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LAPA OCTOBER CONFERENCE RECAP



The Biggest Event of the Year— Finally Here!

by Mariejo Plaganas

As we wrap up another exciting year, let's take a moment to reflect on the incredible time we had at the 48th LAPA October Conference. Attorneys, paralegals, and legal professionals were buzzing bright and early at the Omni Hotel located in Downtown Los Angeles on a cloudy morning of Saturday, October 19, 2024. According to our President— attendees from as far as Texas flew in— and they were in for a treat as LAPA hosts one of most diverse legal sessions offered to enhance their professional development, and navigating one's career. It was a whirlwind of networking and strengthening our relationships with each other, which was a lot of fun!

The Annual October Conference kicked things off with our continental breakfast and an exhibitor meet and greet. This provided an opportunity to connect with

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Honoring Veterans in November: The Value of Hiring Heroes

by Jonathan Dang – LAPA President

November is a month of gratitude and remembrance. As we gather with loved ones for Thanksgiving, it's also a time to honor the brave men and women who have served our country. Veterans Day celebrated on November 11th, is a poignant reminder of the sacrifices and contributions of military personnel. Beyond the ceremonies and parades, one of the most meaningful ways we can honor our veterans is by recognizing their immense value in the workplace.

Employers should hire Veterans for a multitude of reasons. Unparalleled skills and training bring a wealth of skillsets honed through rigorous training and real-world experience. Veterans are often highly trained in technology, leadership, military occupations, and many other areas directly transferable to civilian jobs. Their ability to perform under pressure, adaptability to

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legal vendors and sponsors, learn about the latest tools, services, and insights about what's new in the field.

OPENING REMARKS AND ETHICS SESSION

Following the warm welcome from the President and Vice President, attendees moved into the general ethics session led by Bianco Falcon, Esq. Her presentation focused on the crucial role of ethics in legal practice and even provided various engaging legal scenarios and case studies. Falcon elaborated further on ethical dilemmas and how to navigate these tough situations with integrity and professionalism.

MORNING BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

Attendees had a wide-range of morning break-out sessions to attend, from e-Discovery to Children's Court law. LAPA ensured there was something for students, new paralegals and the seasoned veterans.

- e-Discovery with Don Swanson and Karen Wagshul, Esq, gave their presentation that highlighted tools that, when used effectively, aided and ensured every paralegal's status as invaluable assets to their work teams! This was a talk fantastic for litigation paralegals looking for ways to diversify their skillsets.

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LAPA REPORTER

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Articles and news items should be directed to LAPA at editor@lapa.org. Inquiries about making a submission should be directed to LAPA at info@lapa.org.

Inquiries about advertising placement, applications, membership materials and address changes should be directed to LAPA at admin@lapa.org.

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- Children's Court Law, presented by Dennis Smeal, Esq. Ana Stanstell, and Emily Berger, was an overview of Dependency Law and its role in the child welfare system, family separation, and how legal professionals can help save families. A great look into the legal framework and challenges surround children's rights and family court proceedings.
- Litigation, led by Adesh Singh, Esq. covered the essentials and intricacies of discovery in California Law. An organized slideshow to match his practical no-nonsense approach to all stages of the litigation process. I personally attended this talk and enjoyed the talk as it was refresher- but from the perspective of a former paralegal-turned-attorney.
- Probate was covered by Justin A. Shiau, Esq. offering an overview of the Probate process, which focused on key phases of this area of law and how to avoid the cost process with our government.
- Resume Writing/Interviewing Skills was an insightful workshop, which helped attendees gain confidence in resume writing and interviewing. Led by Tracey Perkins from Round Hill Search, this was a great hour for those looking to change their careers or break into the profession.

LUNCH AND KEYNOTE SPEAKER

After the morning break-out sessions, attendees had another opportunity to visit the exhibitors and sponsors before lunch with inspiring keynote speakers the Honorable Judge Steven T. Morgan and Staff Sergeant TiJuana L. Wortham. Judge Morgan's presentation focused on the attorney and paralegal interaction in the Army Reserve JAGS Corp. Staff Sergeant Wortham flew in from Northern California

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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

NOVEMBER

- 5- **MCLE: CA Employment Law 101** – Online via Zoom; 12:00-1:00 PM; Go to <https://www.lapa.org/event-5929619> for updates, more information & to register.
- 6- **LAPA Executive Board Meeting** – Conf. Call; Contact Jonathan Dang at president@lapa.org.
- 13 - **LAPA Board Meeting** – Contact Jonathan Dang at president@lapa.org.

DECEMBER

- 4- **LAPA Executive Board Meeting** – Conf. Call; Contact Jonathan Dang at president@lapa.org.
- 11 - **LAPA Board Meeting** – Contact Jonathan Dang at president@lapa.org.

LAPA OCTOBER CONFERENCE RECAP - *cont. from page 2*

and shared her journey to Chief Paralegal with the 75th Legal operations Detachment in Mountain View, California.

AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS

Following the keynote speakers, LAPA presented awards recognizing the contributions and achievements of individuals within the legal community. Scholarship was awarded to promising paralegal students, and Lifetime Achievement Award celebrated a distinguished career in the field of law.

- **Lifetime Achievement Award** went to Terri Rasay Walters.
- **Maria-Teresa-Bravo Award** went to Mariejo Plaganas.
- **Volunteer of the Award** went to Martha Izquierdo.
- **Scholarship Recipient** went to Madison Menard.

AFTERNOON BREAK-OUT SESSIONS

The afternoon break-out sessions continued with more specialized topics:

- **AI IN LAW**, led by Mark Ress, MNLP, MHT, and Justin A. Shiau, Esq., explored the implications of Artificial Intelligence on the paralegal profession and the legal profession as a whole— including how freelance paraprofessional can utilize this new tool for their own practice.
- **EMPLOYMENT LAW** with Olga Pena, Esq., provided the overview and updates to all things relating to employment law.
- **LITIGATION**, presented by Courtney R. Arbucci, Esq., gave an engaging session on the significance of each legal team member’s role for trial and trial preparation for effective litigation. Her personal trial stories highlighted how she valued her trial support team, which made for a delightful hour.
- **CALIFORNIA PRODUCTION SUMMARY** (Subpoenas), delivered by Ahmad Zeki, J.D., reviewed an overview of handling subpoenas and



producing documents that included providing structure, procedure, and citing state rules.

- **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT** was perfected for those interested in certification, as Ivan Zogovic, ACP presented a session on how to prepare for NALA’s Certified Paralegal (CP) exam.

FINAL GENERAL SESSIONS ON ETHICS

The day concluded with a second general ethics session, led by Robert L. Kehr, Esq. and Joel Osman, Esq. This session emphasized the ethical issues and concerns of Artificial Intelligence in the legal profession. Overall, the main takeaway with this new technology is to remember that at the end of the day, it is the paralegal’s duty to ensure they are using this tool compliant with state and federal law.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

With old faces and new, the October Conference is a great pitstop before the end of the year to express our gratitude to the legal community and everyone that attended, volunteered, and made this year’s event a success! In addition to that, LAPA’s commitment to develop, strengthen, and advance the paralegal profession with an emphasis on further education

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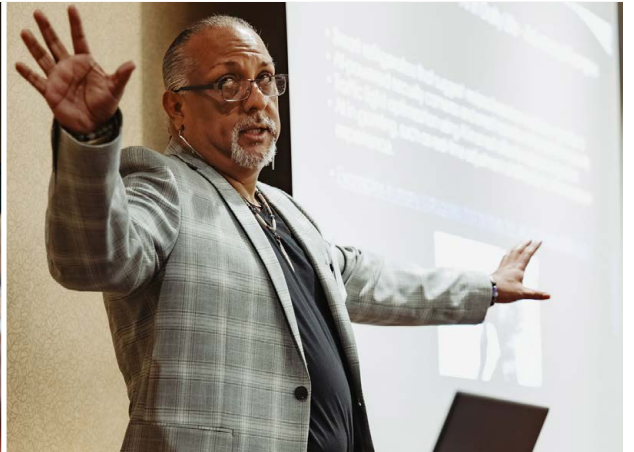
and career enhancement is most felt at in-person conferences such as these with attendees such as yourself. I hope everyone left inspired, as I sure did— and learned something new. It was lovely to reconnect, while knocking out some MCLE credits and investing in our careers. Thank you to everyone that attended and said hi! And if you're wondering if you should attend next time, I most certainly think you should! Don't be a stranger and come out and

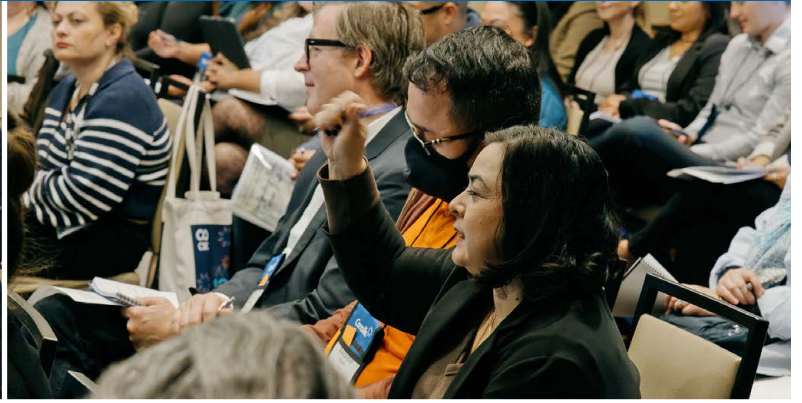
say hi to me at least. I would love to show the ropes around and make this community a second home. Hope to see you at our next LAPA event.

Mariejo Plaganas is a Litigation Paralegal at Yoka | Smith, LLP. Prior to receiving her paralegal certificate, she received her B.S. in Environmental Toxicology and has published authorship from her undergraduate research featured on PubMed and Environmental Science & Technology. Besides her LAPA Newsletter involvement, Mariejo enjoys going to the gym, visiting museums, and playing beach volleyball. 🏖️



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AI Lessons I Learned at the Educational Conferences

by Nicole Davis, ACP

On September 21 and October 19, 2024, I had the pleasure of attending both the Orange and Los Angeles County Paralegal Educational Conferences. The hot topic at both conferences was Artificial Intelligence, also known as Generative AI. Below is a list of the top lessons I learned.

LESSON #1:

We have been using AI for a long time in our daily lives

The general sentiment from the attendees (and

attorneys) is the fear of using “new technology.” Personally, I agree with them. I don’t like using new technology unless I need to. However, the reality is that we have been using AI for years if not decades. The autocorrect feature on cell phones or streaming services are all examples of AI that is already in our daily lives.

LESSON #2:

To stay relevant in the legal field, you need to know Generative AI

Generative AI is here to stay, therefore, a paralegal should have a working knowledge of it. A website I was introduced to was www.POE.com. Poe is a great resource for many reasons. One it can help the paralegal learn how to prompt. To use Generative AI you need to tell it what to do by prompting it. When you prompt using POE you will see the results in Realtime. Two POE uses all popular Generative AI sources. If you are new to Generative AI, this is a good

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PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE - cont. from page 1

changing situations, and juggling multiple tasks are why Veterans should be priority candidates.

Leadership and teamwork are also a few valuable skills veterans possess. Veterans are accustomed to working in diverse teams, often in high-stress environments. This experience fosters a strong work ethic, discipline, and a collaborative spirit that can significantly enhance a company’s culture and performance.

Veterans are resilient and persevere during the most challenging times. This quality can be precious in the business world, where obstacles and setbacks are common. Their ability to stay focused and motivated in the face of adversity is a testament to their strength and dedication.

Veterans demonstrate commitment and each branch instills various core values which can be their guiding light in any organization. Veterans are trained to achieve high standards and continuously strive for improvement. This dedication to quality and continuous development can drive innovation and excellence within any organization.

Creating a veteran-friendly workplace involves more

than just hiring veterans. It requires understanding their unique needs and experiences and providing support to help them transition smoothly into civilian roles. This can include mentorship programs, veteran support groups, and tailored professional development opportunities.

As we celebrate Veterans Day this November, let’s go beyond the traditional tributes. By actively seeking to hire and support veterans, employers can tap into a rich pool of talent that brings invaluable skills, experiences, and qualities to the workplace. This not only honors their service but also strengthens our businesses and communities.

Hiring veterans is not just an act of patriotism; it’s a smart business decision that recognizes the incredible potential these individuals bring to the table. This November let’s commit to making our workplaces more inclusive and supportive of those who have served our country.

Jonathan Dang is currently a Paralegal with Freeman Mathis & Gary LLP. In his diverse career, he previously worked for a fortune 100 insurance company, private law firms, and the Los Angeles District Attorney’s Office. Jonathan Dang is also currently enlisted in the Marine Corps Reserves. Aside from LAPA, he also serves on the board of directors for the University of La Verne’s Legal Studies Program and Mt. San Antonio’s Paralegal Program.



A recurring column where we delve into unique experiences and insights of paralegals. We ask engaging, thought-provoking questions to a featured paralegal, offering a glimpse into their daily life and career.

Carissa Saucedo

Senior Paralegal & Director –
Legal Affairs at Beach Point

Capital Management LP

Describe a typical day for you as a paralegal. What are your most common tasks and how do you manage your time effectively?

As an in-house paralegal, my tasks shift on a daily basis, but my role at its core is rooted in corporate governance. The majority of my work falls under a few general topics: (i) preparation for board meetings, forming legal entities and drafting resolutions, (ii) regulatory and compliance matters, such as making certain mandated filings with state or federal agencies (e.g., submitting reporting for the recently enacted

Corporate Transparency Act) and (iii) managing recurring workflows for the legal department, this includes tracking and following up on the progress of standard agreements or the ongoing maintenance of our entity management system. For me, staying organized while managing competing priorities is, “how the sausage is made.”

What’s the first thing you do when you get to the office in the morning? How does it set the tone for your day?

As simple as it sounds, I always have my notebook with me and I keep an old fashioned written “To-Do” list which I review every morning to set the tone before I open my email inbox. While being a paralegal requires significant attention to detail, it can be easy to get stuck in the weeds. Maintaining a system to track and prioritize active workflows (my To-Do list) allows me to keep a macro view of the projects running through the department, while keeping an organized notebook on hand at all times allows me

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OCPA & LAPA CONFERENCE: AI RECAPS - cont. from page 7

introduction to ChatGBT, Claude, and Gemini. They are all different applications that work and complete your task in their way. Lastly, it will also tell you how much the cost will be using the popular Generative AI models. As we all know we need to add any relevant costs to the case. www.POE.com is a great resource to start learning how to use Generative AI.

LESSON #3:

Ethics do not change even though technology advances.

When using new technology, one needs to still exercise caution. There are ethical concerns that have already come up. For instance, when prompting using client information and details, this could violate attorney-client privilege because the AI application not only stores the information, but you are giving away private information to strangers. Another concern is using something generated by AI, but not double-checking it, and then filing it with the court. We all now know about the New York Lawyers who did just that. All of this could have been avoided if legal professionals used some caution when drafting using the new technology.

Below is a list of Ethical Guidelines from prominent sources regarding Generative AI:

- ABA Formal Opinion 512
- CLA Task Force on Artificial Intelligence
- State Bar COPRAC Practical Guide for Use of Generative AI in Practice of Law

LESSON #4:

Judges have begun making AI Policies, Law Firm need to do the same

To date, 22 judges have started to issue standing orders guiding the use of Generative AI in their courtrooms, Law Firm should follow suit. That being said using AI in Law firms is still new and not yet widely adopted in firms so Attorneys may not know the significance of the new technology. Paralegals can be at the forefront of these new protocols and help develop a policy that is in line with ethics standards.

In conclusion, Generative AI is here to stay. It is imperative for paralegals to know how to use it, exercise caution while using the new technology, and help their respective Law Firms set standards for the new technology.

Nicole Davis, ACP is a Freelance Litigation Paralegal that has worked in the industry for 8 years. She is a self-proclaimed law nerd that loves to study the law and help others advance their own career. 

to track important details, whether those include a follow up question, technical notes or action items from a call or a tip someone might mention offhand that's helpful down the road. When I review my list, I think about the priority order of each task and then I tackle my emails from there!

TECHNOLOGY AND TOOLS

How has technology changed your role as a paralegal? What tools or software do you find indispensable?

I've said it before and I'll say it again, entity management software is an indispensable tool, that allows one paralegal, well versed in the technology, to do the work of twenty. The software has grown in its capabilities in recent years to easily track and manipulate entity data, directorships, officer appointments and ownership information, and serves as a single source of truth for interdepartmental collaboration. Given the recent jumps in technological development utilizing AI, this technology will continue to build more impressive efficiencies for companies with large legal entity footprints and will increase the demand for paralegals that understand how to interact with these systems and maximize their value.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE

How do you balance the demands of your job with your personal life? Do you have any tips for maintaining a healthy work-life balance?

I love this question because I had enough work-life balance when I joined Beach Point that I was able to go back to school and obtain my Master of Studies in Law at USC Gould School of Law, while maintaining a full-time job. That said, it wasn't for the faint of heart. Staying regimented and disciplined about my professional and academic deadlines helped me maintain a healthy work-life balance.

What activities or hobbies do you engage in outside of work to unwind and de-stress?

While in my masters program, I decided to try Pilates to de-stress, and it set me on a journey that helped me in so many ways, but in particular, it helped me maintain my focus (and continues to do so)!

ADVICE FOR NEW PARALEGALS

What advice would you give to someone just starting

out as a paralegal? Is there something you wish you had known when you began your career?

We're all just putting one foot in front of the other to figure out our paths and what interests us most. That means, it's ok to start out in one area and with some experience, expand into another or specialize in one. The most important part is to start, and then keep it going. Also, practically speaking, understanding the difference between becoming a certificated paralegal and a certified paralegal (such as with NALA), as the requirements for each credential are different, and depending on your experience, one path may be preferred over the other.

FUTURE OF THE PROFESSION

How do you see the role of paralegals evolving in the next five to ten years?

This is a lot to unravel in one question, but I think certainly technology, new software, shifts in the legal and regulatory landscape and AI will play significant roles in the paralegal profession in the next five to ten years.

What changes would you like to see in the legal profession that could benefit paralegals?

The licensure of paraprofessionals to provide limited legal services could benefit the paralegal profession more broadly and expand entrepreneurial opportunities, as licensed paralegals will be empowered to take a more hands-on role in their profession.

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

If you could go back in time, is there anything you would do differently in your career?

Continued education is the backdrop of growth. Reading a book in your practice area on the weekends to expand your knowledge base, taking extra CLEs, obtaining industry-specific certifications, whatever the case may be, but every bit of it helps and will be reflected in your performance. For example, brushing up on corporate governance before preparing authorizing corporate resolutions may provide enough insight to play a more participatory role in a project. While I've made an effort to do each of these things, too much is never enough!

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This column addresses technology trends, applications and new products in the legal industry.

Embracing AI in the Legal Profession: How Paralegals Can Lead the Charge

by CJ Dolores

Artificial Intelligence (AI) isn't just a futuristic concept anymore—it's a reality reshaping industries, including the legal field. For paralegals, AI offers the potential to take on complex tasks, boost efficiency, and elevate their role in the legal profession. But it also brings a challenge: staying at the forefront of new technology while keeping legal practice central to the operation. In this article, we'll explore how AI impacts the legal profession and provide practical ways for paralegals to skill up, ensuring they remain indispensable in an evolving landscape.

THE RISE OF AI IN THE LEGAL FIELD

AI is revolutionizing legal work, transforming processes that were once labor-intensive and time-consuming. Here's how it's reshaping the way law firms operate:

1. **Automation of Routine Tasks:** AI-powered tools can now handle repetitive administrative tasks, like sorting documents, data extraction, and even some forms of legal research. This allows paralegals to shift their focus to higher-value work. For example, tools like **Kira Systems** can analyze contracts and extract key information, saving paralegals hours of manual review.

2. **Enhanced Legal Research:** AI tools, such as e-discovery platforms and legal research assistants, provide quick access to case law, statutes, and legal precedents. By utilizing machine learning algorithms, these tools can identify relevant materials faster than ever before, giving paralegals an edge in providing timely and accurate information. Tools like **ROSS Intelligence** use natural language processing to help paralegals find relevant case law quickly and efficiently.
3. **Predictive Analysis and Case Outcome Predictions:** AI's data-processing capabilities allow it to analyze past case data and offer insights into potential case outcomes. This can be a powerful tool for paralegals, enabling them to better prepare case documents and support attorneys in developing legal strategies. **Lex Machina** is a great example of this, providing insights into judges' behaviors and past case outcomes.

With all these advancements, it's clear that AI won't replace paralegals but rather enhance their capabilities, enabling them to work smarter and play a more strategic role in legal operations. But to stay relevant, paralegals need to evolve and adapt.

KEY SKILLS FOR PARALEGALS TO STAY AHEAD IN THE AGE OF AI

Adapting to AI in legal practice requires specific skills. Here are the key areas where paralegals should focus:

1. **Technical Literacy:** Paralegals don't need to become software engineers, but a basic understanding of AI tools, especially legal tech like e-discovery platforms, can be invaluable. Familiarity with tools like Relativity for document review or ROSS Intelligence for research can make paralegals indispensable in tech-driven law firms.


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PARALEGAL PERSPECTIVES: A GLANCE INTO THEIR LIVES - cont. from page 9

What motivates you to keep going on tough days? Do you have a personal mantra or source of inspiration?

My middle school principal used to announce (on speaker) every morning, "Have a good day, the choice is yours." While tough days may be inevitable (in any profession), the ability to intentionally pivot your mindset on a tough day to something positive,

such as remembering a common goal or achieving an end result, always inspires me to keep going.

Carissa Saucedo holds a Master of Studies in Law degree from USC Gould School of Law, a Bachelor of Arts degree from UCLA and is an Advanced Certified Paralegal with NALA. She has approximately 10 years of experience as a corporate and transactional paralegal, the majority of which being in-house. 

2. **Data Management and Analysis:** Data plays a significant role in AI. Knowing how to manage and analyze data, even on a basic level, will make paralegals more efficient and better equipped to handle the growing volume of information AI systems can process. Courses in data science basics can provide the foundation needed for this skill. This includes understanding how to interpret data visualizations, identify trends in data, and use spreadsheets for data manipulation.
3. **Ethics and Compliance Knowledge:** With AI comes new ethical questions, especially around data privacy and confidentiality. Certifications like the AI Governance Professional (AIGP) from the IAPP are especially relevant, as they provide a framework for understanding and navigating the complex legal, ethical, and regulatory landscape of AI.
4. **Critical Thinking:** AI tools are powerful, but they aren't perfect. Paralegals must be able to critically evaluate the output of AI systems, identify potential biases or errors, and apply their own judgment to ensure they are using AI responsibly and effectively.

PRACTICAL STEPS TO SKILL UP

Staying current on AI doesn't have to be overwhelming. Here are actionable ways for paralegals to acquire and hone these skills:

1. **Pursue Relevant Certifications:** Consider certifications like the Certified E-Discovery Specialist (CEDS) from ACEDS, Legal Technology Certificate Program from NSLT, and the **Artificial Intelligence Governance Professional (AIGP)** from IAPP. These certifications cover areas directly impacted by AI, like e-discovery, legal tech, and AI governance, making them essential additions to a paralegal's toolkit.
2. **Take Free or Affordable Online Courses:** There are numerous free or affordable courses that provide insights into AI and technology's role in legal practice. For example, AI For Everyone on Coursera, led by Andrew Ng, is a beginner-friendly introduction to AI's fundamentals. Courses on platforms like FutureLearn and Harvard Online cover topics like data science, legal tech, and even

GDPR compliance, offering valuable knowledge without a high price tag.

3. **Engage with the Legal Tech Community:** Networking and staying active in communities focused on legal tech and AI is another great way to learn. Attend events, participate in webinars, and join discussions on forums or in organizations like the Los Angeles Paralegal Association, where you can exchange knowledge, hear real-world experiences, and even get mentorship in AI-related skills.
4. **Embrace a Growth Mindset:** One of the most important steps is to approach AI with curiosity. Rather than seeing it as a replacement, view AI as a tool that can amplify your work and open up new opportunities in the legal field. This mindset shift can make learning AI more enjoyable and less intimidating.

WHY PARALEGALS REMAIN CENTRAL IN AI-POWERED LEGAL SUPPORT

Despite AI's incredible capabilities, paralegals provide something technology cannot: the human element. Legal support roles require judgment, empathy, and ethical considerations that no algorithm can replicate. By combining the technical skills to leverage AI with the unique qualities of a human paralegal, you can play an even more central role in legal operations.

For example, while AI can help speed up legal research, it still requires someone to interpret that research, assess its relevance, and understand how it fits into a broader legal strategy. Paralegals can also act as a bridge between technology and the legal team, translating complex tech jargon into actionable insights for attorneys and clients alike.

LEADING THE CHARGE WITH CONFIDENCE

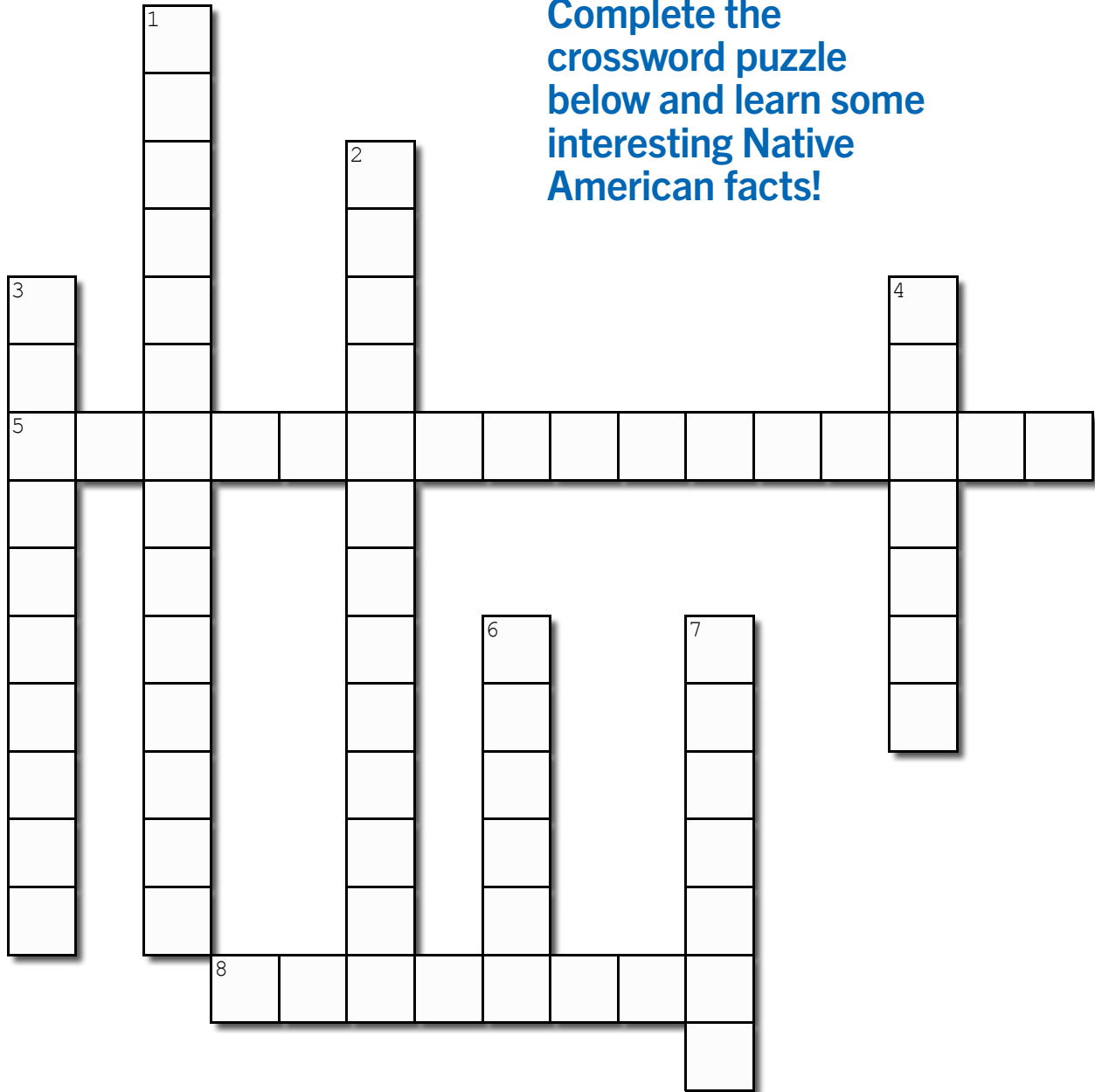
AI is undeniably changing the legal profession, but it's also creating new opportunities for paralegals to lead the charge in innovation. By embracing technology, pursuing relevant skills, and maintaining an ethical compass, paralegals can ensure they remain indispensable and highly valued in an AI-enhanced future.

The role of paralegals is not diminishing; it's evolving. AI might be capable of impressive feats, but it will

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November Crossword Puzzle

Complete the crossword puzzle below and learn some interesting Native American facts!



ACROSS:

- In 1990, President _____ officially designated November as "National American Indian Heritage Month."
- The largest tribe in the United States.

DOWN:

- Part of a series of forced displacements of approximately 60,000 Native Americans between 1830 and 1850.
- The _____ Confederacy is one of the oldest living democracies in the world.

DOWN cont.

- 'Chipmunk,' 'pecan,' 'skunk,' and other common words come from an _____ language.
- Native American name for the capital city of Hartford.
- The _____ Nation has the largest tribal land in the United States.
- Indigenous People's Day, a National Holiday, is now held each year on _____ 11th.

ANSWER KEY FOUND ON PAGE 19



Embracing Change: A Career Journey into Law

by Bryan Corbett

A year and a half ago, I found myself at a critical juncture in my career. I was laid off during the pandemic after a long and successful tenure at two major entertainment studios, where I worked in creative digital content and technology media operations. Some highlights of my career before that include teaching graphic arts, producing pioneering websites for a national television broadcaster, and relocating to Europe to lead regional digital business expansions supporting some of the biggest brands in entertainment. I oversaw global digital publishing operations, engineering, and business functions, and eventually joined a team tasked with launching a streaming service that quickly grew to over 100 million subscribers. Along the way, I earned an MBA, balancing my work with ongoing education.

Then, I found myself in a new and uncomfortable situation: I was one of over 30,000 employees at my company who were laid off over the span of six months. It was the first time I had experienced job loss in my career. The job market was saturated, and the industry I had devoted myself to was in flux. I pursued many similar roles because it felt necessary, but I grew increasingly disillusioned with the direction I was heading and less optimistic about long-term satisfaction and stability. The breaking point came

when a major brand put me through 22 interviews, requiring multiple strategy presentations, only to go in another direction. At that moment, I knew I was ready for a total career reboot.

I began questioning long-held assumptions about my career and explored new possibilities through informational interviews with professionals across various fields. I assessed where I could best deploy my transferable skills. When a family member suggested law, a new path emerged. I had always respected the legal field, and the more I considered it, the more it aligned with my values. A career in law offered stability, growth, and fulfillment, while appealing to my interest in justice, community development, and advocacy.

I enrolled in UCLA Extension's paralegal training program, an excellent full-time course that I completed in five months, graduating with distinction. One of the best decisions I made during this time was to join the Los Angeles Paralegal Association (LAPA). I attended the 2023 annual conference and the spring 2024 career conference, where I connected with board members, speakers, industry vendors, and, importantly, other paralegals and legal professionals. Through LAPA, I gained invaluable exposure to the legal industry and met professionals who offered guidance, insights, and encouragement as I navigated my career change. The networking opportunities helped me build connections with recruiters and specialists who offered different perspectives on entering the legal profession. Every connection I made deepened my understanding of the industry, and each conversation added a new layer of insight that helped me refine my strategy for breaking into the field. *continued on page 14*

TECHNOLOGY CORNER - cont. from page 11

always need the strategic insight, judgment, and adaptability that paralegals bring to the table. So, take up the challenge, invest in the right skills, and position yourself as an essential, forward-thinking member of your legal team. Start your AI journey today by exploring one of the online courses mentioned or attending a legal tech event

CJ Dolores is a Truman National Security Project Fellow for the Class of 2025 and a seasoned professional with a diverse background in climate security, cybersecurity, legal strategy, and paralegal work. His experience spans technology, government contracts, and nonprofit leadership, combining his legal expertise with a strategic focus on sustainable solutions in national security. CJ's work emphasizes navigating complex regulatory landscapes and fostering democratic resilience through innovative approaches to cybersecurity and environmental protection. He holds a joint master's degree from NYU Law and Engineering, a bachelor's degree from UC Berkeley, and obtained his paralegal education from the Georgetown University Paralegal Program. CJ is dedicated to addressing today's most pressing global challenges. [LAPA](#)

A sobering realization I had along the way was that entering the legal profession wasn't as straightforward as I had imagined, even with a wealth of experience from other industries. The reality is, it's difficult to gain legal experience without prior legal experience. I learned that many paralegal roles are highly competitive, and breaking into the field requires a willingness to consider other entry-level options. Advisors encouraged me to seek internships and volunteer roles to gain practical experience and increase my visibility in the legal community.

I followed this advice and secured a paralegal internship at the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office. It was a perfect fit for my ambition to work in the public sector and pursue justice, and it's somewhere I maintain an interest in returning to. For four months, I worked full-time in the DA's office and was inspired by the dedication of the attorneys and staff. I also began volunteering at Bet Tzedek, a respected organization that provides legal aid to underserved communities in Los Angeles. This ongoing experience allows me to work on impactful legal projects and contribute to the public good, reinforcing my desire to pursue a career in law.

In August, I landed my first full-time paralegal role at a plaintiff-side employment law firm, where I now

work in a pre-litigation capacity. I partner closely with attorneys and clients, drafting settlement negotiations for wage and hour claims, discrimination cases, retaliation, and wrongful termination lawsuits. This role has been both challenging and rewarding, offering me hands-on experience in labor and employment law.

Looking back, it's rewarding to see how much has changed since I began my paralegal studies just one year ago, and I'm deeply grateful to everyone who supported me along the way. Transitioning into law has been both humbling and empowering, requiring resilience, adaptability, and a willingness to embrace uncertainty. Along this journey, I've redefined success and discovered new strengths. As I move forward, I'm excited about the future—whether it leads deeper into employment law, public service, more school, or another path in the legal profession.

Bryan Corbett is a Southern California native living in the Mount Washington area of Los Angeles. After completing his undergrad at UC Irvine, Bryan started his career in television at NBC before moving into web development there and at Disney. During his seven years in London, he oversaw digital product development for Disney Europe, returning to the U.S. to help launch Disney+. A dual U.K.-U.S. citizen, he also holds an MBA from USC. Following his entertainment career, he transitioned into the legal field, completing his paralegal studies at UCLA Extension in early 2024. Outside of work, Bryan is a longtime DJ, vintage car enthusiast, and enjoys yoga, cycling, and hiking L.A.'s local trails. 🏠

LOS ANGELES PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION
Invites You To
WRITE FOR OUR NEWSLETTER!
Students, paralegals, everyone!
We want you to write for the Los Angeles Paralegal Association newsletter! Email admin@lapa.org for more info.

The graphic features a circular image of three diverse professionals in business attire. At the bottom, the LAPA logo is displayed, which includes the text 'LOS ANGELES PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION' and 'LAPA' in a stylized font.

LAVOTE.gov
YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE
VOTE!
Be heard on Nov. 5th!

The graphic has a blue background. At the top left is the text 'LAVOTE.gov'. At the top right is the LAPA logo. In the center, a hand holds a sign that says 'YOUR VOTE IS YOUR VOICE'. Below that, another hand holds a sign that says 'VOTE!'. At the bottom, a hand holds a sign that says 'Be heard on Nov. 5th!'.



Looking Forward Despite COVID-19

by Deena Bowman

Living with the COVID-19 virus has changed our means of enjoying recreational and cultural pursuits. However, good times can still be experienced –albeit in different ways. November brings Thanksgiving and celebrates Native Americans.



DO A TURKEY RUN

The 12th Annual Toluca Lake Trot & Fall Festival occurs on Sunday, November 24, from 9 am – 1 pm. Spend time with friends and family for a day packed with fun, fitness, and festive cheer. Proceeds from the run will benefit Toluca Lake’s Fire Station 86 and East Valley PALS. Tickets run from \$10.00 - \$25.00. Register at Eventbrite here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/toluca-lake-turkey-trot-registration-tickets-1047975602237>.

VIRTUAL TENEMENT CONCERT AN EVENING OF NEW AMERICAN SONGS



ENJOY AN EVENING OF NEW AMERICAN SONGS

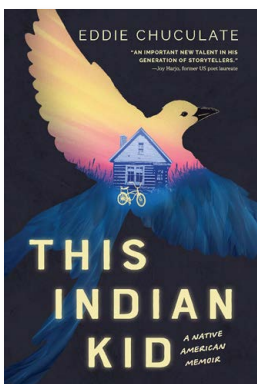
The Tenement Museum hosts a virtual concert featuring an Evening of New American Songs, played by the Bardin-Niskala Duo. Acclaimed cellist An-Lin Bardin and pianist Naomi Niskala have invited Native American, African, Latinx, Asian, and Arab composers to write new pieces that incorporate traditional folksongs and children’s songs of the composer’s cultures as a part of their commitment to using classical music to explore identity, fight racism, and promote cultural awareness. Tune in on YouTube on November 13 at 6:30pm ET to see the duo perform these pieces live from the Tenement Museum! Each composition is accompanied by a personal video from the composer that explores their inspiration and cultural heritage. The concert is free on YouTube on Thursday, November 13, at 3:30 PT. Register here for access: <https://tickets.tenement.org/events/0191489a-d9ce-4b02-f6da-a5ad20682a00>.

Deena Bowman is a Senior Legal Analyst at the State Compensation Insurance Fund in Monterey Park, California. Deena earned her paralegal certificate from the University of West Los Angeles, and she was a former Director at Large with LAPA.

LAPA READING CORNER

A recurring column that reviews books focusing on voices and subjects that reflect the diversity of the human experience

by Deena Bowman



This Indian Kid: A Native American Memoir

by Eddie Chuculate

Eddie Chuculate’s memoir shares episodes from his life from childhood to young adulthood, growing up in Muskogee, Oklahoma,

in the 1970s. Chuculate spent a great deal of time with his maternal grandparents, Granny and Homer, following his parents’ divorce: “Granny was full-blooded Creek, but the Bureau of Indian Affairs insisted she was fifteen-sixteenths. She showed her card to me. I’d sit at the kitchen table and stare at her when she was eating, wondering how you can be a sixteenth of anything.” Chuculate also writes about the library as his second home and his love of sports. This Indian Kid is his love letter to his family and their Cherokee-Creek traditions that grounded him.

2013, 240 Pages, Scholastic Focus, \$19.99, hardcover. Also available for checkout from the Los Angeles Public Library in book form, eAudiobook and e-Book.



A Night to Remember

by Don Adove

The Los Angeles Paralegal Association's recent wine night was an event to remember, bringing together members and guests for an evening of connection, conversation, and, of course, exceptional wine. Held at the picturesque Garçons De Café in the heart of downtown, the event offered a perfect blend of professional networking and relaxed socializing. The event was hosted by wine Sommelier Lee Paige of Novus Lumen.

The venue, adorned with elegant decorations and soft lighting, provided a warm and inviting atmosphere. Attendees were greeted with a selection of fine wines and a spread of gourmet appetizers, carefully curated to complement the evening's theme. The ambiance was lively, with the buzz of conversations filling the air as old friends reconnected and new friendships were formed.

One of the standout moments of the night was the wine tasting session. Lee Paige guided attendees through a curated selection of wines, offering insights into the unique characteristics of each. This interactive session not only expanded everyone's wine knowledge but also served as a great icebreaker,

sparking engaging discussions among participants. Attendees were able to gain a wealth of knowledge in wine tasting and hopefully become wine enthusiasts.

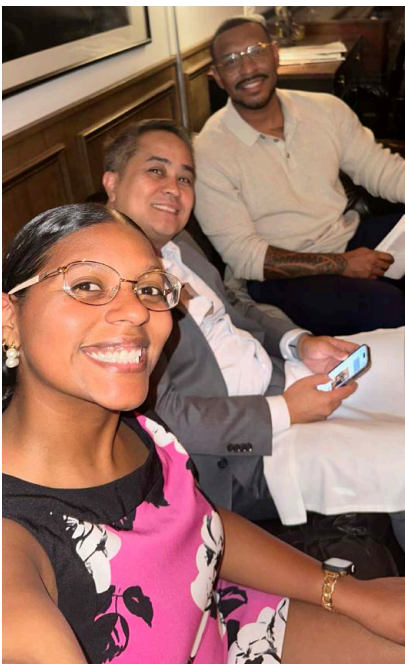
The evening also provided ample opportunities for networking various legal professionals. It was heartening to see the exchange of business cards and ideas, reflecting the collective commitment to professional growth and collaboration.

Special thanks were extended to our sponsors First Legal. Their efforts ensured that every detail, from the selection of wines to the logistical arrangements, was impeccably managed.

As the night drew to a close, attendees left with smiles on their faces and a renewed sense of community. The success of the wine night has set a high bar for future events, and the Los Angeles Paralegal Association looks forward to organizing more such gatherings to continue building and strengthening the professional network.

The wine night was not just an evening of fine wine and good company; it was a celebration of the vibrant and dynamic community that makes up the association. Here's to many more memorable events in the future! Cheers!

Don Adove is currently a Litigation Paralegal at the Kennedys Law. His previous work experiences include working for a financial company and family law. He is a Director at Large and Pro Bono chair of LAPA. He graduated in 2021 earning his Certificate in Paralegal Studies from UCLA Extension. [📄](#)



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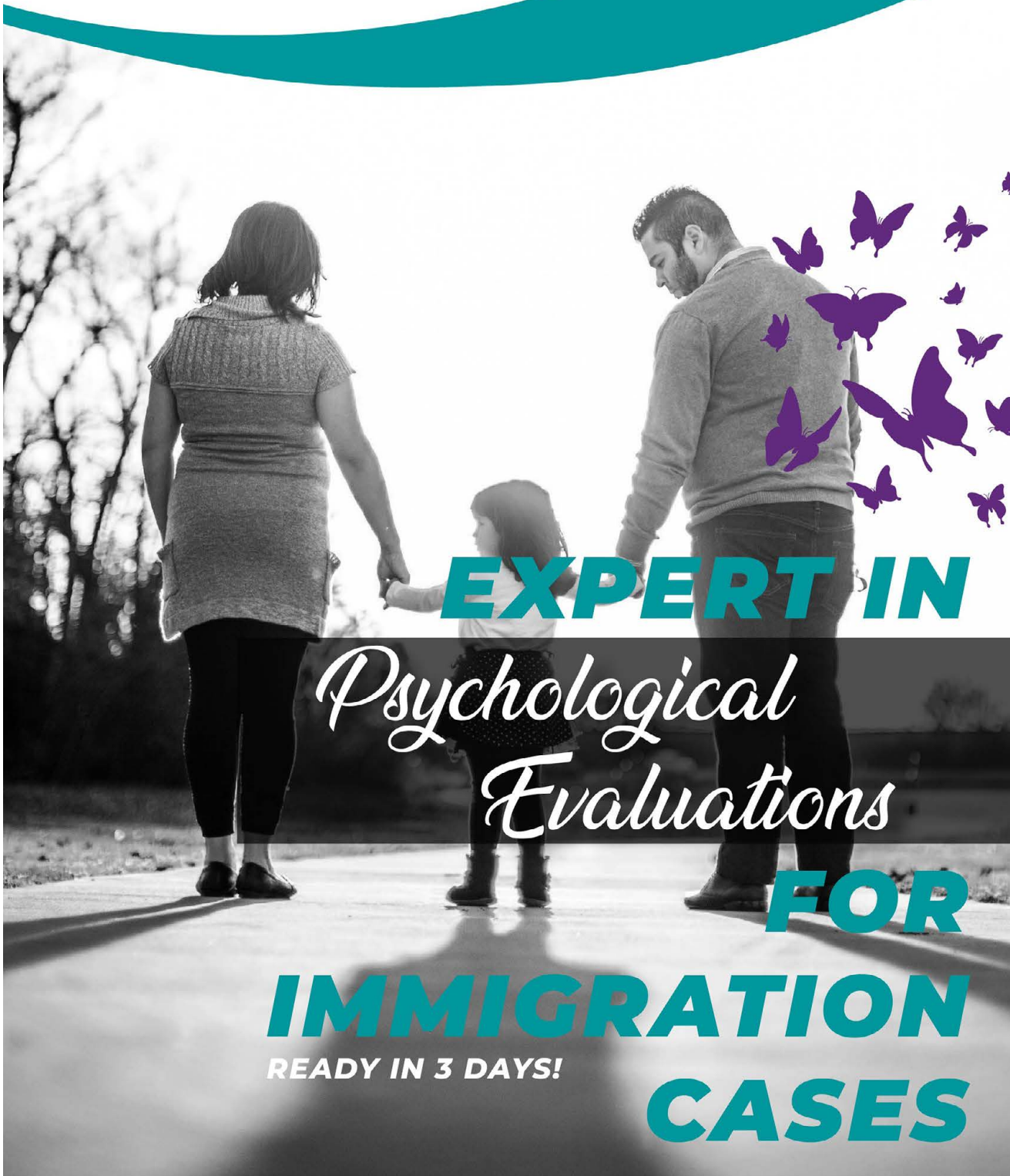
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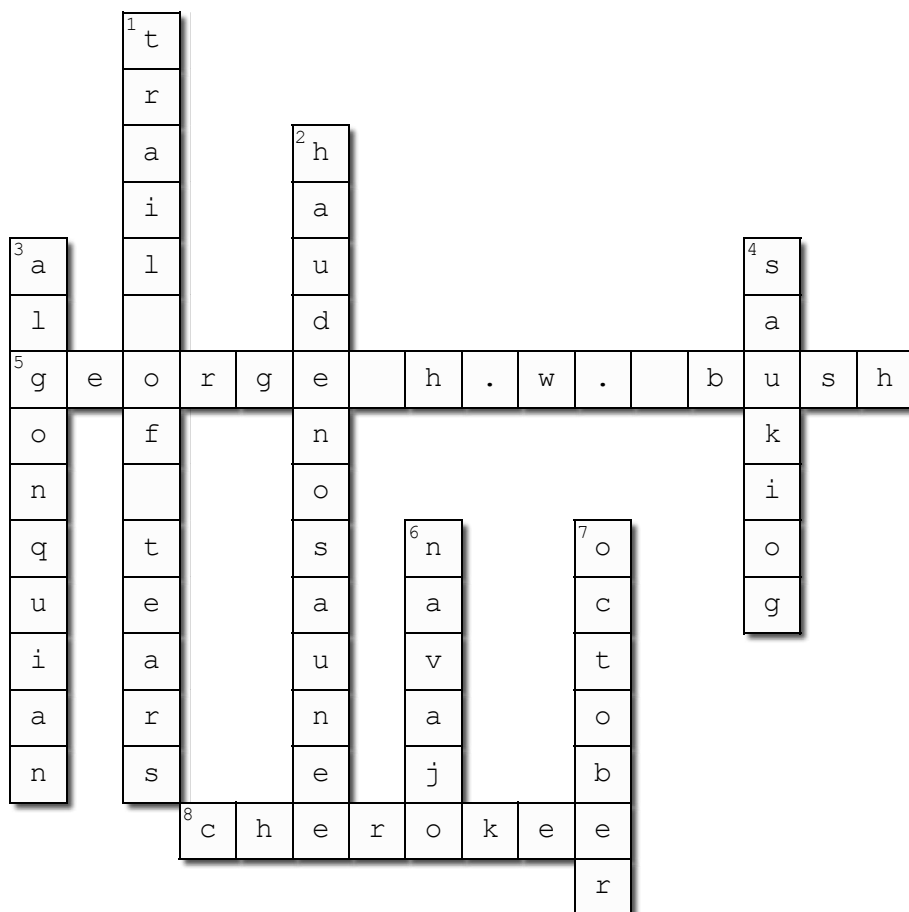


www.lapa.org



ASSOCIATION
CAREER NETWORK

LAPA'S CROSSWORD PUZZLE - cont. from page 12



ANSWER KEY

ACROSS

- 5. George H.W. Bush
- 8. Cherokee

DOWN

- 1. Trail of Tears
- 2. Haudenosaunee
- 3. Agonquian
- 4. Saukiog
- 6. Navajo
- 7. October

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NALA THE PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION CERTIFICATION NEWS



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[Credly](#) provides a plethora of information about the paralegal field and its opportunities. At the bottom of your badge profile, click "Insights" to see available jobs, salaries, job locations, and much more!

RETIRING SOON?

If, after many years of service to the paralegal community, you are nearing retirement, please remember to submit the [CP® Retired Form](#) to NALA so you do not lose your hard-earned credential. Your certification status will be updated to "CP® Retired," and you will no longer be required to earn CLE. If you have any questions, please contact us at cle@nala.org.

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Fullerton College's ABA-approved Paralegal Studies Program provides the education and skills necessary for graduates to work under the supervision of an attorney as a critical member of the legal support team in all areas of law. Our program aids students in finding employment in this ever-growing, fast-paced, and challenging field.



PLEASE NOTE:

The Fullerton College ABA-approved Paralegal Studies Program does not prepare students for law school or the practice of law. Under California's Business and Professions Code, Section 6450 (et seq.), a paralegal may not market his or her services to the public, but must work under the direct supervision of an attorney licensed to practice law.

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We offer both an Associate Science degree and Certificate in Paralegal Studies. Visit our website to view the degree and certificate requirements.

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START HERE:

PLEG 101 F -
Introduction to Paralegal Studies



QUESTIONS? CONTACT:

 **(714) 992-7032**



buscis@fullcoll.edu

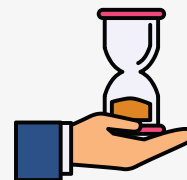


<https://buscis.fullcoll.edu/>

Child Welfare in Los Angeles County



As of January 2021, there are 38,243 children/youth in the Los Angeles Child Welfare System.



Most children are in the child welfare system for about 2+ years.

Black & Hispanic children encompass

81.5%

of children/youth in care.

High turnover rates in child welfare professions create gaps in knowledge and care, and limit youths' access to consistent and appropriate supports.



In an overwhelmed system, L.A. County professionals face the daunting task of making complex, life-changing decisions about a child/youth's overall well-being.

The Solution? The Essential History Program!

The Essential History Program aims to help social workers, attorneys and judges make trauma-informed decisions about the young people they serve. Through this program, a CASA volunteer reviews the entirety of a child/youth's case file and produces an objective and comprehensive report that highlights key historical events for the young person while in the system.



Program Goals

- Reduce time youth is in the child welfare system
- Improve outcomes for youth in the areas such as: permanency, mental health, education and social supports
- Ease changes/transitions for service providers
- Reduce burnout and compassion fatigue for child welfare professionals
- Consolidate information to observe data trends in the child welfare system
- Create systematic change towards healthier and equitable systems

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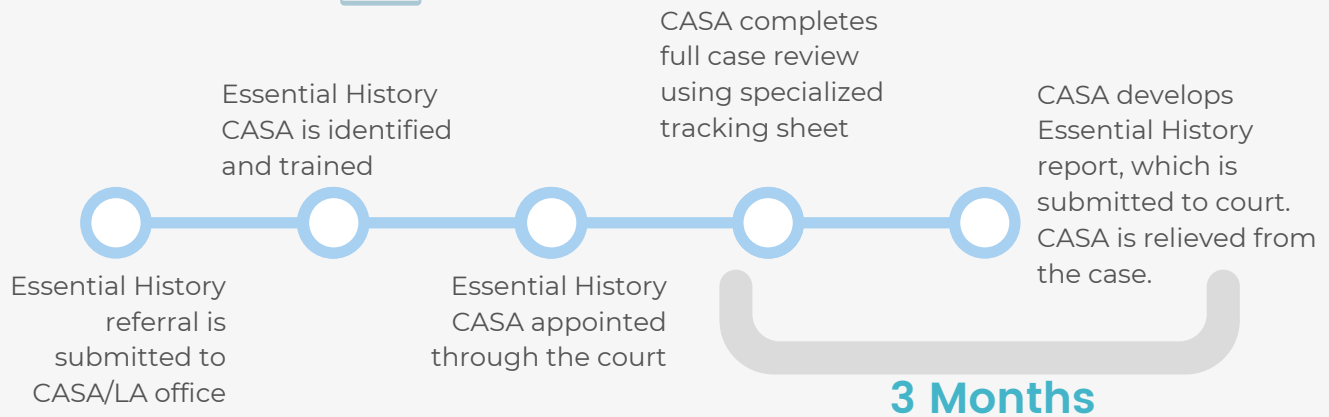
Essential History Program



continued from previous page



Process & Timeline



The Report

Objective & Neutral Language

Information is retrieved from case documents with no additional bias/interpretation.

Strengths-Based

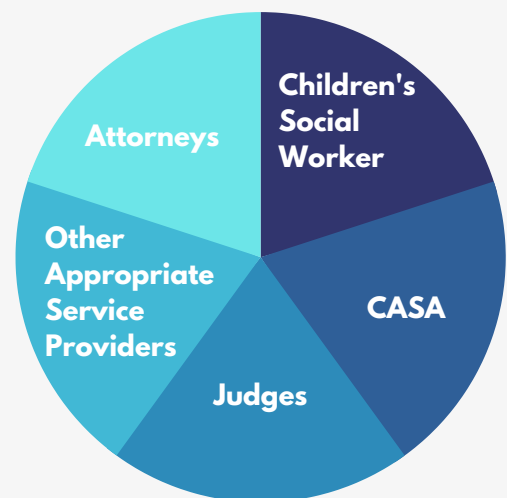
Focus is kept on not creating a negative perception of the youth

Report Content

Report Covers Risk & Protective Factors in the areas of:

- Permanency
- Physical Health
- Mental Health
- Education
- Family & Social Supports

Who Can Access the Report?



Questions?

essentialhistory@casala.org
Visit Us! www.casala.org



The Los Angeles Paralegal Association (LAPA) reflects the diverse nature of Southern California, and we strive to be as inclusive as possible. As an organization of legal professionals, we hold the ideals of equality and justice in the highest regard. The injustices experienced by the communities of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color are a stark reminder that equality and justice are ideas that have yet to reach fruition in this country. We, as a nation, must do better. LAPA stands in solidarity with the families and friends of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. It is our sincerest desire to see justice is done as the law requires for their tragic deaths.

Diversity and inclusion are LAPA's initiative for 2022. We hold firm in striving to be more inclusive and diverse to reflect the community that we serve and represent. Moreover, LAPA will continue to steadfastly advocate and create initiatives to prepare and support our paralegals.

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05 NOV,
2024

12:00PM

EMILIA ARUTUNIAN
SPEAKER



Members \$15
Non-Members \$30

Members Only Benefits

Regional and Networking Sections

LAPA has many opportunities for meeting and connecting with your paralegal colleagues and other legal industry professionals. Such opportunities include seminar and networking events based on geographical locations such as Downtown (Los Angeles), South Bay, West L.A., the San Fernando Valley, Santa Clarita, and more. LAPA also provides educational seminars in various legal specialties, including, but not limited to, Litigation, Probate Law, Intellectual Property Law, Corporate Law, Immigration Law, and Ethics. Additionally, with the support of our legal industry partners, LAPA also hosts other networking and charitable events and mixers. Your participation in LAPA is encouraged, so be sure to reach out to a LAPA Section or Committee Chair, develop your leadership and networking skills, and make LAPA an even better association.

Vital Savings

This benefit provides LAPA members a discount program for dental and vision services, long term care, as well as many pharmaceuticals. LAPA has been able to obtain special pricing of Vital Savings discount cards through Aetna. By using the discount cards and Aetna approved providers, LAPA members can save dramatically on the services provided by these professionals. For more information, please visit LAPA's website, www.lapa.org.

Working Advantage

LAPA members may join a program that offers discounts up to 60% on tickets, travel, shopping, and more. LAPA helps you save money on items from clothing to theater tickets to flowers. This benefit is available by logging onto the LAPA website "Members Only" section.

United Insurance Partners

LAPA has teamed with UIP - United Insurance Partners - to bring LAPA members the opportunity to purchase health, dental, and/or vision insurance. When you access UIP through the link provided on the Benefits webpage, you will find an array of insurance products available for you to purchase with companies such as Blue Cross, Aetna, and many other top insurance companies. Please visit LAPA's website, www.lapa.org, for more information.

NALA Affiliation

LAPA is an affiliated member of the National Association of Legal Assistants. NALA is the nation's leading professional association for paralegals. As a member of an affiliated association, the initiation fee for individual membership in NALA is waived for LAPA members. NALA boasts some of its own benefits. Access its NALA Campus Live for online continuing legal education, self-study courses, and preparation for the CLA/CP Exam. Its annual educational convention in July allows you to expand your network beyond your state's borders as you network with other paralegals from around the country, attend educational institutes and member related activities.

Freelance/Contract Paralegal Listing

LAPA provides a "Freelance Paralegals" section on its website to assist LAPA members who are freelance, contract, or independent paralegals, as defined by California Business and Professions Code Section 6450. For a nominal fee of \$60, you can post your contact information on LAPA's website for six months. You can sign up online through the Members Only section of the website.

Membership Database

Available only to LAPA members, the Membership Database is a valuable tool in locating other paralegals or legal professionals with whom you have worked or networked. The Membership Database also provides up-to-date contact information as well as members' legal specialties and geographical areas.

Credit Union

LAPA members are eligible to join Southland Credit Union. Southland Credit Union, with over \$435 million in assets, offers an online presence, a new full-service branch in downtown Los Angeles, an upgraded ATM network and five new proprietary ATMs. Southland Credit Union has expanded its product line by introducing a new high-yielding certificate of deposit, a Rewards Plus program and a market-leading high interest yielding checking account. Southland Credit Union prides itself on outstanding service to its members and has recently earned a 95 percent Member Service satisfaction rating.

Lorman Education

LAPA is dedicated to providing efficient and readily-available continuing education opportunities that meet the needs of our members and enhance their skills, knowledge, and competencies. LAPA has partnered with Lorman Education to provide continuing education in a variety of topic areas. LAPA members receive a 20% discount on all orders.





Bet Tzedek Needs **YOUR** Help!

Intake Services Volunteers Sought

Bet Tzedek's Intake Services volunteers conduct pre-screening assessments in order to determine the appropriate course of action for individuals who call seeking legal assistance. Our volunteers are often the first contact our community has with our organization, and we rely on our volunteers to handle a high volume of calls from a diverse population of individuals with a broad range of needs.

Gain Issue Spotting and Client Interview Experience

Under attorney supervision, volunteers develop foundational legal skills, including learning to spot legal issues; to conduct telephone interviews with potential clients dealing with challenging, stressful situations; determining what information provided by the caller is relevant; and to begin to develop judgment of potential cases in a wide array of legal areas. Volunteering with Intake Services also provides first-hand knowledge of the landscape of legal services available in Los Angeles County and exposure to and understanding of the issues faced by the communities we serve.

Commitment: 40+ hours. During the school year, we ask that volunteers commit to working in the Intake Center for 8-10 hours/week for 8-10 weeks. During certain periods, such as winter break, we may be able to accommodate schedules that include a higher number of hours per week for fewer weeks. Work must be completed during normal business hours (M-F, 9am-5pm).

To Apply: Email volunteer@bettzedek.org or call (323) 549-5839 with any questions. Spanish language skills are highly preferred, but not required.

WELCOME NEW & RENEWING LAPA MEMBERS

The following is a listing of legal professionals and paralegal students who joined or renewed their membership in Los Angeles Paralegal Association within the last 30 days. The employer and work telephone number also are included when available. If any information is incorrect, please fax corrections to 866-460-0506, call LAPA at 866-626-LAPA or e-mail updates to info@lapa.org.

VOTING

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Sheree Marion	Independent Contractor	shereekaymarionrevl@gmail.com
Christina Medina	Myers, Widders, Gibson, Jones & Feingold	xtymedina@gmail.com

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Whitney Miyamoto	Lanzone Morgan, LLP	wkmiyamoto@gmail.com
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Mariejo Plaganas	Yoka Smith LLC	mplaganas@gmail.com
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Yessenia Soria		yesseniasoria@att.net
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Jeffrey Stewart	Murchison & Cumming, LLP	jeffrey.m.stewart@att.net
Devon Svarda	Lurie & Kramer	devonsvarda@gmail.com
Wut Yee Thaw	KB Professional Service	wutyeehaw@gmail.com
Ursula Wayne	Booth LLP	urswayne@gmail.com
Maggie Wen	LA County	myincredible16@gmail.com
Nancy Wong-Thomas	Gifford Dearing & Abernathy	inbox@gdalaw.com

ASSOCIATE

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Shelley Scarr Hovsepian		shelley.scarr@gmail.com
Chire Tolbert	Los Angeles Space Force Command	chire.tolbert@spaceforce.mil
Gary Williams	Fair Housing Foundation	gwill90813@gmail.com

STUDENT

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Swaniketa Brown	UCLA Extension PTP	swaniketabrown@icloud.com
Bryan Corbett		bryancorbett.law@gmail.com
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Bryn Everett	UCLA Extension PTP	bryn.everett@gmail.com
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Rachel Hwang	UCLA Extension PTP	rhwang714@gmail.com
Matthew Janowski	Ellis Riccobono, LLP	mjanowski9@gmail.com
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Alexander Kuoni	State Bar of California	kuoni55@gmail.com
Stephanie Mandelsberg	Fullerton College	smandelsberg@gmail.com
Daniel Martinez	CSU Los Angeles	dm26@live.com
Edgar Martinez	Fullerton College	chapalote@yahoo.com
Tina McCullough		tina@samsonhairrestoration.com
Crystal Mejia	Mt. San Antonio College	cmejia20@student.mtsac.edu
Amanda Melton	CSU Fullerton	mandamelton@icloud.com

STUDENT cont.

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Carolyn Payan	Paul Hastings LLP	cpayan7@calstatelata.edu
Vanessa Perez	Mt. San Antonio College	vperez97@student.mtsac.edu
Julian Perez	Mt. San Antonio College	julianperez2899@gmail.com
Jennifer Ramirez	Jacoby & Meyers Attorneys LLP	jennccramirez@gmail.com
Lilia Rezaei	Seyfarth Shaw, LLP.	liliarezaei@gmail.com
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