit tabs in bulk; paying exorbitant postage to mail voluminous paper productions; and purchasing storage boxes and space. Kiss those annoying file storage retrieval fees good-bye. No more losing hours of valuable support time while your staffers stand at a copier or file (and refile) for hours (or spend days looking for that file that you forgot you left at your mother-in-law's house two months ago).

**Be (any size) disaster-prepared.** In the event of fire, theft or computer crashes, critical documents are safely stored and backed up, locally and remotely. Also, small disasters like spilling coffee on documents (or, not to beat a dead horse, losing them) are eliminated if you're looking at them on your monitor. (Spilling the coffee on your keyboard is a separate category of disasters.)

**Better maintain confidentiality.** Eliminate paper casually lying around and exposed in your office. Digital documents can be encrypted, further limiting people that have access to privileged information. You can also add passwords to documents to ensure that only the intended e-mail recipient can open and see them.

**Make better use of your office space.** Get rid of the clutter, including unattractive shelves and bulky filing cabinets, and eliminate casual access to accordion files and notebooks by unauthorized individuals and people passing through.

**Facilitate document review,** and eliminate hundreds of pages of documents sitting in stacks on your desk (or on your floor). Since I convinced you to go dual monitor, you can review documents faster and more efficiently on that extra monitor - and save all of our eyes. And key documents are not stashed in multiple places (subject to human whim), physical and/or digital. They are in one place: the electronic file.

**Be ready for the day that all courts are paperless** and require e-filing.

**Save our planet.** Go green. Reduce paper and save trees.

**Great publications for paperless strategies:**

*The Paperless (Law) Office (Lawyerist Media, LLC, 2009)*

*The 2010 Solo and Small Firm Legal Technology Guide (American Bar Association, 2010)*

**Great online articles about going paperless:**

Going Paperless for the Law Office: A Practical Guide (Law Practice Today),

<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/ptr09095.shtml>

Some Thoughts on Becoming Paperless (Law Practice Today),

<http://www.abanet.org/lpm/lpt/articles/ptr09097.shtml>

Paperless Law Office Is Easier Than You Think (*Lawyerist*), <http://lawyerist.com/paperlesslaw-office/>

Taking a Firm Completely Electronic (DennisKennedy.com),

<http://denniskennedy.com/blog/2008/01/by-request-taking-a-firm-completely-electronic>

A Simple Inexpensive Way to Create a Paperless Office, <http://www.keytlaw.com/tech/paperless.htm>

The Cost Savings in Going Digital (The Greatest American Lawyer),

[http://greatestamericanlawyer.typepad.com/greatest\\_american\\_lawyer/2008/10/the-costs-saving.html](http://greatestamericanlawyer.typepad.com/greatest_american_lawyer/2008/10/the-costs-saving.html)

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## Calling All Members!



**“People who ask our advice almost never take it. Yet we should never refuse to give it, upon request, for it often helps us to see our own way more clearly.” --Brendan Francis**

Please consider contributing to the next edition of the *NCPA Forum*. Not only do we want our association's publication to be informative and innovative for each and every member, we also want it to include helpful hints and sound advice from our main resources, our members. We are looking for all types of articles that relate to the paralegal community. Anything of interest to you will most likely be of interest to other paralegals across the state. Let your voice be heard in the *NCPA Forum*. Please submit all articles in Word format to Crystal L. Robinson, NCCP [crystal@levineandstewart.com](mailto:crystal@levineandstewart.com). You may also e-mail your comments, suggestions and possible article contributors to us as well.

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## Look to the Future

# Worst of Times...Best of Times

A new year always brings promise. The year ahead is a clean slate, and, eager to put the old year behind, you make resolutions and set goals for the next twelve months. You focus on change. All this is important, but you should always reflect on the previous year and learn lessons from its events.

'Turbulent' might be the best way to describe last year. The economy took an alarming dip and the legal industry did not escape the downturn. The employment picture was less than rosy. Paralegals suffered right along with everyone else as they experienced lay-offs, downsizing, decreasing salaries and benefits, as well as reduced or non-existent bonuses.

In spite of all the bad news, however, it appears it is still a good time to be a paralegal. The *Occupational Outlook Handbook* published by the Department of Labor says:

"Employment of paralegals and legal assistants is projected to grow 22 percent between 2006 and 2016, much faster than the average for all occupations. Employers are trying to reduce costs and increase the availability and efficiency of legal services by hiring paralegals to perform tasks once done by lawyers. Paralegals are performing a wider variety of duties, making them more useful to businesses.

"Demand for paralegals also is expected to grow as an expanding population increasingly requires legal services, especially in areas such as intellectual property, health care, international law, elder issues, criminal law, and environmental law. The growth of prepaid legal plans also should contribute to the demand for legal services.

"Private law firms will continue to be the largest employers of paralegals, but a growing array of other organizations, such as corporate legal departments, insurance companies, real estate and title insurance firms, and banks also hire paralegals. Corporations in particular are expected to increase their in-house legal departments to cut costs. In part because of the range of tasks they can perform, paralegals are also increas-

ingly employed in small and medium-size establishments of all types" ([www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm#outlook](http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos114.htm#outlook)).

While career opportunities will exist for paralegals whether the economy is good or bad, the recent economic instability is a reminder that while you may go to work every day and do an excellent job, there is no guarantee you will be employed tomorrow.

What lessons did 2009 teach us? Pay attention...accept responsibility...take initiative.

It is ultimately your responsibility to monitor your career, to watch for trends that might affect your profession, and to take steps to keep up with those trends.

Here are some ideas for you:

Pay attention to practice trends and observe geographic changes. Be sensitive to shifting trends and recognize which practice areas are in high demand so that you know which to avoid or to move toward. For instance, real estate and mergers and acquisitions saw a huge decline in 2009 while opportunities in bankruptcy, litigation and family law grew.

As you observe these trends, take steps to update your skills so you can transition your practice area to one that is on the upswing if necessary. You can do this by asking for work in the busier area and gradually switching to that work. You may also volunteer to do some *pro bono* work in the new area. While you may have to do this on your

own time, it is an investment in your future that could pay off in a big way.

Shifting trends tend to occur geographically. For instance, intellectual property may be hot in one state, while family law is the place to be in another. If your specialty is family law and there is little family law business where you work, you will either have to change locations or change practice areas. Your goal should be to always be in a position to work where the business is.

**Become an expert in more than one area.** Even if your current area of expertise is not threatened with a slow down—or extinction—it may no longer be feasible for you to focus only on one practice area. Technology has allowed the practice of law to



streamline the work paralegals do to the point that there may not be enough work in a single practice area. More work is being done online “virtually” and more communication is done electronically. Further, you may have to support more than one attorney, with each practicing in a different area of the law.

**Be the paralegal your employer would not want to get along without.** Are you the one who knows how to run the billing system or do other work critical to the firm? Are you the paralegal who has the e-discovery procedure down pat? Perhaps you know the firm’s tech system inside and out. Some of this may not be strictly ‘paralegal’ in nature, but it is valuable to the firm and may ensure your job stability. It is crucial that your value is clear because your work decreases costs and/or increases revenue.

It is imperative that you be the paralegal who takes initiative and doesn’t wait for the work to come your way. Be the one who points out articles of interest and new court procedures to the attorneys. Keep your ear to the ground. What are people saying? What are the conversations on the forums? What programs are being offered at seminars and conventions? Remember that the goal of seminar coordinators is to offer programs about the latest and greatest topics to their attendees. These topics could be the next hot practice areas. Even if they do not work for you now, they might some day.

**Cultivate your connections.** The key to future opportunities often lies in your networking relationships. Networking is a critical component at any point in your career, but even more so in this challenging economic climate. It is also a source of power and career independence.

While it is always a plus to have friends in high places, it is ultimately best to have many friends in many places. These are the people you can turn to for advice and for information. Develop and multiply your connections through social networking sites (eg: Twitter™, Facebook™, LinkedIn™), participation in forums and attending local and national educational events. Much networking is also done through membership in professional associations.

If networking does not come naturally to you, begin slowly with people with whom you have an established relationship, or those you have helped in the past. Then expand from that base. Remember that some contacts may be more valuable than others, but no contact is unimportant—nurture every single one. Also, networking relationships should be mutually beneficial, so be prepared to give at least as much as you get.

**Take advantage of resources.** There are many resources you can use to monitor and prepare for changing trends. These include NALA and the American Bar Association, as well as some legal vendors who offer training opportunities. You may also seek additional education or sit for a certification examination.

There are many books that can help with defining and developing your career. Read periodicals published in your area of expertise and those areas to which you might be interested in moving. Attend conferences and presentations. If they offer any kind of career counseling, be sure to take advantage of that. Do everything

you can to strengthen your skills, increase your marketability and, at the same time, fulfill your personal goals.

The Internet is also an excellent resource. Many sites are helpful measures of the market in any given geographic area.

**Always swim downstream—don’t fight the current.** You can be as stubborn as you want, but that will do you no good if the work you are doing has gone the way of the dinosaurs. Follow the current—you must keep up with new technology and new practice areas. Litigation support and e-discovery were unheard of as practice areas only a few years ago, but paralegals in those positions are highly sought after today.

Do not let your sense of security stop your career progress. No one should plan on security and the *status quo*. Moving out of your comfort zone and making a change, even a voluntary change, can be stressful, but the results of progress are almost always unforeseeable. It is tempting to remain in a predictable situation, even if less than ideal, than to step into an unclear and uncertain future. It is never easy to let go of the familiar and to be enveloped by that grey area of learning something new, but this process is a necessary part of professional growth and you will move through it. The end result will be worth the discomfort.

**Always be thinking about what you really want to do.** Your career is a life journey. Are you where you want to be? Are you doing what you want to do? If not, then you need to make some lifestyle changes. Clarifying your goals will be a guide for your career.

It is common sense that reflecting on the past will help you plan for the future and, perhaps avoid being the victim of unexpected changes. Mark Twain advised that planning for the future made sense because that’s where you will spend the rest of your life.

There are solid opportunities in the paralegal career field, but those opportunities only come to those who put in concerted, methodical, and strategic efforts. In the end, where you go depends entirely upon the amount of energy, determination and decision-making you are prepared to apply to your career.

Vicki Voisin, ACP, is a nationally recognized author and speaker on issues related to ethics and the paralegal profession, and is the creator and presenter of *EthicsBasics*®, a program designed to raise awareness of ethical concerns by legal professionals and corporate employees. She also publishes a weekly e-zine titled *Paralegal Strategies*, and co-hosts *The Paralegal Voice*, a monthly podcast produced by Legal Talk Network. She has been a paralegal more than 20 years and is currently employed by Running Wise & Ford, PLC, in the firm’s Charlevoix, MI, offices. She is a past president of NALA, received the Association’s President’s Award in 2003, and formerly served on NALA’s Advanced Certification Board.



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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**July 1, 2010**

Fall NCCP Exam registration deadline

**July 14-17, 2010**

NALA Annual Conference in Jacksonville, FL

**July 23-24, 2010**

CLA/CP Exam

**September 11-12, 2010**

NCPA's Mid-Year Seminar and Review Course in Asheville, NC

**October 1, 2010**

CLA/CP Exam Registration Deadline

**September 25, 2010**

NCCP Exam

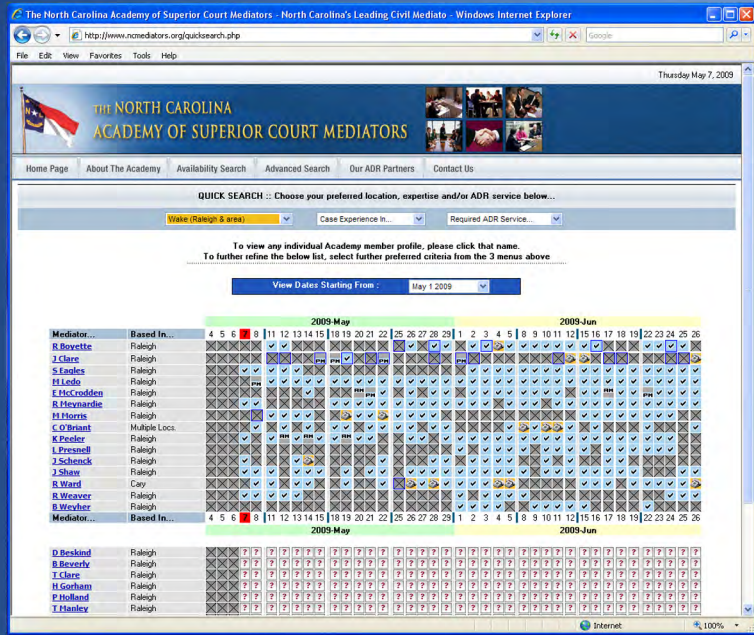
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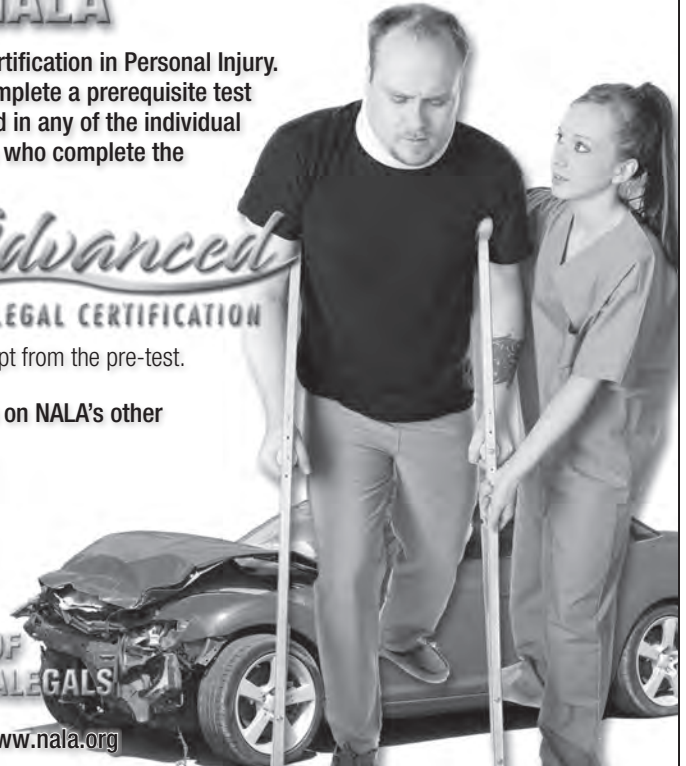
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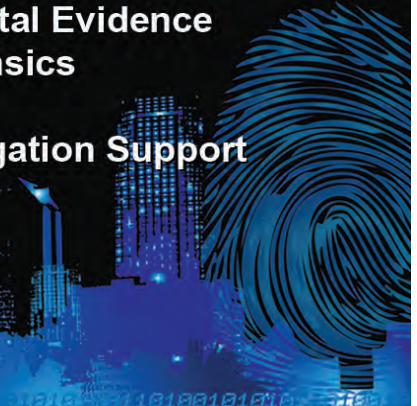
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*Members attending Lynne DeVenny's presentation on Worker's Compensation claims*

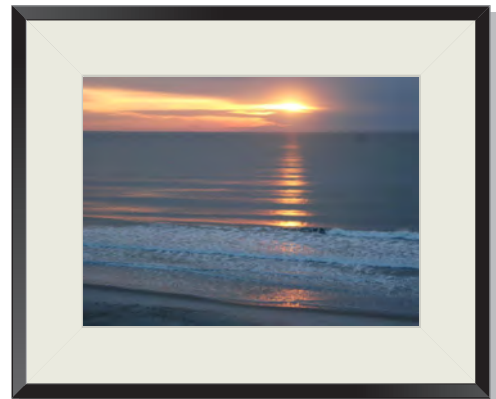


*The Honorable Ola M. Lewis discusses ethics with the membership*

# Annual Meeting 2010



*Patti Clapper, ACP, NCCP and Karen England, NCCP*



*See you all next year!*

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Julie B. Tomlin, CP  
Raleigh, NC

Charlotte A. Ward, CP  
Durham, NC

Debbie Sawyer, ACP  
Raleigh, NC

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Raleigh, NC

Elizabeth R. Kirkman, CP  
Greensboro, NC

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