NEBRASKA PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 2024 INBRIEF



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Welcome!

NePA supports paralegals through continuing education programs. We disseminate information about the profession, offer a job bank for employers and those seeking employment as paralegals and publish this newsletter, the In Brief. We hold regular membership meetings featuring educational programs and social events. NePA fosters communication among paralegals and serves as a forum for the exchange of knowledge and ideas. Our association promotes the educational, professional and ethical standards for paralegals. We provide networking opportunities for members, as well as legal assistant students and other legal professionals.

NePA is a growing organization that always welcomes new members. You'll find a vibrant community of paralegals who benefit from each other's expertise and the resources that only a committed group can provide. NePA is committed to building a strong community of paralegals in Nebraska.

The Nebraska Paralegal Association ("NePA") is an affiliate of NALA, The Paralegal Association ("NALA"). NALA is composed of over 18,000 paralegals, through individual members and through its 90 state and local affiliated associations. NePA supports NALA's certification and advanced certification program (Certified Paralegal and Advanced Certified Paralegal). NALA offers continuing legal education almost daily through its NALA Campus Live! program and hosts an annual Convention, Institutes & Exhibition each year.

From the Incoming President: Katie Gabriel, ACP

The Holiday Season is already here!!! We brought on the turkey and way too much food on Thanksgiving and now Holiday lights galore are incoming! I am looking forward to serving as your President for this upcoming year and am delighted to see a few new faces on the Board.

Our organization does not run without you – our members. I encourage all members to send me any suggestions they have – whether it be on speakers and topics or things you want to see from the organization. What do you feel the Board and Committees are doing well? What suggestions do you have for improvement?



What is something you want to see this upcoming year? I want to hear from you and try to make this year the best yet!

The Fall Seminar held at the Scott Conference Center on September 24th & 25th was an awesome event with a wonderful variety of speakers. Make sure to keep an eye out for announcements regarding our district luncheons. Not only do they provide great speakers on a variety of topics, but they also provide our members with the opportunity to meet new people, network and gain new resources in our field.

I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday season and I look forward to what this year may bring. Happy Holidays!

Sincerely,

Katie Gabriel, ACP

From the Outgoing President: Jessica McArdle, ACP

I hope everyone had a wonderful Thanksgiving and is able to move into the holiday season with some peace, relaxation, and self-care. It may be wishful thinking, but I prefer to think of it as manifesting. You all deserve those things and more! Make sure that you take the time and give yourselves the grace and recognition you deserve. Everyone has their own struggles, but you all have so many things to be proud of. Do not discount your accomplishments, especially the little ones that give you a sense of pride.



I want to thank everyone who has supported our association this year by coming to our events, taking advantage of our CLE offerings, or even just renewing your membership. We have had some great speakers at our CLEs this year, and your suggestions on topics to cover is not only helpful in the planning, but they help us find some amazing speakers. Keep the suggestions coming!

It has been an honor serving as your president for the last year. I cannot tell you how much I appreciate the opportunity you all gave me. I learned so much and hope I can help out with our new Board of Directors and new members in any way I can.

Sincerely,

Jessica McArdle, ACP

2024 NALA Conference & Expo By Angel Younger, ACP



The 2024 NALA Conference & Expo was held at the Louisville Marriott in downtown Louisville, Kentucky July 11-14. We had a handful of NePA Members attend. The hotel was nearby several restaurants and distilleries.

There was several CLE Sessions available including topics like NDAs from A-Z, The Americans with Disabilities Act, Understanding Bankruptcy for Divorce Professionals, Employment Law Updates and Ethics and Compliance in Corporate America. There were also several CP Review courses for attendees preparing for the CP exam.

Iliana Oris Valiente, CP, CA was the Keynote Speaker and her session was titled "Embracing the Future: Human-Centric AI for the Modern Paralegal". She had a very exciting presentation about the future potential of artificial intelligence (AI) in the legal landscape. She showed ways that AI is reshaping the workforce and enhancing efficiency. She even showed us an example of the AI version of herself that helps her with meetings so she can be in two places at once. It was a very eye-opening session and definitely peaked my interest to research this topic more.

Wednesday was full of meetings and exhibitor booths. There were several exhibitor booths this year, and they handed out some great swag and door prizes. Lots of other exhibitors passed out pens, post-its and candy. One of our NePA Sponsors, Tom Woodrome from Capital Services, had a booth.

We had our Affiliate booth set up at the Opening Night Reception on Wednesday night. The event was well attended. We had an "In My Paralegal Era" Taylor Swift themed table and passed out bracelets, key chains, post its and travel accessory bags. There were several Affiliate Tables, and they all had some fun themed ideas.

The Annual Meeting & Awards was held during lunch on Wednesday and the Affiliate Associations Annual Meeting was later that day where Jessica McArdle accepted her Affiliate Award. Jessica has always been a great leader for NePA and I was honored to see her accept her award.

Thursday and Friday were full days of CLE sessions. Thursday evening was the Installation of Officers where our very own Bridget M. Stuhr, ACP was again installed as an At Large Director.

Our conference charity this year was For Hank's Sake which is a non-profit where rescued horses become champions for change and literacy. Hank the horse even attended the conference, so I was able to meet him and get a picture.

NALA organized a get together at the Louisville Bats game on Saturday night so several of us walked together to the stadium to cheer on Vanessa Finley, NALA's CEO who threw out the first pitch with the outgoing and new NALA President by her side. It was a fun game and the Bats won! There was also a nice firework show after the game.

This year there was an additional add on day for NALA Affiliated Associations, so Jessica and I attended this event on Sunday. Shelly Cadamy presented on Growing and Strengthening Your NALA Affiliated Association. We learned so may strategies to recruit, retain and energize our members and board. We were both very excited to think about how to use the strategies to grow NePA in the next few years.

Overall, the Conference was great. There was a great variety of CLE sessions to attend. I love meeting other paralegals from around the United States. Next Year NALA will be celebrating its 50th year in Atlantic City, New Jersey so make sure to mark your calendars for July 10-12. We hope to see many NePA Members there.

It has been my pleasure to serve as NALA Liaison the last two years. I will now be handing everything over to Andria Bell. Please contact her at nalaliaison@nebraskaparalegal.org with any questions you may have regarding NALA. Thank you.

Angel Younger, ACP, 2023-2024 NALA Liaison



DID YOU KNOW.....

.....that NePa has several Continuing Education Scholarships for its members?

Our scholarships include a: Student Education Award, Certified Paralegal Scholarship, & Advanced Certified Paralegal Scholarship.

Take advantage of these opportunities; we would love to help you advance your learning and career!

Deadlines for 2025 are coming soon!

Visit:

https://nebraskaparalegal.org/scholarshi ps.php to learn more. 9



Congrats to our new Advanced Certified Paralegal!

Marinda "Mindy" Scott received her E-Discovery ACP Certification on May 1, 2024!

Facing Two of my Biggest Fears By Kris Krupka, ACP

Introduction

For the past two years, it has been my mission to take some personal and professional experience with domestic violence, stalking, and harassment, and pay it forward to others. My primary goal is to let others know that they are not alone and that it is OK to come forward. My secondary goal is to raise awareness and help employers learn how they can better support their employees who are experiencing this very thing and that, in fact, that they need to know about it to keep their other employees safe as well. My path to get here was a little unusual.

How It Started

In 2022, I was "voluntold" to do a public speaking engagement as part of a paralegal panel. For many, this may be a dream opportunity, but for me, it was an absolute nightmare. Two of my biggest fears at that time were the fear of public speaking and fear of failure. In my mind, this was sure to be two-fold! Since as early as 5th grade, I've been terrified of public speaking. However, hand me a microphone and tell me to sing my favorite song, and I'm all over it. It made no sense! It's funny how our brains can trick us when it comes to fear.

After that, I decided to challenge myself to do more public speaking events. This would require me to step out of my comfort zone, but I had to get more comfortable with it! But what on earth would I talk about? I knew the only way I could do it would be to talk about something I was passionate about. It became instantly clear what my topic should be – Becoming an Ally: When Interpersonal Harassment Bleeds into the Workplace. It sounds very dramatic. It is.

I began by presenting to our internal staff as a way to educate them on how they can come forward if they are presented with threatening scenarios in their personal lives. Then I presented at the NePA 2022 fall seminar. I later presented at the Perfectly Paralegal® cruise in 2023. With each presentation, I learned ways to improve it and grew more confident as I received tremendous feedback and realized I was making a difference as so many people would speak with me about their own experiences following each presentation. In May 2023, I presented on the "main stage" at our firm's annual Labor Law Forum in front of 900 of our clients. I received the forum's first and only standing ovation to date.

Though that was a "Top 5" moment for me, what meant even more to me was the people who reached out afterward to let me know how much my speech impacted them or helped them with an employee in a similar situation. There is truly no greater compliment than that!

How It's Going

On the heels of the Labor Law Forum adrenaline rush, I decided to throw my hat into the ring for The Society of Human Resources Management's ("SHRM") 2024 national conference. Much to my surprise, my presentation was chosen. I am scheduled to present on June 25, 2024 in Chicago and am beyond excited!! never thought I would feel that way about public speaking.

SHRM is thought by many to be the "who's who" of HR professionals and their national conference is considered to be the conference to attend – to the tune of 25,000 people – both in person and virtually! Is this a bit intimidating? You bet!But is it also a chance to make an impact on hundreds, if not thousands of people? Absolutely! This is why I do it.

So, step out of your comfort zone and face those fears! You never know where it may take you!





Get ready to buckle up and blast off to the 2025 NALA Conference & Expo, landing in the vibrant hub of Atlantic City, New Jersey, from July 10-12!

This isn't just any conference – it is a milestone celebration marking 50 stellar years of NALA's journey through the legal sphere! We are turning half a century old, and we are ready to party!

Join us as we take a thrilling voyage through the annals of paralegal history, with a few nostalgia-fueled pit stops, and then zoom forward into the future of the dynamic paralegal profession. This year, we are not just looking back. We're setting our sights higher, exploring futuristic innovations, and charting the course for the next 50 years.

Get ready to power up your networking skills, turbocharge your knowledge, and blast off into a future where the possibilities are limitless. See you there, future leaders of the paralegal universe!



On August 15, 2024, Briana Stelling, Paralegal at Gotschall & Sholes, me, and my attorney, George Achola, of Burlington Capital, participated in a panel organized by Allyson Felt, J.D., and Bri Peterson of the Nebraska State Bar Association. The purpose of the panel was to educate young lawyers on how to effectively work with and utilize paralegals. The hour-long panel was conducted virtually and moderated by Caitlin Lovell who is an attorney at Johnson and Mock. There were 31 attendees.

The hour was packed with great information and insight on the following topics: (1) delegation and task management; (2) workload management; (3) effective communication; (4) building trust and respect/common challenges; (5) collaboration tools; and (6) impact of technology. While it would be difficult to convey every piece of advice in this article, the key takeaways are provided below.

Delegation and Task Management - What should attorneys look for when hiring a paralegal? George said that the key thing a lawyer should be looking for is skill level. One should consider the paralegal's experience, job performance at other firms, knowledge of the pertinent area of law, adaptability, etc. George also stressed that personality/social skills are key factors. You need to consider how this person will interact with other employees, clients, and court personnel because their interaction with these folks will have a huge impact on your practice.

Workload Management –. The workload management will depend on the size of the firm. Larger firms have more employees to share the workload, whereas the bulk of the work typically lands on the paralegal in smaller firms. At Burlington Capital, George is the only attorney and I'm the only paralegal so a lot of what we do falls on me, because George has an extremely heavy workload himself. I am able to handle the tasks that don't necessarily need to be done by George so that he can focus on other items. Briana shares her time between two attorneys, and it is critical that they both are aware of her workload and have realistic expectations of her completing her assigned tasks. She is not afraid to ask for deadlines or order of importance for certain tasks, which is an indication to her attorneys that she has a lot going on in that given moment.

Effective Communication – Effective communication between lawyers and paralegals is critical. A breakdown in communication can cause missed deadlines, unnecessary stress, and wasted time to name a few. To help facilitate effective communication, it is extremely important that instructions are clear and concise from the beginning. The paralegal should know what the task is, how it needs to be accomplished, and the deadline for completing the task and if they don't, they should be honest and ask questions. When instructions are clear from the start, there is no need for the attorney to be "micromanagy." The attorney should be confident that the instructions are clear and that the paralegal will complete the assigned task in the time allotted. This will free up the attorney's time to work on other tasks, which is one of the essential roles of a paralegal.

Building Trust and Respect/ Common Challenges – George said that there has to be honesty and competency to build mutual trust. This can be accomplished by being reliable, consistent and understanding. We must keep in mind that everyone makes mistakes. When it comes to common challenges such as disagreements and miscommunication between an attorney and a paralegal, it is best to approach the situation with respect for one another and a calm attitude. Also, don't let the situation bother you to the point that it blows up – be open and honest right away. While disagreements can get heated, you will get more accomplished if you address the situation as soon as possible, respectfully listen to the other person's point of view, and work together on the solution. Again, there should be no gray areas when it comes to assigned tasks.

Collaboration Tools – We were all in agreeance that a common tool used to facilitate collaboration and workflow between attorneys and paralegals is the Outlook calendar. We are able to track our attorneys' schedules, input deadlines, and color code appointments.

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If there are attorneys working out of office or in different offices, Outlook is especially helpful for communicating what tasks need to be done. Briana used the example of when she set up an appointment for one of her attorneys that works outside of her base office. There was a miscommunication as to where the appointment should be – the clients showed up at one office and the attorney was at the other. From there on out, they color coded appointments based on location.

Impact of Technology – Advancements in technology have been happening since we became paralegals and will continue to happen throughout our careers. George made a good point that when he was in law school, they still had to do legal research using textbooks. Now, we have the capabilities to search case law online. We all know that AI is up and coming. The consensus of the panel was that it will not take over paralegal's jobs in the future, but it will speed up the ways in which tasks get accomplished, like the transition from textbooks to computers.

Final Thoughts – At the conclusion of the panel, we were asked to give some final thoughts to the attendees.

- **Briana**: Paralegals wear many hats. Our job is to make attorney's lives easier and less stressful. Attorneys should allow them to do so, but should also be mindful of the "many hats" we wear.

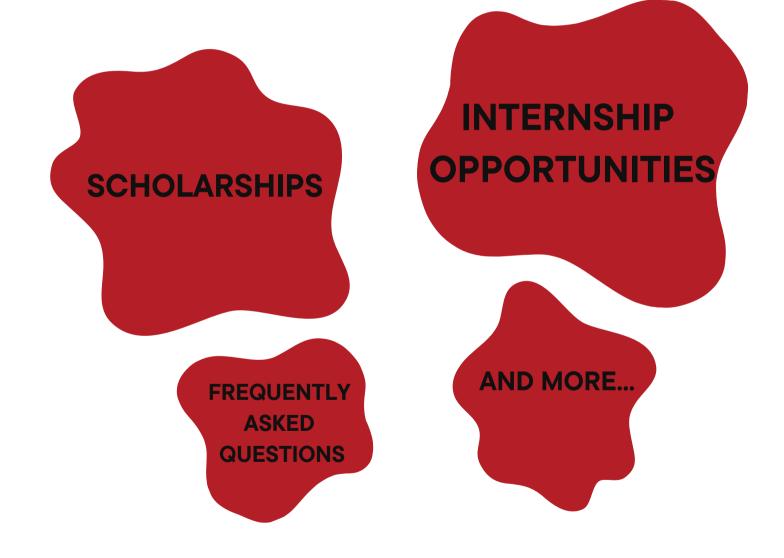
- **George**: Don't be in a hurry to make a name for yourself. Take it slow and get a mentor.

- Andria: Don't put yourself in a box. If you don't like the area of law that you're in, don't be afraid to try a different area. Utilize your paralegal. While this panel was geared toward young lawyers, I truly learned a lot by being a participant. It's easy to be in one's own little world and not realize what others' views are. It was eye opening to hear what Briana's life is like as a paralegal in a small town working for two attorneys from different generations and George's perspective as a seasoned attorney on the qualities a paralegal should have and how to effectively work with and manage paralegals.

As a thank you for our time, George, Briana, and I were inducted into The Sock Club. The Sock Club was created about five years ago by Allyson Felt, J.D. who is the Director of Continuing Legal Education and Editor of The Nebraska Lawyer for the Nebraska State Bar Association. She created it to offer their speakers a token of appreciation that they could use or gift to their partner/kids who would use it. Since Allyson personally loves socks, she thought that gifting socks would be fitting; pun intended!

STUDENT RESOURCES

If you're just considering a paralegal career or you're already deep into your studies we have resources to help you where you're at. Our website includes:



Visit: https://nebraskaparalegal.org/students.php

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Words of Wisdom

By Harvey Spector Motivation



- 1. Don't say, sorry to bother you. Say, I have a question, could you spare me a couple of minutes.
- 2. Don't say goodbye, say see you.
- 3. Don't say I like it, say it's pleasant.
- 4. Don't say, tell me, say I'm listening.
- 5. Don't say, you go first, say after you.
- 6. Don't say your welcome, say my pleasure.
- 7. Don't say shut up, say be quiet.
- 8. Don't say I don't know, say let me find out.
- 9. Don't say, I think, say I believe.
- 10. Don't say, calm down, say take it easy.
- 11. Don't say good luck, say all the best.
- 12. Don't say I'm busy, say I'm tied up right now, can we talk later.
- 13. Don't say I don't care, say it doesn't matter to me.
- 14. Don't say that's impossible, say let's find a solution.
- 15. Don't say leave me alone, say can we talk later.
- 16. Don't say I hate this, say I'm not a fan of this.



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