



Summons

WDALA

An Association for Paralegals/
Legal Assistants

August
2024

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President's Message By Anna Heinen

Hello Members!

I hope everyone is enjoying their summer! These summer months seem to fly by and there never seems to be enough weekends to get all the events and activities in!

I want to take a minute and talk about getting involved. WDALA needs you! This organization isn't anything without its members and their input. Step up, Lend a hand, Volunteer! If you don't know where to start or even how involved your schedule allows you to be, let us know your strengths and interests and we can get you in touch with a committee, or Board position that you can benefit! All I ask is that you please try it!

The plans for the Fall Seminar & WDALA's 40th Anniversary celebration are complete and I am eagerly waiting for the events and to celebrate this amazing milestone with all of you! Just a reminder to mark your calendars, if you haven't already, for September 9th and 10th!



I have begun a Paralegal Outreach program through WDALA that I am excited to share with you! Please see the article referenced later in this newsletter!

As always, please let me know what WDALA can do better for you, its members, and its communities. Also, let me know how I can better assist you going forward - specific training sessions, one-on-one discussions, group gatherings, and/or volunteering options; as I am here to help in any way possible. Just reach out!

Thank you for continuing to participate and be involved with this organization! I look forward to seeing you all in September!



Hello! My name is Madie McPherson and I am originally from Bismarck, North Dakota. I graduated from the University of North Dakota in 2020 and currently work at Bormann, Myerchin, Espe-
seth & Edison, LLP as a Legal Assistant. I've been working in the legal field for around 4 years now and I love it! In my free time, I enjoy spending time with family, friends, my boyfriend, my cat, reading, writing, and occasionally playing piano. I am looking forward to being a part of WDALA!

WDALA

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fall Seminar

September 9-10, 2024

**40th Anniversary
Celebration**

September 9, 2024 at
5:00 p.m.

TO DO LIST



RSVP for WDALA's 40th Anniversary
Celebration by 8/15/24



Register for WDALA's Fall Seminar
by 8/23/24 (early bird rate)



Renew your WDALA Membership by
9/1/24



Apply for WDALA's Scholarship
Award by 9/1/24

NOTES:



A large, empty teal-colored rounded rectangle intended for taking notes.



Congratulations to Candy Schafer who received the 2024 NALA Affiliate Award at the NALA Conference in Louisville, Kentucky in July. WDALA nominated Candy for this award.

NALA's Affiliate Award recognizes members or committees of affiliated associations for their contribution to the goals and programs of their NALA affiliated Association.



Member Spotlight

Megan Ryan

How long have you been a member of WDA-LA?

Almost 2 years.

What do you like most about being a member of WDA-LA?

Meeting others in the profession.

What company do you work for?

Kalil Law Firm, PLLC.

What do you love most about your job?

I love that my job is always changing and keeps me on my toes constantly. No two days are ever alike!

What do you think is the most important skill that a successful professional needs to have?

I feel it is very important to always go into a situation unbiased and look at it from all perspectives.

What is the last TV show you binged watched?

Gilmore Girls.

If your pet could talk, what do you think they might say about you?

You stopped throwing the ball because?



Do you have any creative outlets or interests?

I love to sew and quilt.

If you had a month off to travel anywhere you desire, where would you go?

Europe.

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Don't put yourself in a box, because you never know what you will enjoy doing each day until you try.



Quilt made by Megan

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Website: www.wdala.org

Get to Know . . . Cheryl Nodarse, ACP, NALA President

What is your job title and which company do you work for?

I am an Advanced Certified Paralegal for the Vlahakis Cole Law Firm in East Lansing, Michigan.



What led you to this career and how did you get into your current field or position?

I took one Business Law course in my freshman year of college – at a time when I had declared for a “general business” major – and was totally hooked on the law and legal field. Once I learned about what a “legal assistant” was (the term “paralegal” was not being used much in Michigan as of the late 1980s), I was so convinced that it was the career path for me that I switched colleges to pursue it. I have continuously been a paralegal since January 1988. My current position came about as a result of an attorney retirement. He and I had worked together for over 20 years, and I recruited my current boss to join his firm as an associate straight out of law school. Alexis Vlahakis Cole and I then worked together for about two years prior to my old boss’s retirement in 2018, at which time she took over his practice. The transition was fairly seamless!

What inspired you to pursue the career you have today?

Seriously, it took just one Business Law class! Thankfully, it was taught by an excellent professor!

How long have you been a member of NALA and what do you like most about being a member?

Although I earned my NALA Certification way back in January 1990, I became a member in 2013. I have found the BEST part about being a member are the incredible people I’ve met as a result, several of whom are WDALA members!

How did you get involved with NALA’s Board?

I was lucky enough to have known Kelly LaGrave, ACP, prior NALA President, through our Michigan legal community. It was at her suggestion and with her encouragement that I first ran for and was elected to serve as what was then called a Region Director.

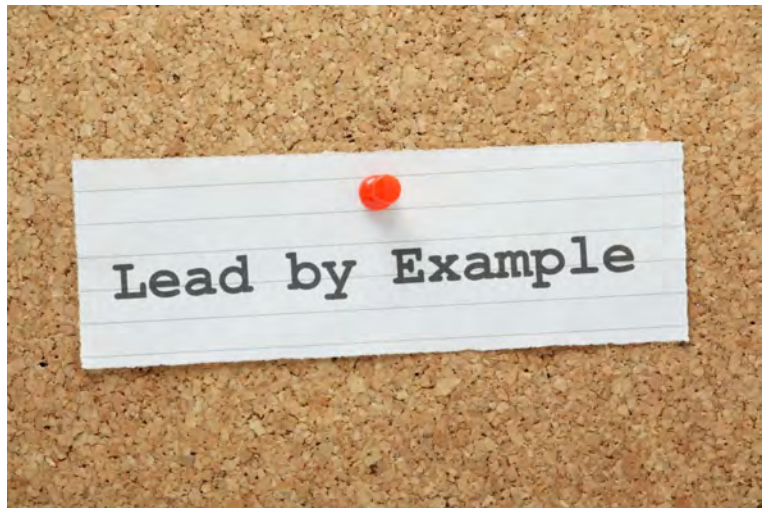
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What would you like to accomplish as NALA’s President?

For the past several years, I have worked to foster stronger relationships with paralegal educators and students, as I see both as being crucial to NALA’s future and continued success. I would also like to dedicate time and resources to serving our affiliated associations in new and varied ways.

What is your definition of a great leader?

I define a great leader as one who uplifts others around her, not only supporting but also amplifying their abilities and giving them their “time to shine.”



How would you describe your leadership style in three words?

Lead By Example – I never expect from others anything that I cannot expect to accomplish myself. I try to be realistic and respectful of other’s time and resources.

Who from NALA would you like to swap jobs with for a day?

I’ve often thought that Melissa Hamilton’s position with the North Dakota Attorney General’s Office sounds fascinating!

What piece of advice would you share with your younger self?

Don’t take everything so seriously. Kelly LaGrave, ACP, is famous for asking the question, “But did anyone die?!” when confronted with an issue that seems at first blush so very crushing. I think of her often when I’m hit with a challenge that might not have gone as well as I’d hoped.

What is the best thing about living in Saint Johns, Michigan?

St. Johns is a very small town with the typical small-town problems, but my family has roots in the community dating back to before the Civil War and it provided an excellent, safe space to raise our children. Also, the area is known for its mint farming, so much so that when it’s time for the harvest, the wonderful smell of peppermint permeates the area around the fields.

What game show do you think you have the best chance of winning?

While I'd love to say Jeopardy because I truly love trivia, I'm not enough of a brainiac to be successful there; however, I am fairly good at solving word puzzles, so I think I could hold my own on Wheel of Fortune if given the chance.

If your pet could talk, what do you think they might say about you?

"My mom LOVES working from home so that she can be with me every day!"

What's the best compliment you've received from someone?

My favorite compliment is when I'm told that I am a kind person. As corny as it may sound, I'm a firm believer that kindness matters.

If you could be famous for one thing, what would it be?

I've always wanted to be an author. Like many paralegals, I am an avid reader, and I would dearly love to have the skills to craft a beautiful, heartbreaking tale.

Where did you go on your last vacation?

I have just returned from a weeklong trip to the west coast of Florida. My husband and I have vacationed there often and are actively making plans to retire in the Sunshine State.

Cheryl Nodarse, ACP, is the President of NALA, with her term beginning on July 11th at NALA's 49th Annual Meeting in Louisville, Kentucky. Cheryl is a paralegal with Vlahakis Cole Law Firm in East Lansing, Michigan, specializing in municipal and real estate law. She graduated from Central Michigan University and from Lansing Community College's paralegal program. A NALA Certified Paralegal for 34 years, Cheryl has served on the NALA Board and its committees for the past 11 years, and previously served with the State Bar of Michigan Paralegal/Legal Assistant Section. She is a licensed realtor with Vlahakis Companies and a member of the Lansing Community College Paralegal Program Advisory Committee.



Cheryl and Tank

Paralegal to Law School - Round 2

By Michelle A. Kessler, RP

The law school saying is, “the first year they scare you to death, the second year they work you to death, and the third year they bore you to death” and so far, that could not be any truer. Year two is completed and what a whirlwind it was! Just when I thought life could not get any busier than during my first year of law school, the second year snuck up and said, “hold my beer and buckle up!”

The first year of law school focuses on foundational courses and core legal principles needed to prepare students for the Bar exam. Upon completion of the first year, students can find themselves at a critical juncture in their education. While students have their 1L courses selected for them, starting in the 2L year, students select their own courses. This freedom poses a choice between focusing on Bar tested classes and/or selecting more specialized courses which align with their desired career interest. Personally, I want to do criminal, juvenile, and family law within my own solo practice. I chose to tailor my education to align with those career goals by taking classes such as Family Law, Criminal Procedure, ICWA, and Law Practice Management.



With that said, my second semester was filled with writing courses, and I only had two in-person finals. A paralegal’s job is heavily focused on legal research and writing so this sounded like a dream come true with my previous 19-years of experience; however, it was more like a nightmare! Having multiple 25-page and 35-page writing projects was not as picturesque as it initially sounded. Further, I love to help and teach others, so I overextended myself (extremely self-inflicted) by adding other

things to my list like being an orientation leader and a teaching assistant (“TA”). I started the year serving as an Orientation Leader and Orientation TA for the incoming 1L class. That included greeting, mentoring, and grading 1L essay assignments during Orientation Week. On top of my classes, I continued being a TA for the 1L class in Civil Procedure and Lawyering Skills. Being a TA was very rewarding and allowed me to expand my network of legal professionals. Since I am fast-tracking law school, which involves higher credit semesters, the extra work was a lot to juggle on top of my courses because I was also still working remote for my attorneys in Bismarck; however, they did hire me an assistant to help with the workload (let’s be honest, that is every paralegal’s dream)!!

In addition to the coursework, TA duties, and work there are also other requirements students need to complete during their 2L year. Law students must begin the character and fitness investigation process by filing an application with the Board of Law Examiners by October 1st of their 2L year, or they risk incurring higher fees. Also, students typically take the Multistate Professional Responsibility Examination (“MPRE”) in their 2L year. Students must squeeze in time to study for the MPRE and obtain a passing score prior to passing the Bar exam. The MPRE is only offered a few times a year, so it is important to allow yourself enough time to be able to retake it if needed. These are all things which are compounded onto an already busy schedule.

One of the biggest challenges during my 2L year was managing the demands of being a single mother with the demands of school and work. As a woman and a mother, holding it down and keeping it together for your children while tending to school and work was a real struggle for me. This is where that strong support system, which I talked about in my first article, becomes imperative. I strongly believe you are only as good as the people you surround yourself with, which is why I keep my circle extremely small. Without these amazing people, like my assistant, my first two years of law school would have looked very different. In fact, there was a time I thought I would have to drop out of school due to family issues and my circle reminded me of why I was here to begin with. To those few people, you know who you are, thank you from the bottom of my heart.



Overall, my second year went well but without my paralegal background and the discipline that it instills, the year would have been much tougher. Just like my first article, if you are interested in pursuing law school, you are already trained to have the flexibility and adaptability to take that next step. Reach out to me and we can go into more detail on how you can begin your journey. If I can do it, so can you!

Editor’s Note: This is the second article in a series to be provided by Michelle as she describes her first-hand experience of completing law school each year as a paralegal.

Michelle is a Registered Paralegal at Robert Quick Law PLLC and Weinberger Law PLLC focusing mainly on criminal and juvenile law. She also has an extensive background in family law. In 2005, Michelle received a Bachelor of Science degree in Paralegal Studies with an emphasis in Criminal Litigation, Civil Litigation, and Probate/Tax/Real Estate from Minnesota State University- Moorhead. In 2018, she obtained her PACE Registered Paralegal certification through NFPA. Currently, she is obtaining her J.D. at the University of North Dakota School of Law.



NALACON 2024

By Ashley Miller, CP



NALA Conference 2024 was held July 11 – 13, 2024 in Louisville, KY. This was the second in-person conference I had attended, and it was so invigorating. It is a great opportunity to visit with paralegals from other states and learn about their associations and their states. I saw some familiar faces and had a great time reconnecting. I even met another North Dakota paralegal out of Fargo while riding the elevator down to an event.

The seminars NALA offered at this conference were top notch. My absolute favorites were: Improving Your Written Motion Practice and Writing Sentencing Memorandums – The Mitigating Factors. The presenter, Terry Hale, ACP, was extremely knowledgeable and provided so many great tools to use when writing. I’m excited to implement the information I absorbed into my own writing.

Another exciting CLE I attended was How to Color Within the Lines: Legal Ethics, ChatGPT, and Generative AI Technology. Attorney Mbilike Mwfulirwa stressed the importance of learning how to use AI Technology ethically and effectively in our professions. Paralegals are worried about AI taking our jobs. Attorney Mwfulirwa opined that it will be the paralegals who do not learn how to use these tools are the ones who will be phased out. The Keynote speaker, Iliana Oris Valiente, CPA, CA, was also focused on the importance of embracing and integrating AI into our jobs. She even introduced us to her cyber twin who she utilizes in her career.

The Affiliated Associations meeting was very exciting this year as two of our very own members were highlighted. Candy Schafer received the Affiliated Associations Award for all of the contributions she has made to our organization and profession over the years. I am also excited to announce Melissa Klimpel, ACP, was elected to be the Affiliated Associations Secretary for 2024 – 2025. We are fortunate to have such amazing leaders here in WDALA.





Attending the expo and the Affiliate Showcase was overwhelming but fun. The clever booths and amazing swag were an experience to be had. I again brought an entire bag full of goodies and office supplies home to my kids. Visiting the exhibitors and Affiliated Associations from all over the nation was one of my favorite parts. Okay, maybe it was having an actual horse and dog inside the hotel expo hall. Yes, a horse visited us inside the hotel and a service dog attended the conference along side us.

For Hank's Sake was the charity NALA sponsored this year. Hank is a rescue horse with a touching story. Donations to this organization help support horse rehabilitation and literacy programs for children and the community. Hank was a very good boy and his owner's trip was inspiring. Tammi Regan fractured her pelvis only

days prior to the conference and was barely discharged from the hospital before taking the stage in a wheelchair to talk about her organization. She even attended our Affiliated Associations Showcase to mingle with the attendees.

The add-on event offered after the conference was excellent! We were able to break into small groups and discuss our organizations and learn how to help them grow and succeed. The session facilitator, Shelley Cadamy, was brilliant and made the session a safe and comfortable space to freely ask questions. There are some amazing people doing great work in their local associations across the nation.

Over the years I have come to realize how beneficial it is to attend seminars and conferences in-person when feasible. Attending virtually is more cost effective and convenient, and you get the same CLE's. However, you miss out on making connections with your fellow members and other professionals in your field. I hope you all get a chance to attend a NALA Conference or our WDALA Fall Conference in-person someday. I know I have grown as a person and a professional by attending these events. NALACON 2024 was refreshing and inspiring!



2024 NALA Conference Recap

By Anna Heinen



On behalf of WDALA, I attended the 2024 NALA Conference in Louisville, KY, July 11-13th. Being in the presence of other paralegals with similar goals, and being reminded that you are a vital part of the legal field, is very uplifting. The conference offered numerous presenters on a wide array of topics. The presentations delivered amazing information and I acquired a great deal of new knowledge to incorporate into my repertoire.

The sessions I attended included the following:

- Tasers, Pepper Spray, and the Use of Force (Joseph Koenig)
- Mock Trial Competition: The Case of the Doped Derby (Lisa Leibow)
- Unlocking the Power of Pro Bono: Opportunities for Paralegals (Lisa Leibow)
- Don't Strike Out – Maintain Confidentiality and Privilege as Paralegals (Kaila Glaros & Kristine Custodio Suero)
- How to Color Within the Lines: Legal Ethics, ChatGPT, and Generative AI Technology (Mbilike Mwafurlirwa)
- Paralegal Roles in The Mediation and Arbitration (Morphy Andraws)

One standout presentation was the Mock Trial. I volunteered as the Defendant, Casey the Professional Horse Jockey, accused of giving my race horse Lightning Bolt performance enhancing drugs before a big race. My legal team and I had 20 minutes to go through the documents in the case and come up with a defense, witness questioning, and my testimony. If you weren't part of the legal team and witnesses you were the Jury (or animal rights protesters)! I was found Not Guilty without any deliberation! It was fun to get to work with others and really play into your character for the mock trial.

I want to thank WDALA for the continued support in my professional journey as a Paralegal!



Ashley Miller, CP and Anna Heinen

NALA Conference Photos



Melissa Hamilton, ACP - Contestant for the Derby Hat Contest



Melissa Hamilton, ACP with the service dog



Melissa Hamilton, ACP with Hank's Mom



Anna Heinen and Ashley Miller, CP with Hank of For Hank's Sake



NALA's Past Presidents: Kelly A. LaGrave, ACP (2014-16); Cassandra Oliver-Divens, ACP (2016-18); Jill I. Francisco, ACP (2018-20); Melissa J. Hamilton, ACP (2020-22); and Debra L. Overstreet, ACP (2022-24)

Bravery Backpacks

If you are interested in donating a backpack and/or any of the items needed for the Bravery Backpacks, you can bring your donations to the Fall Seminar on September 9th and 10th.

Items needed for ages 2-12



31:8 PROJECT BRAVERY BACKPACKS

31:8 Project is assisting law enforcement officers and emergency service providers to collect donations to help children in vulnerable situations who are in need of additional resources.

ITEMS NEEDED PER BACKPACK

- Backpack
- "When You Are Brave" book by Pat Zietlow Miller
- Toothbrush
- Toothpaste
- Pajamas (boys & girls) Ages 2-12
- Underwear (boys & girls) Ages 2-12
- Children's book
- Coloring book
- Crayons / Markers
- Blanket
- Stuffed Animal
- Slippers (boys & girls) Ages 2-12
- Socks (boys & girls) Ages 2-12
- Comb / Brush
- Stickers





DETAILS

Feel free to donate individual items, or a backpack containing all of the items listed above. For drop-off instructions or any questions, contact 31:8 Project.

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Items needed for ages 13-17



31:8 PROJECT BRAVERY BACKPACKS

13-17 YEARS OLD

31:8 Project is assisting law enforcement officers and emergency service providers to collect donations to help children in vulnerable situations who are in need of additional resources.

ITEMS NEEDED PER BACKPACK

- Backpack
- Toothbrush / Toothpaste
- Underwear / Boxers (boys & girls) Ages 13-17
- Socks (boys & girls) Ages 13-17
- Blanket
- Comb / Brush
- Hair Ties
- Reusable water bottle
- Deodorant (no aerosol)
- Tampons / Menstrual Kits (girls)
- Body Wipes
- Washcloth / Hand Towel
- Snacks
- Shampoo, Conditioner, Body Wash, Lotion (travel size)
- Journal / Sketchbook w/ Pens / Colored Pencils / Markers
- Gift Card(s) for fast food places

13-17
YEARS
OLD



DETAILS

Feel free to donate individual items, or a backpack containing all of the items listed above. For drop-off instructions or any questions, contact 31:8 Project.

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Paralegal/Legal Assistants Day in ND

By Ashley, Miller, CP



We are proud to report that Governor Doug Burgum declared June 27, 2024, Paralegal/Legal Assistants Day in our great state of North Dakota. WDALA members worked with the Governor's administration to draft and request the proclamation to be signed by Governor Doug Burgum. On June 26, 2024, WDALA members met and had their photos taken with Governor Burgum. WDALA members also had photos taken with the Attorney General Drew Wrigley and Chief Justice Jon Jensen. It was an honor to converse with these brilliant leaders of our state.



On June 26, 2024, Region III members had a luncheon at Stonehome Brewery to celebrate our contributions to the community and the legal profession.

Paralegal/Legal Assistants Day



Melissa Hamilton, ACP; Cassy Clark, CP; Anna Heinen; Governor Doug Burgum; Trisha Kinnischtzke; and Ashley Miller, CP



Melissa Hamilton, ACP; Cassy Clark, CP; Anna Heinen; ND Attorney General Drew Wrigley; Trisha Kinnischtzke; and Ashley Miller, CP



Melissa Hamilton, ACP; Cassy Clark, CP; Anna Heinen; Chief Justice Jon Jensen; Trisha Kinnischtzke; and Ashley Miller, CP



Cassy Clark, CP; Anna Heinen; Governor Doug Burgum; Trisha Kinnischtzke; Melissa Hamilton, ACP; and Ashley Miller, CP

WDALA's Paralegal Outreach Opportunities

By Anna Heinen

I am always looking for ways to get our Association name and our Paralegal profession out into the legal community. Since losing our Paralegal programs in North Dakota's Colleges and Universities, qualified paralegals are hard to find and WDALA has been struggling to increase membership.



I was informed that United Tribes Technical College (UTTC) had begun a Paralegal Studies program at their College, so I reached out to their Instructor Luke Turner and we visited about WDALA's collaboration within his program. He was very intrigued and I forwarded him our association information and I invited his Paralegal Students to our Fall Seminar.

I also reached out to The State Bar Association of North Dakota (SBAND) and spoke to Troy Weiler. I told him about our objective of bringing the Paralegal profession to light and I secured a presentation spot for the annual SBAND meeting in Fargo on June 13th! RRVPA President Miranda Hall, WDALA Liaison Ashley Miller, and I put together a presentation titled "The Utilization of Paralegals: Benefits to your work and practice." Ashley Miller was unable to present due to a family medical obligation but Miranda and I completed the entire 1.5 hours to speak on our profession and our Associations. From those in attendance, we had a lot of great questions regarding our job duties and client billing.

I want to continue to work annually with SBAND, whether it be hosting an exhibit during their annual meeting, presenting on more legal topics, and/or writing articles for their legal newsletter "The Gavel". I also hope to keep a great rapport with UTTC and their Paralegal program in whatever form that transitions in to!



I hope to continue to grow WDA-LA's Outreach and continue to apprise you all of the continued opportunities. If you are interested in our Outreach, please let me know as I would love your input and assistance!

Meeting

NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

The annual meeting of WDALA will be held at the ND Heritage Center, 612 East Boulevard Avenue, Bismarck, North Dakota, on Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 11:30 a.m. The purpose of the meeting is to elect officers, hear reports of officers and committee chairs, adopt a budget for the ensuing year, and hear other business which may come before the membership.

SLATE OF OFFICERS

Pursuant to Article XII of the Bylaws of WDALA, a slate of officers shall be presented to the membership thirty days prior to election. The following individuals have consented to have their names placed on the ballot for election of officers at the Annual Meeting of WDALA on September 10, 2024, at Bismarck, ND.

President	Anna Heinen
1 st Vice President	Melissa Hamilton, ACP
2 nd Vice President	Kathy Johnson, CP
Secretary	ReBecka Wohl, ACP
Treasurer	Cassy Clark, CP
NALA Liaison	Ashley Miller, CP

Nominations from the floor shall be accepted and election shall be by majority vote of the members present, either in person or by individual proxy. The term of service shall be one year or until their successors have been elected or appointed and qualified.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

August:

- 9 Dianne Taix
- 11 Bethany Unruh
- 18 Tera Skaar
- 27 Tami Hulm

September:

- 4 Candy Schafer
- 20 Jen Defoe

October:

- 9 Dehan Schwan



We asked . . . You answered

Which bucket list item do you most want to check off in the next 12 months?

- Travel to more places I haven't been!
- I've never experienced time fly by so quickly before working in the legal world. Twelve months seems to come and go before I know it and I suppose I need to calendar in my bucket list items if I want to seriously accomplish them. So... one item I want to check off is actually making a bucket list instead of just getting through the day!
- Skydiving.
- I've already crossed off a bucket list item in the last 12 months, which was being accepted as a member of WDALA! The next bucket list item would be obtaining legal assistant/paralegal certification.
- Family Trip to Tennessee: I would love to take my kids to visit where I grew up in Tennessee.
- Hmm, be retired and sitting on the beach?
- Take my family on a vacation that isn't just another trip to visit family.
- Girls Trip! Crossing this off in August!
- Take my kids to Disney World - I always wanted to go as a child and I know my kids have been dying to go.



If you could change one thing about your job, what would it be and why?

- The hours. I wish it had more flexibility so I could get more things done outside of work at reasonable hours.
- If I could change something about my job it would probably be to have monthly meetings to discuss effective communication strategies with my team. We work with sensitive matters in the legal world and sometimes need to have difficult conversations with clients. It would be helpful to have thinking teams to discuss how to convey accurate information tactfully.
- To go completely electronic, no more hard files or paper! The files/paper sure does pile up fast and I prefer to be clutter free!!!
- The parking situation, especially during session. It is not so bad in the summer, but when it's -40 and the wind is blowing you are wiped out before you even start the day!
- Truthfully, I don't have a specific answer to this question. Maybe better attention to time management (i.e. towards the end of the day, if a legal assistant/paralegal has a known appointment and their attorney hands over a time-sensitive project due before EOD which could have been handed off to their legal assistant/paralegal sooner). I understand, stuff happens during the day but sometimes this last-minute rush can be easily avoided.
- Working at a small-town firm certainly keeps me on my toes! We cover such a wide range of legal areas—from probates to criminal defense, domestic issues to real estate, and even state's attorney matters. It's a lot to juggle, but I find it keeps things interesting. However, I do sometimes wish I could specialize more and focus solely on the legal aspects without getting pulled into bookkeeping and secretarial work. Despite the challenges, I can honestly say I'm never bored!
- I would like an office, so I don't have the distractions/interruptions from the other people and clients in the building.
- I would be able to work from the lake all summer long.
- I would love to be able to help litigate the order I write because I feel that by the time I have done the research, composed the order and everything in between I would like to feel like I would make a compelling case.



How do you handle a disgruntled client?

- If we have gone round and round without an end in sight I would ask my Attorney to handle!
- I handle a disgruntled client by listening to their concerns, taking note, and scheduling a call between them and my supervising attorney!
- It depends on the situation. If on the phone, I will try to de-escalate; explain the situation; apologize if necessary as I believe in taking responsibility for actions; if not my fault and they are yelling or cursing at me they get one warning to calm down and talk respectfully or I will end the conversation. If that doesn't work then they get transferred to my employer or I hang up on them. If in person, I put them in a conference room so that there isn't a "public" scene. Do pretty much everything as above. I do try to handle to the best of my ability before having to pull the boss in. If they are just upset about a certain event that isn't our fault and just need to vent, I will listen to them but calmly explain that they do need to lower their voice and be respectful. I will sympathize and be a listening ear. I will strategize and offer options of resolution. Fortunately, we have had very few upset clients over the years. Most of the upset individuals or ones who talk to us disrespectfully or either opposing sides or a potential client. We really do have an amazing clientele that treat us respectfully.
- I usually just let them vent, most disgruntled individuals just want someone to listen to them. I am lucky in my position that we have management's approval to terminate a call if the individual curses or gets nasty. Luckily I've not had to use that option much.
- I handle a disgruntled client, first, by indicating that since I am not an attorney, I cannot provide legal advice. However, I'll do my best to understand what I am able to help with, and if that help is not wanted and/or not enough, I indicate to the client that I cannot help anymore other than by scheduling a phone call or in-person meeting with their attorney.
- When it comes to our clients, I've found that relating to them and expressing empathy goes a long way. Understanding their situations and letting them know that I'm here to help can make a significant difference. (I think it would be great to have a do a session on de-escalation tactics to further support our clients during challenging times.)
- Remain calm and sympathetic to whatever it is they're upset about and LISTEN. Sometimes they just need to be heard.
- A lot of deep breaths and trying to speak calmly. I try to figure out if there is something they do not understand and the reasoning for them being disgruntled. From there, we can hopefully reach an understanding that makes the client feel better.
- When dealing with a disgruntled client I feel it is important to remain calm and understanding. This is a stressful time in their life and I want to be as compassionate and understanding as I can even though I probably cannot give them the answer they are looking for.



1st Vice President's Report

By Melissa Hamilton, ACP

By the time you read this issue of *The Summons* we will be full swing in back to school planning. How about you take a minute or two to plan for your ongoing paralegal education and join us at the WDALA Fall Seminar which will be held September 9-10, 2024, at the Heritage Center in Bismarck. If you have already registered, thank you, if not, what is holding you back? The line up of speakers covers a broad range of topics, there is something for everyone.

The seminar will start on September 9th with a Keynote Address by North Dakota Attorney General, Drew Wrigley, followed by a presentation from NALA President, Cheryl Nodarse, ACP. The morning will end with a presentation on Cybersecurity and Ethics by Blake Klinkner. Lunch will be on your own - there is a café in the Heritage Center and the Capitol Lunchroom is just across the street. The afternoon will start off with a presentation on Human Trafficking, followed by the 40th Anniversary Celebration starting at 5:00 p.m.

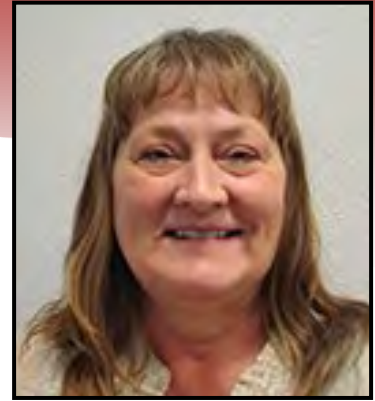
On September 10th, the seminar will start with a presentation on Empathic Strain/Burnout, by Mike Bolme followed by the WDALA Annual Meeting over lunch which is included in the seminar registration, but separate tickets can be purchased if you are unable to attend the seminar. The afternoon will cover Appellate Practice for Legal Assistants/Paralegals and Updates at the Supreme Court, including the new public portal presented by North Dakota Supreme Court Justice Doug Bahr, Justice Lisa Fair McEvers, and Petra Hulm, Clerk of the Supreme Court.

The Education Committee is also planning for next year and have already received a suggestion to have a presentation on bankruptcy. Yes, bankruptcy is a dry subject, but I think we all have had to dip our toes into the murky bankruptcy waters, reading bankruptcy petitions and schedules and trying to figure out what has actually been discharged and what has not. If you know of an attorney who could speak on this subject, please let me know. We are also planning to have a luncheon teleseminar in January/February, so if you have any ideas for topics for that, let me know.

It has been a pleasure to serve as WDALA's First Vice President and Education Chair for the 2023-2024 year. A special thanks to Education Committee members, Melissa Klimpel, ACP; Anna Heinen; Ashley Miller, CP; Megan Klym; and Stephanie Howe for their help and ideas. Their contributions helped WDALA reinstate the luncheon teleseminar, host a highly successful Spring Seminar, and secure a lineup of excellent speakers for the Fall Seminar. I hope that they all consider serving again next year. And WDALA members, here is my pitch for you – consider volunteering for a WDALA Committee, it is a great way to dip your toes in the volunteer pool, as well as get to know your fellow members better. Consider checking one of the boxes in the “I will volunteer for the following Committees” on the membership renewal form, you will not regret it!

2nd Vice President's Report

By Kathy Johnson



As of this date, our membership stands at 41 members: 34 Active, 1 Student, 1 Associate and 5 Emeritus.

We did have a new member for June, 2024. We welcome Madison McPherson as an Associate member. Welcome Madison!

Also, I would like to remind everyone that it is that time of year again for renewing your membership for 2024-2025. A renewal form is attached to the SUMMONS.

If anyone needs to contact me or has any questions regarding membership, you can email me at kjohnson@ndcourts.gov.



Treasurer's Report

By Cassy Clark, CP

Greetings WDALA Members!

I am pleased to announce that as of July 27, 2024, our association's bank account balance is a healthy \$10,657.48. Our legal community and your dedication & support are invaluable in ensuring our financial wellbeing. Thank you for being a crucial part of our association's prosperity.



NALA Liaison's Report

By Ashley Miller, CP

NALA Conference and Expo 2024 was held July 11-13, 2024 in Louisville, Kentucky. Congratulations to Candy Schafer as she is was a recipient of the 2024 Affiliate Award! Candy was nominated for this award by our association for her many contributions to our organization over the years.

Members don't forget your \$80 credit can be used towards these CLE opportunities. The annual conference has a virtual attendance option if you're unable to attend in person. If you do not want to attend the entire conference, you are able to register for any day of your choosing. For those of you who are studying for the CP exam, NALA has a new webinar to help you prepare for the skills portion of the CP exam. It is the IRAC method by Leanne the Lawyer. If you are studying for the exam, please watch this presentation on YouTube. I watched this several times prior to sitting for the exam and it absolutely helped me succeed. If you have any questions about the CP exam, please reach out.

Thank you, WDALA, for electing me to be your NALA liaison for this past year. It has been an honor serving you all in this position and representing our association at the conference as our liaison. I'm looking forward to attending the next conference on July 10-12, 2025 at Harrah's Resort in Atlantic City, New Jersey.

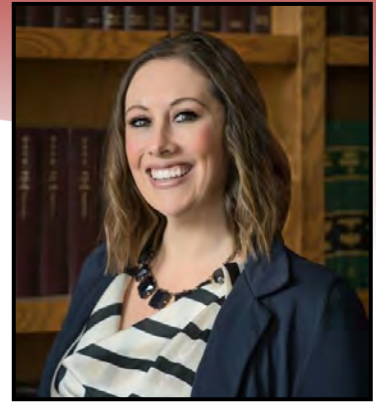
FOLLOW NALA:

Facebook: [NALA - The Paralegal Association](#)

Website: www.nala.org

Region III Report

By Trisha Kinnischtzke



Region III hosted the 13th annual Drug Court Picnic on July 24th at Sertoma Park in Bismarck. About 50 people attended the picnic which included the Drug Court participants and their families, the Drug Court staff, Justices and Judges, and Region III WDALA members.

A special thank you to the following Region III members and local businesses who donated money, food, time, etc.:

Nicki Behm

Cassy Clark,CP

Dickson Law Office

Laurie Guenther, ACP

Melissa Hamilton, ACP

Anna Heinen

Judge Carol Ronning Kapsner

Trisha Kinnischtzke

Melissa Klimpel, ACP

Megan Klym

Vicki Kunz

Ashley Miller, CP

Candy Schafer

Super Slide Amusement Park



13th annual Drug Court Picnic: Anna Heinen, Ashley Miller, Cassy Clark, Trisha Kinnischtzke, Laurie Guenther, Melissa Klimpel, Melissa Hamilton, and Candy Schafer

Governor Doug Burgum declared Thursday, June 27, 2024 Legal Assistant/Paralegal Day. Some of the WDALA board members were able to take pictures with Governor Burgum, Chief Justice Jensen, and Attorney General Wrigley to commemorate the occasion.

Following pictures, several Region III members were able to partake in a celebratory lunch at Stonehome Brewing Company.



Melissa Hamilton, Bonnie Banks, Melissa Klimpel, Candy Schafer, Laurie Guenther, Ashley Miller, Anna Heinen, and Trisha Kinnischtzke



Melissa Hamilton, Bonnie Banks, Melissa Klimpel, Anna Heinen, Candy Schafer, Laurie Guenther, Ashley Miller, and Trisha Kinnischtzke

The 2024 WDALA Fall Seminar will be held September 9-10 at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck. WDALA's 40th Anniversary Celebration will take place on Monday, September 9, beginning at 5:00 p.m. in the Northern Lights Atrium in the Heritage Center.

Region III will resume monthly luncheons in September at A&B Pizza South, after taking a break over the summer. Please join us - we'd love to see more faces!

Officers/Executive Committee and Board of Directors



President
Anna Heinen



1st Vice President
Melissa Hamilton, ACP



2nd Vice President
Kathy Johnson, CP



Secretary
ReBecka Wohl, ACP



Treasurer
Cassy Clark, CP



NALA Liaison
Ashley Miller, CP



Parliamentarian &
Region I Co-Director
Holly Radke, ACP



Region I Co-Director
Anna Oleksik, CP



Region II Director
Andrea Johnson



Region III Director
Trisha Kinnischtzke

WDALA's Committees

Education

Melissa Hamilton, ACP (Chair); Stephanie Howe; Anna Heinen; Ashley Miller, CP; Jen Defoe, ACP; Megan Klym; and Melissa Klimpel, ACP

Membership

Kathy Johnson, CP (Chair); ReBecka Wohl, ACP; and Andrea Johnson

Finance/Budget

Cassy Clark, CP (Chair)

CLA Chairman

Ashley Miller, CP

Nominations/Elections

Andrea Johnson and Melissa Klimpel, ACP

Legal Assistant Day

Megan Ontis and Ashley Miller, CP

Auditing

Holly Radke, ACP

Ethics/Professional Development

Melissa Hamilton, ACP

State Bar/NDTLA Liaison

Ashley Miller, CP

Historian

Laurie Guenther, ACP

Student Liaison

Ashley Miller, CP

Public Relations

Melissa Klimpel, ACP (*Summons* Editor); Anna Heinen (Website/Facebook); Tami Hulm, ACP; Laurie Guenther, ACP; Candy Schafer, CLA; Andrea Johnson; and ReBecka Wohl, ACP

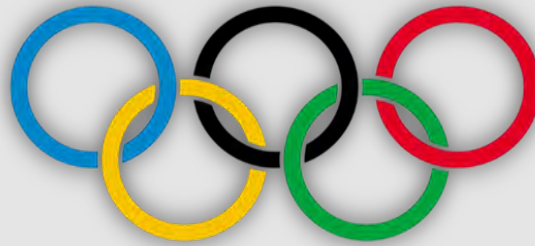
Sponsorship

Anna Heinen; Kimberly Perkuhn; and Dehan Schwan

40th Anniversary

Melissa Klimpel, ACP (Chair); Trisha Kin-nischtzke; Candy Schafer; ReBecka Wohl, ACP; and Laurie Guenther, ACP

WDALA SPONSORS



WDALA gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors for their generous support throughout 2024.

Olympic Level

Revive Law Group • Mandan

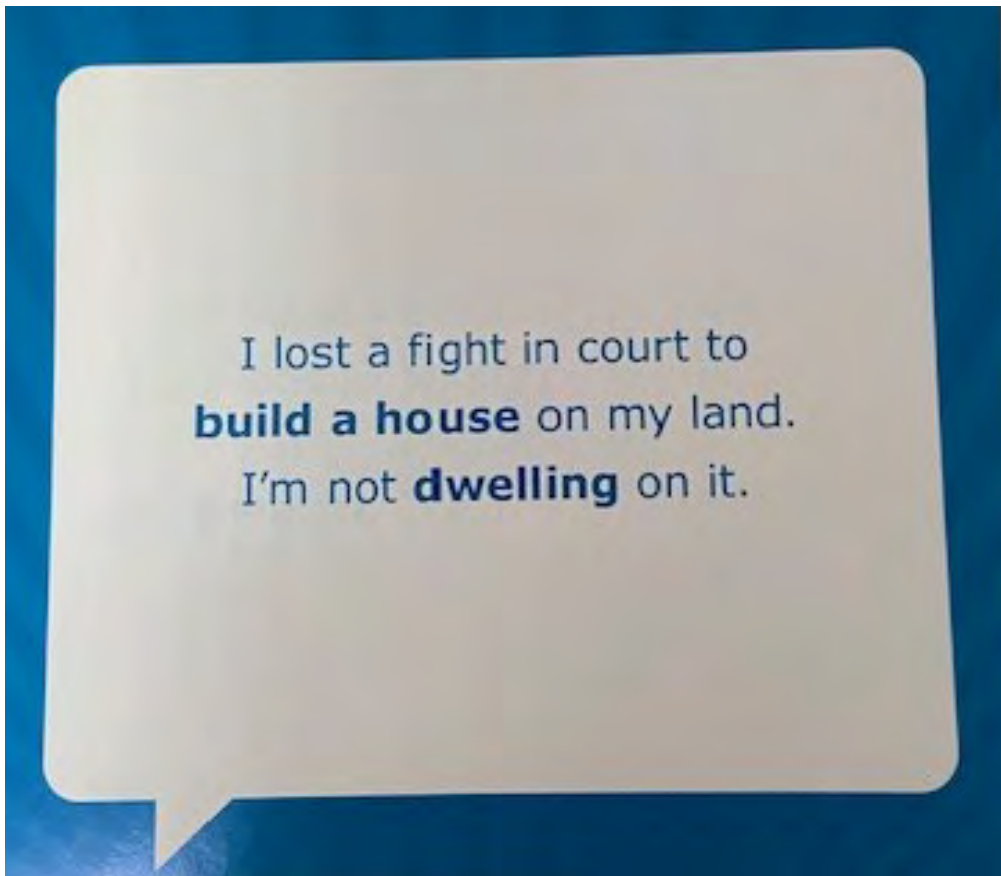
Gold Level

Lori Hauge • Williston
Kalil Law Firm PLLC • Williston
Mulloy Law PLLC • Bismarck

Silver Level

Crowley Fleck PLLP • Bismarck
McGee Hankla & Backes • Minot
Vinje Law Firm • Bismarck
Wheeler Wolf LLP • Bismarck

Olympic Level: \$500 Gold Level: \$250 Silver Level: \$100 Bronze Level: \$50



MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL AND DIRECTORY INFORMATION

September 2024 to September 2025

NAME: _____ HOME PHONE: _____

HOME ADDRESS: _____

FIRM NAME _____

FIRM ADDRESS: _____

OFFICE PHONE: _____ FAX NO: _____

E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____ DOB: Month _____ Day _____

AREAS OF EXPERTISE: _____

CLA ___ CP ___ ACP ___ Area of ACP _____

NALA Member: ___Y ___N

Current WDALA Membership Status: ___ Active ___ Associate ___ Sustaining ___ Student
___ Emeritus Status – Request Form attached

I will volunteer for the following Committees:

- Audit
- Education
- Ethics/Professional Development
- Historian
- Legal Assistant Day
- Library
- Nominations & Elections
- State Bar/NDTLA Liaison
- Student Liaison
- Public Relations

Please return this form with your check for annual dues made payable to WESTERN DAKOTA ASSOCIATION OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS. Renewals are due and payable by *September 1, 2024*. (Any dues not received by October 1st will require a \$10.00 reinstatement fee).

Active Member	--	\$50.00 (includes WDALA Directory)
Associate Member	--	\$45.00
Sustaining Member	--	\$45.00
Student Member	--	\$25.00

Send to: WDALA
PO Box 371
Bismarck, ND 58502-0371

All listings in the WDALA Directory will be with your office address unless otherwise specified.

****Students – Please Note****

If you are a student changing your membership status to Active, please submit either of the following along with your dues: 1) a transcript from your school; or 2) your attorney's signature on the attestation portion of the Membership Application.

WDALA EMERITUS STATUS REQUEST

For at least ten (10) years and within the last twelve (12) years prior to this request for “Emeritus” status, I was an active member of the Western Dakota Association of Legal Assistants. I no longer work as a paralegal/legal assistant and request “Emeritus” status based on the following circumstance:

_____ I am 55 years of age or older and am no longer employed as a paralegal/legal assistant.

_____ I am permanently disabled and no longer am employed as a paralegal/legal assistant.
I have attached medical proof of my disability for approval by the Board.

_____ I have submitted and been granted Emeritus status with the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA). Proof is attached.

I understand if I return to employment as a paralegal/legal assistant I will no longer retain Emeritus status and will be required to meet the same requirements as all other active members by satisfying the requirements and submitting the current active membership application.

I understand I am not eligible to vote or hold office. I understand I am not required to pay dues as an Emeritus member. I understand I may participate in committee work, continue to receive the association newsletter and attend educational seminars at the same cost as an active member.

Dated: _____

(Signature)

(Printed Name)