

ASSOCIATION *Spotlight*

Discover how CALA is navigating a powerful growth journey under the inspiring leadership of President Ernalene Rex, CP, SCCP.

The Charleston Association of Legal Assistants (CALA) is the 2024 recipient of the brand-new NALA Affiliated Association of the Year Award. They received the award in recognition of their efforts to further the paralegal profession through professional development and volunteer service. Their NALA Liaison, Kerrie Specht, ACP, SCCP, accepted the award on behalf of the association at the 2024 NALA Conference & Expo in Louisville, Kentucky, in July.



CALA was founded in 1982. For over 40 years, the association has been dedicated to the promotion of legal excellence in the paralegal profession throughout Charleston and the surrounding areas. CALA joined NALA as an affiliate in 1996.

With 46 members and 12 corporate sponsors, CALA is on a growth journey. Their president, Ernalene Rex, CP, SCCP, is optimistic about the association's future. She started serving CALA as the Vice President and NALA Liaison in January 2023.

"We are constantly working hard to get exposure by utilizing the tools available to us, such as social media, our website, and newsletters," she shared.

Ernalene's predecessor is Nicole Rittmaier, who led CALA for four years.

"I do not think CALA would be thriving today without her leadership and mentorship," Ernalene acknowledged.

CALA invests in the professional development of its members by offering at least two continuing legal education (CLE) hours each quarter during Lunch & Learns. They also hold an

Educational Seminar where attendees can earn up to six CLE hours. All of their CLE hours are pre-approved by NALA. One way CALA engages its members is through social networking events. They hold at least one per quarter, and every member is invited to bring a guest. CALA typically provides drinks and snacks.

In addition to advancing the paralegal profession, CALA is dedicated to community service through volunteer opportunities. Every summer, CALA hosts a back-to-school backpack drive to donate backpacks to HALOS, an organization focused on helping kinship families.

In the spring, CALA holds a virtual fundraising event to help fight hunger. Proceeds are donated to the Lowcountry Food Bank (LCFB). They also participate in LCFB's annual Walk to Fight Hunger. The 2024 walk took place on September 22, and LCFB raised nearly \$75,000! The day before that, Kerrie Specht, ACP, SCCP, coordinated a beach sweep, where CALA members came together to clean up the marsh. In early December, CALA holds a Toys for Tots Toy Drive during their annual holiday party, where each member can bring a guest.

Ernalene believes that openness, flexibility, and networking are essential to success. There are two additional elements she credits for CALA's success.

"Every successful association should have are teamwork and communication. These two work hand-in-hand to ensure success in everything we do."

