

SUMMONS

WDALA

An Association for Paralegals/Legal Assistants



MAY 2025

www.wdala.org

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From the PRESIDENT

Hello Members and HELLO SPRING!

I think we are officially over “false spring”, and I cannot wait to enjoy the longer, warmer days!

In regards to the Paralegal Outreach program, we have put together two new paralegal brochures – one for Paralegals, to let them know what WDALA is and how we can help them succeed; and one for Attorneys, so they know the benefits of having a paralegal and how to utilize a paralegal within their practice. With the connection we have made with United Tribes Technical College and their Paralegal Degree program, I have been asked to join UTTC’s Advisory Committee for their Paralegal and Criminal Justice Degree programs. I am truly excited for the opportunity to be a voice for Paralegals, and I hope I can help by offering insight, expertise, and a new perspective to shape the future content being taught! And to round it out, a few members from Region III will be hosting a vendor booth at SBAND’s Annual Meeting in Bismarck on June 12th. Our intent is to continue to push the power of Paralegals within the legal field and to continue to boost the recognition of our Association! If you are interested in being a part of any of the outreach events, please let me know, and keep an eye out for the next Summons to see how the Outreach program is continuing to evolve!

Did you know that WDALA needs you? Yes, 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 give you some options on utilizing your skills! Your dedication, commitment, and continued collaboration has helped WDALA achieve recognition in the legal field and within our communities. Together, we've demonstrated the power of our collective efforts, and I'm truly excited about what we can continue to accomplish.



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 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. Please reach out!

Thank you for continuing to participate and be involved with this organization! If you are new, I welcome you and I look forward to having you onboard!!

Anna Heinen



Save **THE DATE**

SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2025

WDALA'S FALL SEMINAR

ND Heritage Center
Bismarck, ND

Welcome To WDALA

**Nathaniel Henjum
(Region II)**

Photo and bio not available.

**Michelle Renner
(Region III)**

Photo and bio not available.



**Lindsey Lewis
(Region IV)**

Hi I'm Lindsey. I am originally from Glendive, MT and moved to Dickinson in 2019. I worked as a Legal Assistant for the Dawson County Attorney's Office prior to the move and for the past 5 years, I have been working at the Dickinson Public Defender's Office as a Legal Assistant. My husband is from Dickinson, prompting the move to ND. We have three children- Brecken (14), Bexleigh (10) and Lochlan (4); and two dogs, Zeke and Zoey. When I'm not at work, I'm usually running the kids to every sporting practice you can imagine or cheering them on from the stands. I always joke if there's an empty day on the calendar, I must have missed something! I'm excited to be a part of WDALA!

Member Spotlight



Megan Ontis

How long have you been a member of WDALA?

2.5 years.

What do you like most about being a member of WDALA?

I have learned a lot from online seminars and reading the newsletter.

What company do you work for?

Schweigert, Klemin & McBride

What do you love most about your job?

The team at SKM. We all get along so well, and everyone is willing to help one another when needed.

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

Patience. I know a lot has been given to me and I think it is a necessary skill to have in any field to remain calm and control stress levels.

Do you have any creative outlets or interests?

I love decorating. I jump at the chance to help friends when they ask.

What is the best concert you ever attended?

I'd have to say that it was the first concert I ever attended, which was Def Leopard and Aerosmith. My two friends from the all-girls Catholic high school that I attended, and I got all decked out in our "rock concert" apparel (that was definitely not our usual conservative attire) and had a blast. My parents of course never knew I was there!

What's a cause that you are passionate about?

I had a sister with Downs Syndrome, and I believe they are some of the greatest people on the planet; I would really like to spend more time volunteering with Special Olympics and programs involving special needs.

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

That I should never sing in public.

What is one question you wish people would ask you more?

What would you like from Starbucks today?

Describe what a perfect day outside of work would look like for you?

The perfect day outside of work would involve being on a lake in a boat, on a paddle board or in a kayak; then enjoying the sunset with a glass of wine...or beer...or seltzer, I'm not picky!

If you could make one rule for everyone in the world to follow, what would it be?

Say "Thank you" when people do small things such as holding the door.

What is a dream that you want to make come true one day?

To live on lake property.

What's the weirdest food you've ever eaten?

Head cheese. Disgusting. And the name is not only unappetizing, but also partly false, it's not cheese of any kind. Sorry to anyone who likes it, but who came up with this stuff?





Kim Perkuhn

Member *Spotlight*

How long have you been a member of WDALA?

I became a member in Sept of 2023 so about a year and a half.

What do you like most about being a member of WDALA?

Connecting with people in the same profession who have a passion for continued education and growth in the Paralegal field.

What company do you work for?

I work in the Ramsey County State's Attorney's Office.

What has been your biggest professional achievement?

I am hoping to be able to add Certified Paralegal to my name shortly as I am studying for the CP exam (which in itself is an achievement to me!!!). Since I haven't accomplished that yet, I would have to say securing the job in the State's Attorney's Office.

What is one professional success story that you're proud of?

Assisting the State's Attorney with the prosecution of a child abuse case, it was a very emotional trial. The first jury came back as a hung jury, and it was decided to try the case again. The second jury came back with a conviction. I ended up spending a lot of time with the family during this trial and they were very grateful for all the work our office put into the case.

What do you love most about your job?

Working in the prosecutor's office brings something different every day. As a Paralegal, I am involved in the cases from the very beginning as they are sent to us from law enforcement to the end when they either go to trial or plead out. Assisting in the courtroom is probably one of my favorite things to do, especially in a jury trial. It gets pretty fast paced with a lot of information coming at us, it seems like anything can happen in the courtroom!



Skills

✓ Communication

✓ Organization

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

Organization and good communication! I try to follow the Touch-it-Once rule when it comes to documents crossing my desk. Don't put things off, they never go away and then you just end up with a to-do pile.

What is the best concert you ever attended?

I am a classic rock fan. I love going to concerts and I never miss a chance to go see Hairball. They bring all the classics together!

What has been your most meaningful accomplishment so far?

My children and grandchildren!! We have a blended family, 4 children and 9 grandchildren.

What is the last TV show you binged watched?

Netflix – Running Point with Kate Hudson

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

I am Irish so I would love to spend a month in Ireland! Maybe run into some relatives I didn't know I had. 😊

If you could make one rule for everyone in the world to follow, what would it be?

Treat others the way you want to be treated.



PARALEGAL CORE COMPETENCIES: ENHANCING THE LEGAL ECOSYSTEM

By Melissa Hamilton, ACP

Even in an evolving legal landscape, paralegals will find vital roles in the delivery of legal services, provided they possess the key technical and soft skills that ensure the efficiency, accuracy, and continuity of the legal process.

NALA – The Paralegal Association identifies these skills as “core competencies,” but the same concepts are also recognized in similar forms by other organizations devoted to the education and support of paralegals, such as the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA), the American Association for Paralegal Education (AAfPE), the American Bar Association’s Standing Committee on Paralegals, and others that share the same goals.

Empowering paralegals to excel and elevate the profession by attaining these core competencies and durable skills benefits not only the paralegal profession but also the attorneys, law offices, and clients that comprise the legal ecosystem of which paralegals are a part.

As described by NALA and others, these core competencies include:

Critical Thinking Skills: Analyze, identify, and synthesize relevant issues, discern applicable laws, and apply recognized legal authority to solution of the matter.

Technical Skills: Mastery of legal technology, eDiscovery tools, and case management software.

Analytical Thinking: Problem-solving and attention to detail.

Ethics and Compliance: Adherence to professional and legal standards.

Communication Skills: Clear, concise, and effective interaction with clients, attorneys, and other stakeholders.

Project Management: Organizing workloads, managing timelines, and prioritizing tasks.

Other durable skills, such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and leadership, add to the mix by fostering seamless teamwork, especially in high-pressure environments. Paralegals who are armed with these tools can thrive across a broad range of organizations and industries, serving as indispensable components of their legal teams.



Benefits to Attorneys and Law Offices

Engaging paralegals with robust core competencies allows attorneys to focus on high-level legal strategy, confident that operational excellence will continue. For example, assigning skilled paralegals to organize and assemble due diligence materials and documents in the key areas of a large corporate transaction will free the attorneys to oversee the interviews, investigations, and contract negotiations that lead to a successful closing.

In complex litigation, an excellent paralegal team can drive nation-wide discovery efforts, oversee document review, and perform other key support roles in and outside the courtroom. In regulatory matters, paralegals can oversee submissions of information requests to government agencies and collect, review, summarize, and organize available information.

Benefits to Clients

Regardless of the size of the legal team or the nature of the work, delegating appropriate tasks to highly trained paralegals results in increased productivity, as a strong legal team allows a case to progress efficiently. In addition, paralegals who are skilled in communication and relationship management enhance client satisfaction and contribute to a positive client experience. Last, but far from least, including paralegals in appropriate positions reduces the legal team's reliance on higher-billed attorneys and external resources, improving overall cost efficiency.

Benefits to the Legal Ecosystem

An investment in paralegal education and development strengthens the entire legal profession by creating a workforce that is competent, ethical, and prepared to meet emerging challenges. This ripple effect promotes:

- **Consistency and quality**, as well-trained paralegals assume responsibility for tasks that broaden the reach of the legal team and promote access to justice while supporting the high standards of the legal profession.
- **New perspectives**, as empowering paralegals from a broad range of backgrounds fosters creativity and productivity.
- **Innovation and Growth**, as adaptive, forward-thinking teams are equipped to respond to change and embrace new technologies and methodologies.

Succeeding in the paralegal profession demands skills, knowledge, and ethical conduct. Providing training focused upon the core competencies prepares paralegals for fulfilling and meaningful careers in whatever sector they may choose to work. Paralegals who can demonstrate the core competencies are positioned to elevate their contributions, deliver exceptional support to their legal teams, and thrive in a profession that demands both expertise and adaptability.

The information and views provided in the American Bar Association (“ABA”) Standing Committee on Paralegals’ blog do not constitute official statements by the ABA and do not represent official ABA policy. The views expressed in this blog are those of the individual authors writing in their individual capacities only – not those of their respective employers, the ABA, or the Standing Committee on Paralegals as a whole.

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<https://www.americanbar.org/>



Melissa Hamilton, ACP, member of the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals Approval Commission and Paralegal at the North Dakota Office of the Attorney General



Balancing Workload and Well-Being for Sustainable Success

By Brenda Ross



In the fast-paced world of legal work, paralegals are often caught between tight deadlines, demanding cases, and the expectation to perform their best. The legal field is notorious for its high-pressure environment, where every task feels urgent, and every detail matters. While dedication and a strong work ethic are essential qualities for success, they can also lead to burnout if not managed carefully. Maintaining a balance between workload and personal well-being is crucial to long-term professional success. Here is how you can manage your time effectively, protect your mental and physical health, and avoid the burnout that can derail even the most promising careers.

1. PRIORITIZE AND ORGANIZE YOUR TASKS

The first step to balancing your workload is effective prioritization. In the legal profession, it is easy to feel overwhelmed by the sheer volume of tasks that demand your attention. Each day can bring new challenges, from last-minute requests to urgent client needs. To navigate this environment successfully, start each day by listing your tasks in order of importance. This simple habit can make a world of difference in how you manage your time and energy.

Begin by identifying the tasks most critical to your job performance and those with the most significant consequences if not completed promptly. Break down larger projects into smaller, manageable steps and tackle them individually. By focusing on one task at a time, you can reduce the risk of feeling overwhelmed and increase your ability to produce high-quality work consistently.

Tools like task management apps or a simple planner can help you keep track of deadlines, meetings, and follow-ups. Digital tools often offer reminders and notifications to ensure you do not overlook important tasks. On the other hand, a physical planner can provide a tangible way to visualize your day and make necessary adjustments.

Tip: Color-code or label tasks by urgency to identify what needs immediate attention. This method helps you focus on what matters most and prevents less critical tasks from taking up your valuable time. By visually distinguishing between different priority levels, you can quickly assess where to direct your efforts, especially during busy periods. This approach enhances productivity while reducing the mental strain of constantly juggling multiple responsibilities.

2. SET REALISTIC DEADLINES

Setting achievable deadlines is key to maintaining productivity and sanity. In a high-stakes profession, it is tempting to promise quick turnarounds to please supervisors or clients. However, overcommitting can lead to a cycle of stress, rushed work, and, ultimately, burnout. When new assignments come in, it is essential to assess how they fit into your current workload.

Take a moment to evaluate your existing commitments and consider how the new task will impact your schedule. Do not hesitate to negotiate deadlines with attorneys or supervisors if your plate is full. Open communication is crucial in managing expectations and ensuring you can deliver high-quality work without compromising your well-being. It is better to set a realistic time frame up front than to risk producing rushed or incomplete work later. By being transparent about your workload, you can build trust with your colleagues and demonstrate your commitment to delivering excellent results.

Tip: Consider building in a buffer when setting deadlines. This extra time can be a lifesaver if unexpected issues arise or if a task takes longer than anticipated. For example, if you estimate that a task will take three days, set a deadline of four days to give yourself some breathing room. This buffer protects you from last-minute stress and allows you to address any unforeseen challenges without compromising the quality of your work. Over time, this practice can lead to a more consistent performance and a reputation for reliability.

3. SCHEDULE REGULAR BREAKS

In the rush to meet deadlines, it is easy to skip breaks, especially in a field as demanding as law. The culture of many law firms often values long hours and relentless dedication, which can make it difficult to justify taking time for yourself. However, regular breaks are essential for maintaining focus, reducing stress, and preventing burnout. Continuous work without adequate rest can lead to diminished productivity, increased errors, and decreased overall job satisfaction.

Brief, scheduled pauses throughout the day can refresh your mind, improve concentration, and even spark creative solutions to complex problems. These breaks do not have to be long. A few minutes away from your desk can significantly affect your mental clarity and energy levels. Whether it is a short walk, a quick stretch, or a few deep breaths, these moments of rest can rejuvenate you and help you return to your work with renewed engagement.

Tip: Try the Pomodoro® Technique, where you work for 25 minutes, then take a five-minute break. After four cycles, take an extended break of 15-30 minutes. This approach can enhance productivity while ensuring you get the mental rest you need. The Pomodoro® Technique is particularly effective because it breaks the workday into manageable intervals, making even the most daunting tasks seem more approachable. Balancing periods of intense focus with regular breaks allows you to maintain a steady pace throughout the day without feeling overwhelmed.

4. SET BOUNDARIES AND DISCONNECT

One of the biggest challenges for paralegals is setting boundaries between work and personal life, especially with the rise of remote work. The line between professional and personal time can easily blur when your office is just a few steps away from your living room. While checking emails or working on tasks outside of office hours is tempting, this can quickly lead to burnout. The expectation to be constantly available can create a sense of perpetual urgency, leaving you feeling drained and unable to disconnect from work fully. Establishing clear work hours and sticking to them as much as possible is crucial for maintaining a healthy work-life balance. Communicate your availability to colleagues and supervisors, and make it clear when you are offline. This protects your personal time and sets expectations for others, helping to prevent the encroachment of work on your personal life.

Tip: Create a shutdown ritual at the end of your workday. This could be as simple as closing your laptop, tidying your desk, or reviewing tomorrow's to-do list. This ritual signals to your brain that the workday is over and helps you transition into personal time. A consistent shutdown routine can help you mentally separate from work, allowing you to relax and recharge. Over time, this practice can improve work-life balance, mental health, and overall satisfaction with your job.



5. PRIORITIZE SELF-CARE

Taking care of yourself is not a luxury – it is a necessity. The legal profession's demands can be all-consuming, making it easy to neglect your physical and mental health. However, avoiding self-care can have serious consequences, including increased stress, reduced productivity, and long-term health issues. To sustain your energy levels and focus, it is essential to make self-care a priority.

Regular exercise, a healthy diet, and sufficient sleep are critical to well-being. Physical activity can help alleviate stress, boost your mood, and improve your overall health. A balanced diet provides the nutrients your body needs to function optimally, while adequate sleep is crucial for cognitive function, emotional regulation, and physical recovery.

In addition to these basics, engage in activities that calm and rejuvenate you, such as reading, cooking, or spending time with loved ones. Hobbies and leisure activities can provide a much-needed break from work demands and help you maintain balance and fulfillment.

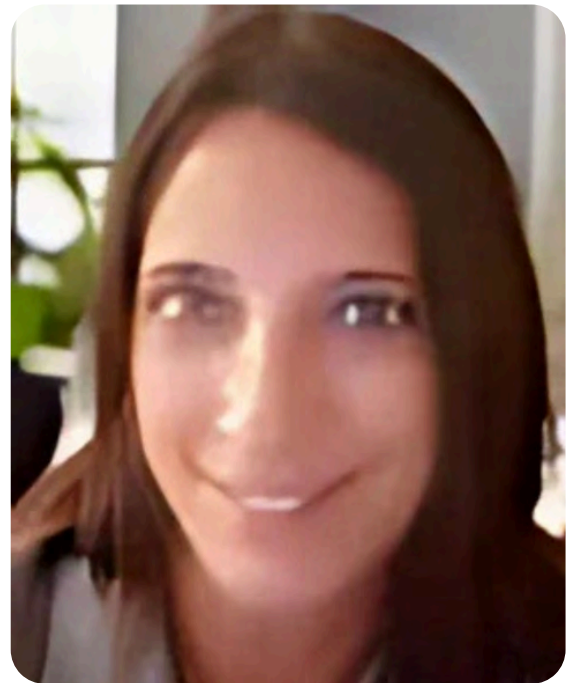
Tip: Schedule self-care like you would a meeting or deadline. Treat it as a non-negotiable time essential for your overall well-being and effectiveness at work. Make self-care a regular part of your routine, whether through a daily walk, a weekly yoga class, or a weekend getaway. By prioritizing your health and happiness, you will be better equipped to handle the challenges of your job and more resilient in the face of stress.

CONCLUSION

Balancing workload and well-being is an ongoing process that requires conscious effort and self-awareness. The legal profession is demanding, but it is also incredibly rewarding when approached with the right strategies. By organizing tasks, setting realistic deadlines, taking regular breaks, establishing boundaries, and prioritizing self-care, you can maintain a healthy equilibrium between your professional responsibilities and personal life.

Remember, a well-rested and balanced paralegal is more productive, satisfied, and resilient in the face of challenges. By taking proactive steps to manage your workload and protect your well-being, you can thrive in your career while staying energized, motivated, and fulfilled for the long haul.


Success in the legal field is not just about working hard. It is about working smart and taking care of yourself. Embrace these strategies as part of your daily routine, and you should find that you are more effective in your role and more content and balanced in your life.



Brenda Ross has nearly 25 years of legal expertise. She grew from a legal receptionist to a paralegal manager and became a law practice management consultant focused on increased efficiency and revenue. As an adjunct professor at St. Petersburg College, Brenda is committed to educating future legal professionals. She serves on the ABA Paralegal Studies Advisory Board for two Florida colleges. She has written several reference books for paralegals. She has a paralegal certificate, an associate degree in computer science, and certifications in agile project management, Google Project Management, and Six Sigma White Belt.

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QUITCLAIM DEED

Recording Documents in North Dakota

By Attorney David Phillips

What begins as a routine task – recording a deed – can become a logistical nightmare if you do not pay attention to the statutory recording requirements. Consider this scenario: your client and his neighbor have finally reached a mediated settlement after years of litigation over a property line dispute. As part of the settlement, your client agreed to execute and record a quitclaim deed. An attorney at your office prepared a draft of the deed, asking you to format it, and to ensure it gets signed and recorded. You give the deed a final review, present it to the client for signature, notarize it, and mail it to the county recorder's office. Shortly after, you receive it back,

unrecorded, with a note indicating it was rejected due to incorrect margin formatting. Meanwhile, your client has left the country on a backpacking trip through Europe. Now, you're left scrambling to obtain a new signature and avoid delaying the resolution of a matter everyone thought was settled.

To prevent such costly and embarrassing delays, it is essential to understand and follow North Dakota's recording requirements. Below is a summary of key statutory requirements and best practices to help ensure your documents are accepted for recording the first time.

General Recording Requirements in North Dakota (see statutes for details and exceptions)

- Document must be an original or a certified copy.
- All signatures on the document must be original and handwritten. (N.D.C.C. § 47-19-03)
- Document should be notarized, unless it is an instrument entitled to record without acknowledgment under N.D.C.C. § 47-19-02 – see statute for list of instruments.
- Document must be no larger than 8½” x 14” size. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05(1)(a)(1))
- The printed, written, or typed words must be considered legible by the recorder and, unless the form was issued by a government agency, must have a font size equal to or larger than ten point calibri. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05(1)(a)(2))
- Document must have a legal description considered to be adequate by the recorder. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05(1)(a)(3))

- A space of at least three inches must be provided across the top of the first page of the document (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05(1)(a)(4)). Each page of the document must contain a 1-inch margin on either the top, bottom, or side. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05(1)(d))
- Any map, plat, survey, or other land surveying document must include the personal signature and seal of a registered professional land surveyor by whom it was prepared, even if the document is just part of an exhibit or attachment. (N.D.C.C. § 43-19.1-30; ND Attorney General Letter Opinion 2017-L-03).
- Social security numbers should be redacted. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-23)
- Make sure all dates are filled in (not left as blank underlines).

Deeds and Contracts for Deed – Additional Requirements in North Dakota (see statutes for details and exceptions)

- Must contain a statement of full consideration or identify a statutory exception in accordance with the provisions of N.D.C.C. § 11-18-02.2 (not required on a deed covering only minerals).

- Must contain the post-office address, and any known or existing street address if within the corporate boundaries of a city, of each grantee named in the deed. (N.D.C.C. § 47-19-05)
- If the deed contains a metes and bounds legal description, it must contain the name and address of the individual who drafted the legal description, using one of the following forms: "The legal description was prepared by _____ (name) _____ (address)." OR "The legal description was obtained from a previously recorded instrument." (N.D.C.C. § 47-19-03.1) (This requirement does not apply to any instrument executed before January 1, 2000, or any instrument executed or acknowledged outside North Dakota).
- All taxes must be paid before the auditor will transfer the deed for recording. (N.D.C.C. § 11-18-02). See N.D.C.C. § 11-18-03 for a list of exceptions, which includes among other others: mineral deeds, personal representatives deeds, and transfer on death deeds.

Mortgages – Additional Requirements in North Dakota (see statutes for details)

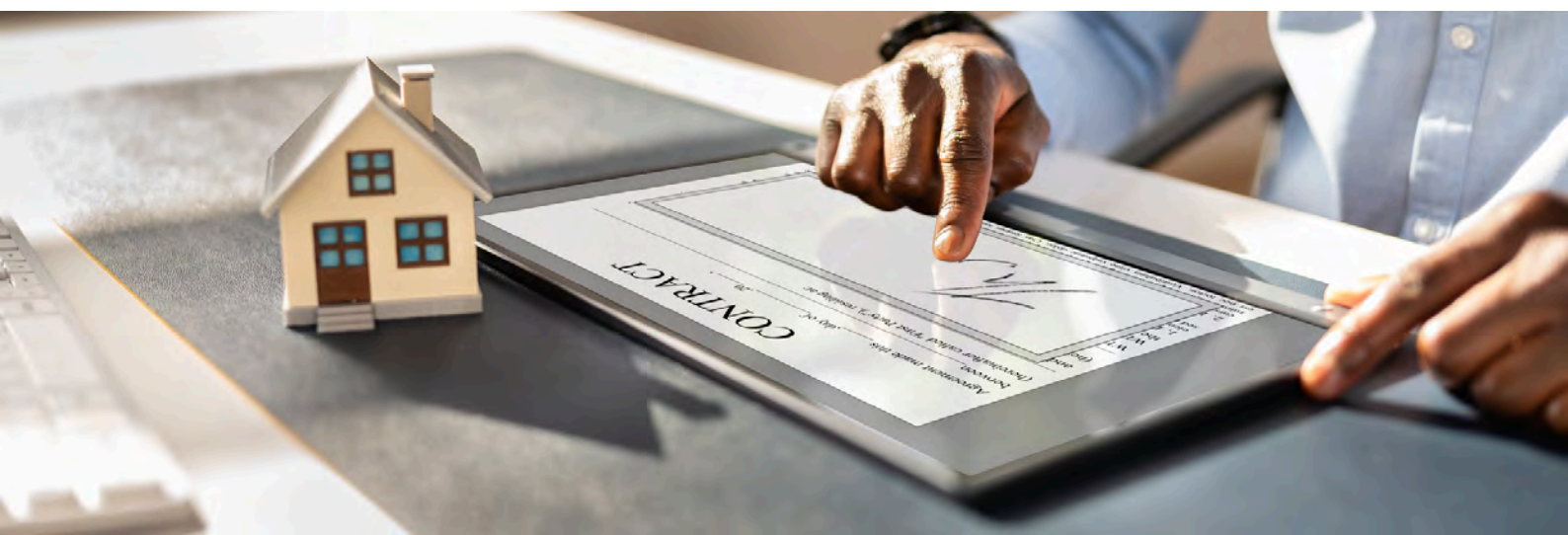
- Must contain the post-office address of the mortgagee. (N.D.C.C. § 35-03-04)
- An assignment of a mortgage must contain the post-office address of the assignee. (N.D.C.C. § 35-03-04)

Recording Fees

Recording fees are governed by N.D.C.C. § 11-18-05. Be sure to calculate the correct fee amount and include payment when submitting the document.

Electronic Recording

Some county recorders work with vendors to facilitate electronic recording of documents, which may be an option for attorneys, title companies, abstractors, lenders, mortgage clearing houses, and other similar businesses. Check the specific county recorder's website for more information.



Best Practices

- Articles like this are a good guide and starting point, but always review the actual statutes as well.
- Review the specific county recorder's website, which may list additional requirements.
- Verify the requirements before preparing the document, again before having someone sign the document, and again before sending to the county recorder.
- When in doubt, call the county recorder's office directly for clarification.

Final Thoughts

In real estate and transactional work, attention to detail is critical. A minor formatting error can create unnecessary delays and frustration for both the legal professional and the client. By proactively following statutory requirements and county-specific practices, you can help ensure a smooth and timely recording process—without having to track down a client halfway across the world for a second signature.



David R. Phillips is an attorney with Bakke Grinolds Wiederholt in Bismarck, ND. He has been practicing law since 2005 and is licensed in state and federal court in North Dakota, and before the United States Court of Appeals, Eighth Circuit.

David obtained an undergraduate degree in Political Science from North Dakota State University in 2001, and a law degree from William Mitchell College of Law in 2005. David practiced civil litigation at Smith Bakke Porsborg Schweigert and Armstrong, primarily in the areas of insurance defense, insurance coverage disputes, defense of political subdivisions, personal injury, and property damage. David joined Fredrikson & Byron, P.A. in 2010 as an attorney in its Bismarck office, eventually becoming a partner in the firm. At Fredrikson, David represented business clients in all aspects of complex commercial litigation, with a particular emphasis on oil and gas, contract disputes, employment law, and property law. Additionally, David represented numerous school districts throughout North Dakota on transactional and litigation matters. David also worked as general counsel at CoSchedule, LLC, a successful startup software company based in North Dakota. From 2018 to 2021, David was an Assistant Attorney General with the State of North Dakota, primarily representing the North Dakota Industrial Commission, including the Oil and Gas Division.

MY JOB AS A STAFF ATTORNEY FOR THE

South Central Judicial District Court

WHAT ARE YOUR JOB DUTIES?

- Conduct in-depth legal research and analysis on various areas of law, including civil, criminal, juvenile, family law, and administrative appeals.
- Review case records and conduct background research if necessary, including providing summaries and analyses of similar relevant issues previously or currently being heard in the district resolution of prior similar cases and suggesting areas that will need clarification at any hearing.
- Review orders and court documents for appealable issues.
- Draft and edit findings and orders for the district court judges.
- Drafts jury instructions and special verdict forms for upcoming trials.
- Assists judges through ongoing complex trials. Provides insight and legal analysis on trial matters as requested by judges, including objections, in-chamber conferences, and motions made through trial. Conducts in-depth legal research during the trials to provide the judges with the necessary law for making quick decisions and rulings as issues arise during trials.
- Records transcribe and aid in creating a record during trials and hearings.
- Perform clerical duties in court, including administering oaths, ensuring correctly marked documents, maintaining logs and forms of exhibits, witnesses, and time logs, ensures a full record is transferred to the clerk's office.
- Provide administrative support to assigned judges.

WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GREW UP AND ARE YOU CURRENTLY DOING IT?

When I was a young kid, I wanted to be a veterinarian; however, some of the sad aspects of that job made me rethink that path. In high school, I wanted to work in linguistics or international politics. I did obtain a bachelor's in international studies. After I graduated from UND with my undergraduate degree, I decided to stay closer to my family. Although not the path I envisioned, I am delighted with where I have ended up.

WHAT LED YOU TO THIS CAREER AND HOW DID YOU GET INTO YOUR CURRENT FIELD OR POSITION?

Before going to law school, I worked for several years in both victim services and corrections. In these positions, I spent much of my time in the court system and eventually decided to go to law school. When I graduated, I had no idea what area of law to practice, so I took a clerkship with the North Dakota Supreme Court, where I did very similar work but on an appellate level. I enjoyed the variety of areas I would see, but wanted a faster pace and to see a case through the courts instead of just on appeal. I lucked out, and a staff attorney position became available when my clerkship was over. It perfectly fit what I loved about my clerkship but with a little more excitement.

WHAT ADVICE CAN YOU OFFER TO ATTORNEYS AND THEIR SUPPORT STAFF TO MAKE YOUR JOB EASIER?

Preparation is one of the biggest things about my position. Each judge, and by extension their staff, has many cases, all of which have many needs when it comes to staff. Because of this, minimizing surprises when possible is huge. If exhibits can be prefilled or prenumbered, if parties can stipulate to exhibits they don't have objections to, or if parties are able to notify us of issues or needs during a hearing as early as possible, it helps us be able to prepare better. It keeps the court from bottlenecking with a number of continuances for general administrative complications.

WHAT'S SOMETHING THAT SURPRISED YOU ABOUT YOUR CURRENT CAREER PATH?

The biggest thing about being a lawyer, which surprised me, is how small of a bar North Dakota is. Everyone knows everyone, and most people are more than willing to help if you struggle with an issue.

WHAT IS A TYPICAL DAY LIKE AT YOUR JOB?

If I don't have court, I will arrive at work, have my daily coffee, and spend a significant amount of time working on projects for either previously heard or upcoming cases. Sometimes this includes drafting orders, findings, or jury instructions; other times, it includes researching specific issues or fielding incoming requests from the public or attorneys. If I have court, these previous daily tasks will be broken up with various court hearings. One day could be initial appearances and criminal matters; another can be civil or administrative. One day, I could be here in Bismarck. Another day, I could be heading to the rural counties in our district. No two days are the same - which I love.



Fun Facts:

HOBBIES?

In the summer, my hobbies are anything outdoors, such as kayaking, hiking, camping, or just being lazy and sitting on a lawn chair. During the other 10 months, I do puzzles, play cards/board games, watch documentaries, and snuggle with my cat.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE QUOTE AND WHY?

"If you do what interests you, at least one person is pleased." – Katharine Hepburn. It has always stuck with me: you can spend your whole life trying to make others happy, but at the end of the day you can't make everyone happy.

WHAT COULD YOU GIVE A 30-MINUTE PRESENTATION ABOUT WITH NO ADVANCED PREPARATION?

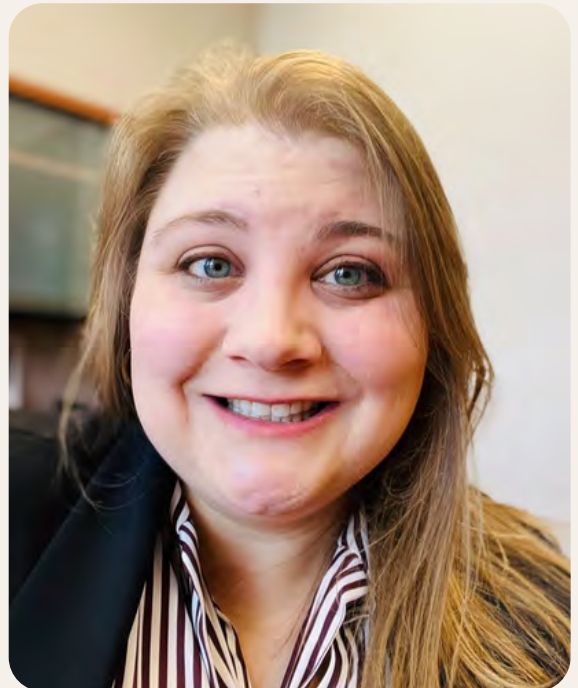
Why Mulan is considered a Disney princess – I recently had a very in-depth argument with my niece on this topic, and it's very fresh in my mind.

IF YOU COULD MEET ANY HISTORICAL FIGURE, WHO WOULD IT BE?

Eleanor Roosevelt – I wrote a report on her in high school and have always found her to be a fascinating person who did amazing things for human rights.

WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?

My coworkers – I firmly believe you can do any job when your supervisors and coworkers are good people and you enjoy being around them. The job can be demanding at times, so having people at work that can make you laugh or make a bad day a little better is a huge win. Because of this, I want to do a good job to ensure I pull my weight and don't create more work for others.



Dixie Holland graduated from UND in 2013 with undergraduate degrees in criminal justice and international studies. After graduation, she worked in corrections until 2020, when she returned to UND to pursue a law degree. She graduated from the UND School of Law in 2023 and accepted a position as a law clerk with the North Dakota Supreme Court. In August 2024, she transitioned to the South Central Judicial District Court, where she now works as a staff attorney.

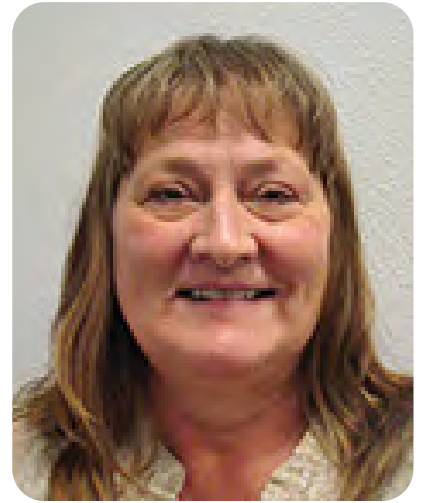
WDALA'S OFFICERS/EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS



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Anna Heinen



1st Vice President
Melissa Hamilton, ACP



2nd Vice President
Kathy Johnson, CP



Secretary
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Treasurer
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Region II Director
Andrea Johnson



Region III Director
Trisha Kinnischtzke



1ST VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It appears that winter is finally behind us and spring appears to be close. Growing up on the farm, I knew that spring was finally here when the crocus flowers started blooming. The meaning of the crocus flower revolves around rebirth, hope, and fresh beginnings. It is often associated with the awakening of spring and the transition from dormancy to vibrancy, making it a symbol of personal transformation. Additionally, it is linked to joy, happiness, and the arrival of warmth and light after a cold period.

Spring also means the WDALA Spring Seminar. The Spring Seminar was held on May 1, 2025, at the Sleep Inn and Suites in Minot. We had a great lineup of speakers – we started the morning off with “Bankruptcy Basics” presented by Chad Anderson, of the Chad Anderson Law Firm,

followed by “Bridging the Legal Workforce Gap in North Dakota – Virtual Assistance” presented by Jen Lee, from Legal Services North Dakota. There was a Board Meeting over lunch. The afternoon started with “Three Affiliated Tribes Criminal Matters” presented by Sheldon Standish, with the Fort Berthold District Court. The afternoon closed out with a presentation on “The Nose Knows: The Scent of Law and Order” presented by Trooper Clark and Lorace the bloodhound of the North Dakota Highway Patrol.



The WDALA Fall Seminar will be held September 16 and 17, 2025, at the North Dakota Heritage Center in Bismarck. We are working on finalizing the schedule of speakers but have secured a presentation from Legal Services of North Dakota and a legislative update from the 2025 legislative session. Add the dates to your calendar and keep an eye out for updates and the seminar brochure.

The WDALA Luncheon Teleseminar was held on February 5, 2025, with a presentation by Kari M. Knudsen, Clerk of Court on E-filing Basics and Tips. There were 20 attendees, 13 WDALA Members and 7 non-members, netting WDALA a profit of \$70.

If you have an idea for a topic or speaker for a future WDALA seminar or teleseminar, please feel free to contact me or any of the WDALA Education Committee members – Melissa Klimpel, ACP; Megan Klym; Dehan Schwan; Kimberly Perkuhn; and Anna Heinen.

I hope you have a wonderful spring!

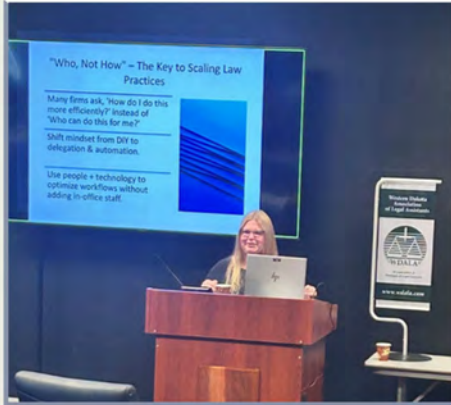
Melissa Hamilton, ACP

WDALA

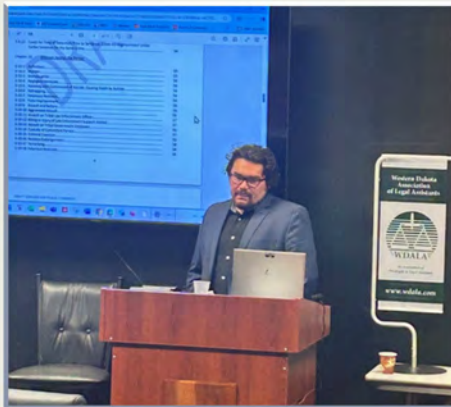


WDALA Spring Seminar

Bridging the
Legal Workforce
Gap In North
Dakota - Virtual
Assistance
Presented by
Attorney Jen
Lee



Three Affiliated
Tribes Criminal
Matters
Presented by
Sheldon
Standish



Bankruptcy
Basics by
Attorney
Chad
Anderson

The Nose Knows:
The Scent of Law
and Order
Presented by
Trooper Steven
Clark & Lorace the
bloodhound



2nd Vice President's Report



As of this date, our membership stands at 39 members: 33 Active, 1 Associate, and 5 Emeritus.

Please note that we have 3 new members: Nathaniel Henjum (Region II), Lindsey Lewis (Region IV), and Michelle Renner (Region III). Please reach out to them, invite them to your Region events, and make them feel welcome!

If anyone needs any help regarding membership, please email me, at least for the time being, at ahainen@smithporsborg.com.

Anna Heinen

for

Kathy Johnson, CP

Treasurer's Report



As of April 14, 2025, I'm happy to report that the Western Dakota Association of Legal Assistants account balance stands at \$9,852.67. I want to send a big thank you to each of you for your help with our fundraising efforts and your enthusiasm to keep our community thriving!

Cassy Clark, CP



NALA Liaison's Report

Hello WDALA! The 2025 NALA Conference is taking place July 10 - 12, 2025 in Atlantic City, New Jersey at the Harrah's Resort Atlantic City. The rates for registration are now \$699 for NALA Members, \$769 for Nonmembers, and \$349 for Students. Early bird registration ends May 7th. Thereafter, the cost increases \$70. The conference offers up to 12.5 CLE hours along with networking and socializing opportunities. If you are studying for the CP exam, I highly recommend attending the CP Review courses. If you would like to attend, please let me know.

If you are a NALA member, the \$80 member credit can be used toward any education materials offered by NALA. If you need or are interested in CLE's, please take advantage of this opportunity and check out NALA's webinars, and CLE seminars. <https://nala.org/education/>.

Our board members have selected our nominations for the NALA Affiliated Associations Director and the NALA Affiliated Associations Secretary positions. Our very own Melissa Klimpel has thrown her hat in for the Director position. Good luck Melissa!!! The Board nominated Nita Serrano for the Secretary position.

The Board has nominated the Education Committee for the many years of incredible CLE offerings for both paralegals and attorneys. WDALA offers a Luncheon Teleseminar each winter, a 1-day Spring Seminar, and a 2-day Fall Seminar. The Education Committee ensures all CLE's are available for virtual attendance and are approved by both NALA and SBAND.

Melissa Hamilton was nominated and won the NALA President's Award for her outstanding accomplishments and contributions to the future of the paralegal profession. She will be recognized at the NALA Annual Membership Meeting on Thursday, July 10, 2025, in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Though we are small, we are fierce WDALA!

We currently have two members sitting for the CP exam. Congratulations to Dehan Schwan for passing the Knowledge portion of the exam. If anyone else is interested in becoming a member of NALA or obtaining their CP/ACP credential, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. I can't stress enough how beneficial this certification can be for your career and future. The CP/ACP credential can be the key to success, respect, and opportunity. When clients and potential employers see the credential, they know you are educated, motivated and goal oriented.

Ashley Miller, ACP



Region III Report

This winter, Region III members stayed active by volunteering for the 14th annual Drug Court Christmas project. Additionally, several members volunteered for the Santa Run which took place in its new location in Mandan.

Planning has begun for the annual Drug Court picnic. The picnic will be held on Tuesday, June 17th at 6:00 pm at Sertoma Park. This will

be the 14th year WDALA has hosted a picnic for the Bismarck-Mandan Drug Court participants and their families! We still need additional volunteers to help serve at the picnic and/or bring food. If you want to volunteer to bring food to the picnic, you can find the sign up link at:

<https://www.signupgenius.com/go/60B054DA4A72EA1F58-56799483-wdala>

Monthly meetings for Region III are held the second Wednesday of the month over the noon hour at A&B Pizza South. We will not be meeting in June, July, and August, but will resume in the fall. Have a great summer!



Trisha
Kinnischtzke



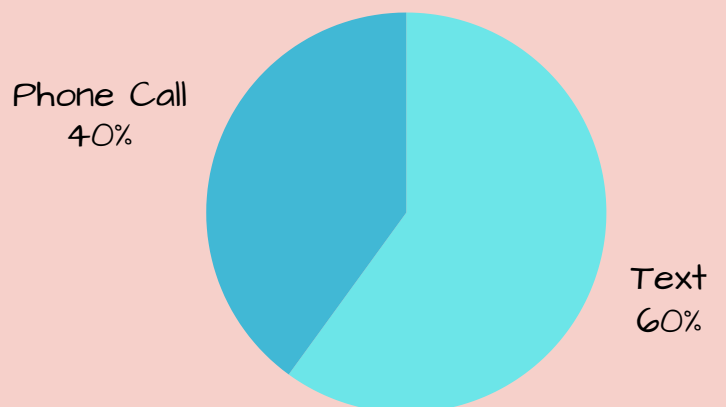
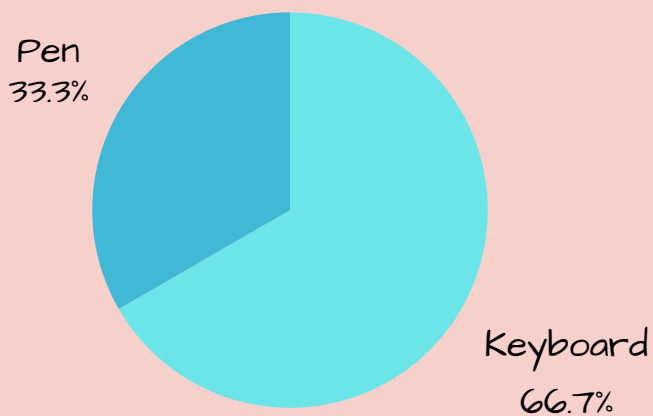
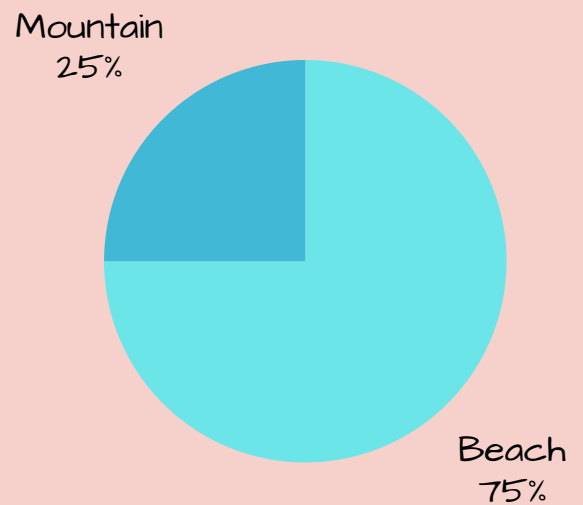
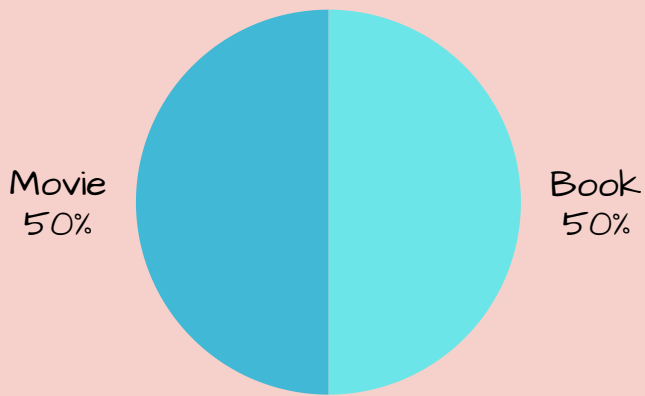
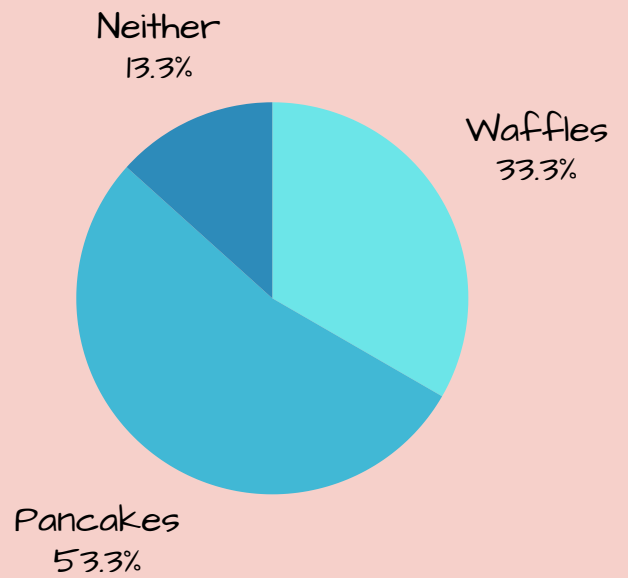
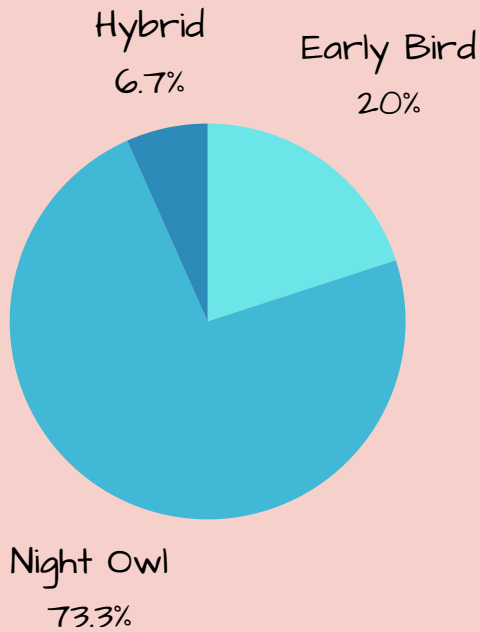
We Asked . . . You Answered

If you had a magic button on your desk to bring you whatever you wanted, what would it summon?

- A magic button on my desk would summon a file organizing fairy so when I press it at the end of the day, all the paperwork on my desk gets automatically filed.
- I would summon warmer weather!
- A copy of myself who could work for me while I took a break!
- Chocolate!!
- Cash. If it had to be office-related, then coffee.
- Coffee and water!
- A stiff drink (at 4:59 pm, of course!)
- A masseuse to give me a neck/shoulder massage throughout the day.
- Coffee or whatever file/document my boss is asking me for.
- Patience
- A neck massage!
- A Diet Coke!
- Bring more coffee



This or That ?



WHAT'S AN UNDERRATED KITCHEN APPLIANCE OR GADGET AND WHY?

- Air Fryer. I don't have one but I've heard they change the kitchen cooking game.
- I definitely feel that my strainer is an underrated kitchen appliance – it is in use daily for cooking and cleaning vegetables and fruit.
- Definitely a meat tenderizer. I have used it to crush ice, crush nuts, as a hammer, to actually make meat tender, etc.
- Air fryer. I cook in that thing almost daily. I had one that died and it was rough going without until I replaced it.
- Pizza cutter – I realized in college that a good pizza cutter is underrated!
- The pick from a nutcracker set. I've never used the pick to crack walnuts! The pick makes a great tool to clean crevices, nooks, and crannies. It's great for getting under lids on cans to pop open the tops and spare your fingernails. It can serve as a letter opener. All kinds of things.
- Egg cooker. It's crazy inexpensive and no more pot full of stinky water, overdone yokes, or hard to peel eggs.
- Kitchen shears – I'm always using my teeth to try to open things. A good kitchen shears is far less expensive than repairing a cracked tooth!
- Spaghetti server spoon – you actually end up with a nice serving of noodles on your plate in one try!
- Pampered Chef chopper - my husband and I joke that if we ever split that would be the one thing we would fight over!
- Ice maker. I was devastated when ours went out. I didn't realize how much ice I use during the day.
- A Melon baller scooper for fruit!
- Air fryer! It can cook anything 😊
- Wine opener

WE ASKED . . . YOU ANSWERED

Thank you to everyone who
sent in their answers.

Giveaway Winners!



Kim
Perkuhn



Madie
McPherson

WDALA SPONSORS

WDALA gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors for their generous support throughout 2025.

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Armstrong Moldenhauer & Smith

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Revive Law Group

Silver Level

Knoll Leibel, LLP
Wheeler Wolf, LLP

Bronze Level

Yunker Law P.C.

WDALA's Committees

Auditing

Holly Radke, ACP and Becky Kocourek, CLA

CLA Chairman

Ashley Miller, ACP

Education

Melissa Hamilton, ACP (Chair);
Melissa Klimpel, ACP; Ashley Miller,
ACP; Megan Klym; Dehan Schwan;
Kimberly Perkuhn; and Anna Heinen

Ethics/Professional Development

Melissa Hamilton, ACP

Finance/Budget

Cassy Clark, CP (Chair)

Historian

Laurie Guenther, ACP

Legal Assistant Day

Ashley Miller, ACP and Shannon Barth

Membership

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

Nominations/Elections

Andrea Johnson and Dehan Schwan

Public Relations

Melissa Klimpel, ACP (Summons Editor); Anna Heinen (Facebook & Website); Andrea Johnson; Melissa Hamilton, ACP; Stephanie Howe; and Candace Schafer

Sponsorship

Trisha Kinnischitzke and Cassy Clark, CP

State Bar/NDTLA Liaison

Ashley Miller, ACP


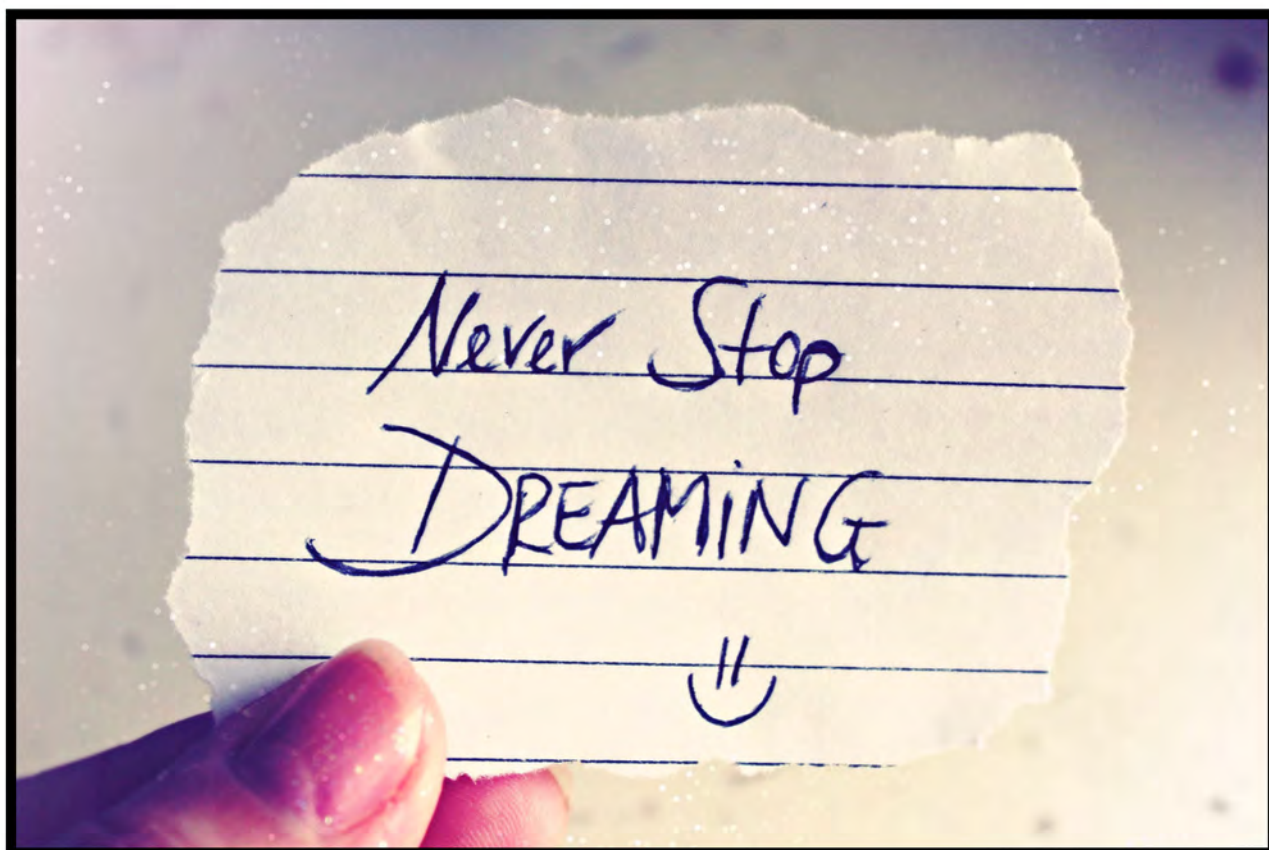
Student Liaison

Ashley Miller, ACP and ReBecka Wohl, ACP

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

May 15	Kathy Johnson
May 22	Melissa Hamilton
May 22	James Hagen
June 14	Michelle Renner
June 14	Carmen Dukeman
June 28	Stephanie Howe
June 29	Megan Ontis
July 2	Becky Kocourek
July 20	Vicki Kunz
July 25	Molly Guy





5 TIPS FOR DEALING WITH ATTORNEYS

- Just reprint/resend whatever it is they are looking for.
- Be ready to explain why that cost is necessary, even if it is obvious.
- Don't tell THEM "it depends."
- Follow up on your follow up's follow up.
- If you aren't being yelled at, you're doing a good job.