



# IN BRIEF

Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants  
An Affiliate of the National Association of Legal Assistants

August 2006

## NeALA'S ANN ATKINSON ELECTED NALA TREASURER

NALA convention in Tampa, Florida, wasn't all fun and learning. There were moments of tension and drama during the election of officers at the membership meeting on Friday, July 28th. For most offices in most years, there is one candidate standing for election. This year, the candidates for treasurer were our own Ann Atkinson, CLA; Sharon Robertson, CLAS, from North Carolina; and Lisa Vander Weide, CLAS, from Florida.

NALA Bylaws require election of a candidate by a majority vote of those voting members present in person or by proxy. After three written ballots, none of the candidates had received a majority of the votes. The Bylaws directed election by lot if no candidate had been elected after three ballots. There were hushed conversations among members and hurried consultations with the professional parliamentarian. Finally, President Deb Monke announced the results of the third ballot: Ann Atkinson had 35 more votes than one candidate and 51 more than the other candidate, but was 14 votes short of having a majority. President Monke asked if any candidate wanted to withdraw; none would. It was decided to attempt one more written ballot. After almost an hour, after four ballots, the voting members of NALA elected Ann Atkinson as treasurer. Robertson said later she and Ann looked at each other in disbelief when the election judge announced the third ballot failed to resolve the election. At the meeting of the Board of Directors of NALA the following morning, the newly-installed president, Tita Brewster, CLA, assigned a Board member to draft an amendment to the Bylaws to elect officers by plurality, not majority vote.

NeALA is very proud of Ann Atkinson, CLA. She served us as NALA's Region VI Director for the past four years. She remains active at a local level, currently sitting on the 30th Anniversary Committee. Ann has been a legal assistant since 1983 and earned her CLA in 1993. She is Senior Public Finance Paralegal at Kutak Rock LLP, Omaha.

Taking over from Ann as Region VI Director is Janie Boswell, CP Specialist. Janie is employed in the Law Division at Mutual of Omaha. She became a legal assistant in 1981, earned her CLA in 1987, and the following year earned her CLAS designation in estate planning and probate. Janie is finishing a 3-year term on the NALA Certifying Board. She is President-Elect of NeALA.

In other convention news, Linda Hess, CP Specialist, of Baird Holm LLP, Omaha, was appointed to the NALA Certifying Board.

## GOVERNOR'S PROCLAMATION HONORS NeALA'S 30TH ANNIVERSARY



Attending the signing on July 12, 2006, were: (left to right) Front row: Jan Wigodsky, Linda Hess, Loretta Phillips, Rose Lulla, Governor Heineman, Laurie Vik, Misty Cowen, Kristine McMahon, and Stephanie Henson. Back row: KeeKee Faulkner, Janie Boswell, Joni Hickey, and Jill Grueber

## Officers & Directors

### President

Stephanie Henson, CLA  
The Dial Companies  
Omaha

### President-Elect

Janie Boswell, CP Specialist  
Mutual of Omaha  
Omaha

### Vice President

Vicki Gradowski  
Gross & Welch  
Omaha

### Secretary

Jodi Gardner-Grandberry  
McGrath North  
Omaha

### Treasurer

Joni Hickey, CP  
Koley Jessen  
Omaha

### NALA Liaison

Linda Hess, CP Specialist  
Baird Holm LLP  
Omaha

### District 1 Director

Loretta Phillips  
City of Omaha  
Omaha

### District 4 Director

Jan Howard, CLA  
Stowell, Kruml  
Ord

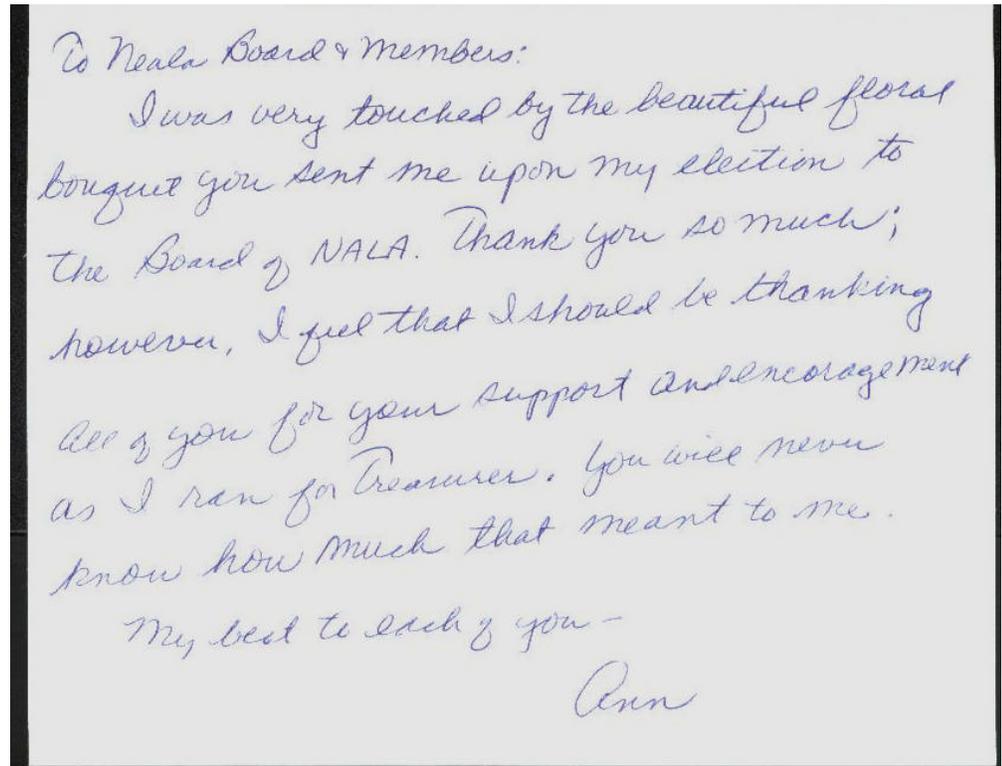
### Publication Editor

Linda Hess, CP Specialist  
Baird Holm LLP  
Omaha

[www.neala.org](http://www.neala.org)

## FROM THE NeALA MAILBOX.....

From Ann Atkinson, a thank you note for flowers sent in honor of election to the office of NALA Treasurer



From Alegent Health Hospice House, a thank you note for NeALA's donation in memory of Ken Koerselman.

Dear Friends,

On behalf of the Alegent Health Hospice, please accept my deepest appreciation for your gift in memory of *Ken Koerselman*. The Hospice Foundation has acknowledged your thoughtfulness to the family.

The Alegent Health Hospice Foundation pledges to utilize your donation of \$100.00 in a responsible manner for the continued support of the Hospice program.

Memorials such as yours have been vital for the ongoing development and provision of hospice services. Each year hundreds of individuals utilize Alegent Health Hospice, and our services are enhanced by generous gifts from individuals like you.

The Alegent Health Pledge states, "we pledge to provide for the special needs of those just beginning life or nearing the end of life." Thank you for sharing with us our mission of providing quality comfort and care at the end of life.

Sincerely,

Annie Allen, MHA  
Hospice Program Coordinator  
Alegent Health Hospice

## FROM THE PRESIDENT –Stephanie Henson, CLA

Dear Members:

The NALA convention has now come and gone and I must commend all those who worked so diligently to prepare. I found it very well organized and informative. Most of all, it was great to see all those you really only see at convention and get reacquainted with them and their respective affiliates.

Congratulations go to Ann Atkinson, CLA, who was elected Treasurer of NALA. Ann ran against two other NALA members, one of whom was from Florida. This is a great accomplishment for Ann and for NeALA as well. Janie Boswell, CP Specialist, was elected Region VI Director, formerly held by Ann (nice to keep it in the “family”); and Linda Hess, CP Specialist, was named to the Certifying Board. This is truly an accomplishment for all of you!

The weather was actually cooler in Tampa than here in Omaha; it was wonderful to sit on the veranda of the hotel and watch the boats navigating the channel. Next year the convention will be held in New Orleans, which we have been assured is safe to visit. If you have never been to convention, please give it some thought. It is truly a great experience.

Since this is my last column as President, I want to thank everyone for making this year so special. Not only was there more participation in the monthly luncheons, but it seems as though everyone was more interested in NeALA and its growth. It has been my pleasure to serve these past two years and to be involved with the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations. As I move into the Past President’s chair, I know that NeALA is in the most capable hands of Janie Boswell, your incoming President. We aimed for a smooth transition so that none of the goals the Board set would be lost. Janie is truly an amazing individual and will serve with foresight and dedication.

I made it a special point when I took office to tell the Board members and volunteers that at no time were their duties to NeALA to ever cause undue hardship for them. I know how much time and effort it takes to take on such a project, but everyone on your Board of Directors has worked very hard to achieve the mutual goals set two years ago and truly deserves so much more than a “Thank You.” All of you in your own way brought something very special to the table, so on a personal note:

To Ann: Had it not been for your tutelage at Metro and your unswerving belief in me, I never would have considered running for an office. Thank you for that special shot of confidence.

To Linda: You have always been the foundation I could count on to keep me balanced. You were never critical when I made mistakes and were always there with the answer. Thank you for letting me lean on you.

To Loretta: You have been that special “cheerleader” for everyone, but especially for me when I questioned my decisions – you were always positive and supportive. Thank you for being my “soul” support.

To Janie: whose brilliance and vision, tenacity and humor has helped me and NeALA grow in ways too numerous to mention. Thank you for your diplomacy and your guidance.

To Jodie: whose organizational skills are unparalleled, and who kept me from showing up at the wrong time or the wrong place. Thank you for keeping me and NeALA on track.

To Joni: I envy your calm and confidence. You took a thankless job and made it seem effortless. Thank you for always keeping on top of things and for your patience.

To Vicki: One of the best things I ever did was to ask you to join the Board! See, I can do intelligent things. Thanks for always being there with a smile.

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## FALL CLEANING PROJECT

When you are cleaning your office or home, are you finding boxes of NeALA records? NeALA is organizing and indexing its records for storage. If you have records that should be part of the official archives of the association (or if you're not sure if they should be archived but want to get them off your hands), please contact Linda Hess, [lhess@bairdholm.com](mailto:lhess@bairdholm.com); 402.636.8305. We would also appreciate any photos, programs of past seminars, promotional items, or other memorabilia. Please help us preserve the history of NeALA.

# NALA CONVENTION - TAMPA, FLORIDA, JULY 26-29, 2006



(left to right) NALA Certifying Board member Linda Hess; NALA Treasurer Ann Atkinson, NALA President Tita Brewster; and NALA Region VI Director, Janie Boswell



Janie Boswell before the NeALA display at the Affiliated Associations' Exhibition on Friday morning.



Virginia Koerselman (left) and Connie Kretchmer (right) enjoying good company at the Opening Night Reception



Treasurer candidate Ann Atkinson giving her campaign speech



NeALA members Rose Lulla, Stephanie Henson, and Linda Hess ready for the opening session, "Musings of a Country Judge on Life, Law and Love"



Newly installed NALA Board of Directors, including Treasurer Ann Atkinson and Region VI Director Janie Boswell

## HAPPY BIRTHDAY, NEALA!

Thank you to the 75 members, students and friends who helped us celebrate our 30th Anniversary on June 28th. The camaraderie and good wishes for both our organization and our special guest, Virginia Koerselman, will be long remembered. The event was enhanced by special decorations, party gifts, and a beautiful and delicious birthday cake baked by our president, Stephanie Henson. The highlight of the luncheon was a memorable dedication by Ann Atkinson honoring Virginia for her dedication to the legal assistant profession and her history with NeALA. Virginia was presented with a beautiful rose bouquet and many cards from her students and friends. Thank you again for all who joined in this unforgettable afternoon!

By Loretta Phillips, District 1 Director



Pictured are (left to right) Loretta Phillips, Virginia Koerselman, Shannon Chapoy (Virginia's daughter), and Janie Boswell.

## GOVERNOR AND STATE HONOR NeALA AND ITS MEMBERS

By Rose Lulla

On July 12, 2006 twelve members of the Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants (NeALA) met at the state capitol in Lincoln to witness a proclamation signing by Governor Dave Heineman. The Nebraska Sweetheart for 2006, a group of clowns, child support advocates, and Purple Heart veterans had proclamations signed in the same ceremony.

The clowns added a festive mood to the ceremony. HiFy the clown did her part to ensure the NeALA members looked their best by giving each member a "manicure". She kept telling the NeALA members that they had to look their best for the governor.

The governor spoke briefly on the reason he does the proclamation signings for different groups in Nebraska. He stated that he wants the citizens of Nebraska to see how many different groups represent and constitute what is so good about living in Nebraska. The governor signed a proclamation for NeALA declaring 2006 as the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of NeALA and urged "all citizens to take due note of the observance and thank the current and past members for their service" in the delivery of legal services in Nebraska.

After the ceremony, the NeALA members took an impromptu tour of the chambers of the Nebraska Supreme Court and the Court of Appeals. A member of the Clerk's office was gracious enough to allow the NeALA members access to both courtrooms and gave a brief history of each room. NeALA delegates were honored that they were granted access to the Appeals Court, as it is not part of the regular public tour. Tours of the State Capitol are conducted daily and are a great way to learn about the history of Nebraska.

The NeALA delegates then enjoyed lunch at the Terrace Grill in the Cornhusker Hotel in Lincoln. Those attending were: Linda Hess, Jan Wigodsky, Jill Grueber, Loretta Phillips, Kris McMahon, Stephanie Henson, Laurie Vik, Janie Boswell, Joni Hickey, Misty Cowan, KeeKee Faulkner, and Rose Lulla.

Go to [http://gov.nol.org/proclamations/2006\\_07\\_12/index.html](http://gov.nol.org/proclamations/2006_07_12/index.html). for photos of the proclamation signings on July 12, 2006.

## **DON'T MISS THE RECOGNITION BREAKFAST AND OFFICIAL 30<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION!!**

If you liked the birthday party luncheon, you will love the plans we have for the Recognition Breakfast on September 21st. Not only will there be gifts for every member attending, but there will be special awards and acknowledgments, the presentation of the NeALA Scholarship, and the drawing for the beautiful diamond ring. You will treasure the elegant programs designed especially for this event to be held in Salon C inside the North entrance of the convention center at the Holiday Inn Central at 72nd and Grover Streets, in Omaha.

Nancy Mendenhall, NALA Affiliated Associations Director, will be our guest and past presidents will be recognized. There will be posters and displays for your enjoyment with historical and interesting facts about NeALA, and the Proclamation signed by Governor Heineman recognizing our 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Keynote speaker this year will be The Honorable Theodore L. Carlson from the Nebraska Court of Appeals, who has entitled his presentation "A Judge's View on The Law and Lawyers."

Please plan to join us at this festive affair. It will be the last anniversary event for the year and we plan to make it as memorable as possible. You are encouraged to invite your supervising attorney and/or employer, but if they are not able to attend, come anyway. You will be glad you did!

30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Committee  
Stephanie Henson, CLA, Chair

### **NEED CLE? SIGN UP FOR THE NeALA FALL SEMINAR!**

NeALA's Fall Seminar on September 21 & 22, 2006, has been approved by NALA for seven (7!!) hours of CLE credit. Topics and speakers are:

- Franchising Law - Gary R. Batenhorst, Esq.
- Essentials of Medical Record Analysis - Rebecca Jackson, RN, LNC
- eDiscovery Best Practices - Donna Colley, Esq.
- Construction Law - Gretchen Twohig, Esq.
- Estate Planning in Nebraska: Working with Wills and Trusts - Karin Anderson, Esq.

The seminar will be preceded on Thursday, September 21st, by the Recognition Breakfast at 7:30 a.m. and Annual Membership Meeting, at 9:15 a.m. As in prior years, the seminar will conclude at noon on Friday. It will be held at the Holiday Inn Central, on South 72nd Street, Omaha. Brochures with complete details will be mailed soon. If you need more information or do not receive a brochure, please contact Kim Grabenstein at [kim.grabenstein@owh.com](mailto:kim.grabenstein@owh.com) or Kim Brown of Spencer Fane Britt & Browne LLP, 1065 North 115th Street, Suite 150, Omaha, NE 68154; [kbrown@spencerfane.com](mailto:kbrown@spencerfane.com); 402.965.8600.

### **NEED MORE CLE? GO ON-LINE!**

NALA Campus and NALA Campus LIVE! programs offer two categories of courses offered - CLA/CP Review Presentations and general continuing legal education (CLE) programs. The CLE programs are offered on an intermediate to advanced level. All programs, including the exam review courses, qualify for continuing education credit for Certified Paralegals.

NALA Campus provides top quality self study courses - affordable continuing education on a 24 hour basis, 7 days a week, education on your schedule, at your convenience.

NALA Campus LIVE! started offering live on-line continuing legal education seminars in September 2004. All that is required to participate is a computer with Internet Explorer (6.0 or higher), a high-speed internet connection, and a telephone. The program uses a telephone conference call for the audio portion, and participants view slides and other visual examples via an internet connection. The fall 2006 schedule and course descriptions are now available and registration is open for these programs.

For complete details on both NALA Campus and NALA Campus LIVE!, log on to [nalacampus.com](http://nalacampus.com).

# What Were You Doing 30 Years Ago?

While paralegal pioneers were forming an organization to better the lives of future professionals, what were you doing?

- Seeing "All The President's Men" at the theater
- Flying on the first transatlantic voyage of the Concorde
- Reading *Trinity* by Leon Uris, or *Roots* by Alex Haley
- Watching "Happy Days" or "Laverne & Shirley" on TV
- Hearing Elton John sing "Don't Go Breaking My Heart" on one station and "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" by Paul Simon on another
- Marveling that the Dow had broken 1000
- Buying a stamp for \$.13 or a gallon of gas for \$.59
- Exalting that women were admitted to NASA's training program for astronauts
- Envyng O.J. Simpson for his record \$2.9 million contract with Buffalo
- Wondering the effect of the ruling of the Supreme Court that capital punishment is constitutional
- Imagining yourself a paralegal in California, drafting the first Living Will
- Learning computer skills on the Apple computer, invented in a garage

In 2006, we honor those brave souls who foretold paralegalism was here to stay and would become one of the fastest growing careers in years to come. Was the decision to form NeALA in 1976 one to give strength to those few striking out "where no man had gone before" or a wise gift to those of us who came after them?

## We know what Vicki Ladegard was doing in 1976.....

### NeALA Presidents

1976-79	Vicki Ladegard
1979-81	Lorine Mares, CLA
1981-82	Connie Kretchmer, CLAS
1982-83	Betty Mortenson Gillis
1983-84	Victoria Groskopf
1984-85	Shirley Stunkel
1985-87	Joyce Pardee, CLA
1987-88	Janice Warm
1988-89	Natalie A. Lawson
1989-90	Lorrie Dahl
1990-91	Linda Walker
1991-93	Carol E. Nielsen
1993-94	Stefanie Nelsen
1994-96	Mary Bronson, CLA
1996-97	Dee Saari
1997-98	Linda Hess, CLAS
1998-99	Wayne Baker, CLA
1999-2000	Joyce Reimer
2000-01	Barbara Bidroski, CLA
2001-03	Susan Altstadt, CLA
2003-04	Karen Boyd, CLA
2004-06	Stephanie Henson, CLA

NeALA's First Official Roster in July 29, 1977, showed 18 active members:

Louis G. Anderson, Omaha
Kathryn Borral, South Sioux City
Josephine M. Colton, Omaha
Z. Louise Cooper, Omaha
Patricia J. Dickerson, Hastings
Betty Eggerling, Lincoln
Vicky M. Ladegard, Lincoln
Lorine Mares, Lincoln
Deborah Mattsch, Lincoln
Jo Malone, Omaha
Larry Palmer, Omaha
Louise E. Redmond, South Sioux City
Judy Seeger, Columbus
Patricia C. Shaffer, Lincoln
Rita Rae Shea, Hastings
Helen M. Tjaden, Hastings
Becky Thompson, Omaha
Ann Vineyard, Lincoln

The following past presidents contributed these updates on their lives:

### LORRIE DAHL

I am currently managing a drop store for The Dry Cleaning Station in Lincoln, Nebraska. I left the legal field 7 and one half years ago. My girls are 9 and 11. Next up is Middle School this fall; whatever happened to junior high?

I certainly enjoyed my time as a legal assistant for 4 different law firms over 15 years. My NeAla experience was one of the highlights. My co-authors and I certainly paved the way for legal assistants in the workplace with the publication of The Handbook for Legal Assistants. Two of my best friends today are two of the ladies that helped us write the handbook.

The Association is a great stepping stone for legal assistants and the resulting connections. Take a chance and get involved. You won't regret it!

### SHIRLEY A. STUNKEL

Since I became a past president, I worked for Badami & Radke until they split up; First Federal Lincoln wasn't going to have in-house lawyers any longer, I worked for another firm for about six months, and then I retired. My daughter Cathy was having her fourth baby, so I moved closer to her and I've been helping her since then. She has been enrolled in the University and Southeast Community College for her CMA, so I "babysat." In the meantime, Mom had Alzheimer's disease, so I had to take care of her. When I moved closer to Cathy, a woman from Romania wanted to get her masters degree and PhD in America, so she has been staying with me, sometimes bringing her son. She is often very interesting to talk to and she tells me about the laws and such in Romania. All told, being retired is not bad at all. Sometimes, I just feel like I have to go to work, but with the kids, Mom, Cathy, and my Romanian friend, it all makes up for it.

### JOYCE PARDEE

I have been a member of the Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants for almost 30 years. I have received tremendous educational benefits from the association. I have met so many wonderful people locally and nationally, many who have become long-time friends.

In the early years I was very active in our association. I held every office twice except for Treasurer, chaired many committees, have been NALA Liaison numerous times, served as liaison to the Nebraska Bar Association and chaired special projects such as the Senior Fair with the Young Lawyers Section of the Nebraska Bar Association and co-authored the Handbook for Utilization of legal Assistants distributed by the Bar to over 4,000 Nebraska attorneys.

The educational opportunities in NeALA paved the way for my obtaining a CLA distinction in 1992. I am proud of achieving this professional goal.

Since 1976 I was employed as a paralegal by the Barney & Carter law firm whose partners and name changed several times over the years. The last three years it was the Johnson Law Office, with its sole attorney being Michael R. Johnson. After many health issues, Mr. Johnson, my boss of thirty years, passed away August 17, 2005. September 30 the firm officially ceased doing business and my employment there ended. I worked at Erickson & Sederstrom's Lincoln office until the end of 2005 helping them get started with my former firm's biggest client. January 3, 2006 I started working full-time with the Vanderford Law Office as a certified paralegal. I have been very fortunate and after thirty years in this profession still love what I am doing.

If you have addresses or telephone numbers for any other past presidents prior to 1994, please contact Ann Atkinson, CLA, of the 30th Anniversary Committee, at Kutak Rock, Omaha; [ann.atkinson@kutakrock.com](mailto:ann.atkinson@kutakrock.com)

## HELP WANTED

**We are looking** for qualified paralegals or legal assistant students to fill open positions on NeALA committees. Individuals must be highly motivated, skilled in communications, and demonstrate ability to function effectively as a team player. Positions open October 1, 2006, but willing to train eager candidates in advance. Submit resume (at least your name and contact information) to President-Elect Janie Boswell, Certified Paralegal Specialist, at [janie.boswell@mutualofomaha.com](mailto:janie.boswell@mutualofomaha.com). Benefits: priceless.

**Are you ready** to increase your job marketability? Add project management, issue analysis, composition aptitude, and proofreading skills to your resume after serving on the Official Publications Committee. Helen Thomas or Woodward/Bernstein type candidates preferred, but anyone considered. Part-time position with longer hours bi-monthly prior to printing deadline. Interested candidates send resume to [janie.boswell@mutualofomaha.com](mailto:janie.boswell@mutualofomaha.com) or [lhess@bairdholm.com](mailto:lhess@bairdholm.com). Willing to train..

## **WHAT I LEARNED AT NALA CONVENTION.....**

Five NeALA members attended the 31st Annual NALA Convention in Tampa, Florida, on July 25-29, 2006: Ann Atkinson, CLA; Janie Boswell, CP Specialist; Stephanie Henson, CLA; Linda Hess, CP Specialist; and Rose Lulla. Joining us for the social events and adding a different point of view was Andy Lulla, Rose's husband. We went different ways for the educational courses, but reconnected for the general sessions and workshops. In the following pieces, convention-goers share some of their experiences.

### **THIRTY-FIRST ANNUAL NALA CONVENTION** By Rose Lulla

The weather can be very hot and humid in Tampa, Florida in July. You can also count on a daily thunderstorm or two. Knowing those facts did not discourage several NeALA members from attending the 31<sup>st</sup> Annual National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) Convention. The convention is attended by paralegals and legal assistants from across the United States.

Educational sessions are the main focus of every morning while you are at the convention. The schedule allows paralegals and legal assistants an opportunity to learn more about their particular field of law or to learn something new in an area of law that might be of interest. You also earn valuable CLE credits while attending the educational sessions.

The National Convention is a great place to meet new paralegals, renew old friendships, and have fun. There are also opportunities to spend time with members of your local Affiliate to build or strengthen relationships. NALA planned the convention schedule this year with most evenings free for recreational activities..

A few of the sightseeing and relaxing opportunities in Tampa include riding on the electric trolley, taking a dinner boat cruise, and just sitting outside watching the geckos scurry around. Several NeALA members journeyed out one evening on a dinner cruise around the bay. The food was good; the sunset was magnificent; but the time spent with other NeALA members and members from other Affiliates was priceless.

Start planning now to attend the National Convention in New Orleans July 11-14, 2007.

### **LET'S GET INVOLVED!!** By Ann L. Atkinson, CLA/Certified Paralegal

The underlying theme of the 2006 NALA Convention was "Making a Difference". Special presentations were made to members and affiliates who had spent time and energy helping others, apart from their paralegal responsibilities. Each one received a special award from the NALA President and a glowing introduction. We were all in awe of the things that they had accomplished.

Lupe Acosta, an affiliate member from Louisiana who had a big hand in the hurricane cleanup last year, presented a breakout session on community involvement. She emphasized how important it was to reach out beyond ourselves to help others. Lupe told a story of the cleanup after the Katrina disaster. Julia Roberts was there and spent a lot of time digging through the flood residue and helping people in their time of need. Lupe actually met Ms. Roberts and remembers distinctly what she said: "Putting your arm around someone . . . does the most good."

Luckily we don't have any disaster situations of that magnitude, but every day there is some person, family or organization who needs someone, like you, to help them get through a crisis. Taking your first step to get involved simply requires getting in contact with a local community organization and obtaining its directory of volunteer opportunities. Examples of such organizations are the Salvation Army, Chamber of Commerce, the Bar Association or City Hall.

I would encourage you to seriously think about getting involved here in Nebraska, whether it is through the Red Cross, the homeless shelters, literacy programs, pro bono clinics or maybe even some organization or person that you personally know could use some extra assistance.

You all have positive energy just waiting to be tapped. I would encourage you to channel that energy into active community involvement, for involvement equals a stronger organization.

Wouldn't it be great if NeALA or a NeALA member was recognized at next year's convention as Making a Difference?

### **WHAT A YEAR TO BE THERE!** By Janie Boswell, Certified Paralegal Specialist

The 31st Annual NALA Conference in Tampa was exceptional for me and for NeALA as well. I enjoyed meeting new people, visiting with friends from across the country, sharpening my legal skills, and deepening my bond with fellow NeALA members.

I attended the very interesting and informative leadership educational track. I am anxious to incorporate the skills I learned for NeALA. The affiliate and membership meetings provided a wealth of knowledge and ideas, many of which I look forward to sharing with NeALA members.

During the affiliates display presentations, I visited with other sister associations. Not only was I impressed with their creativity and goals, I was very proud to share information about NeALA. Many people visited our table to admire our display board and grab a popcorn ball.

Ann Atkinson's election as NALA Treasurer was the highlight of the conference. The contested election had three good candidates. Ann gave an impressive speech and was very gracious in her victory. I was elected Region VI Director. Being sworn in with my dear friend Ann was very special to me. I was also privileged to see Linda Hess appointed to the Certifying Board. To my knowledge, this is the first time in NeALA's history that we have two NALA board members and a Certifying Board member serving at the same time. This is great exposure for NeALA and speaks volumes for the support NeALA gives members as they pursue national positions. Ann, Linda and I are very grateful for your support and encouragement.

In addition to enhancing my professional development skills and hearing great ideas from affiliates, I had a wonderful opportunity to spend time with fellow NeALA members. We often spent our evenings together and we got to know each other on a more personal level.

Common threads at NALA conferences include focusing on professional development, networking, learning and sharing with other affiliates, and making personal friends. All these threads were very evident in Tampa. I enjoyed them all. It was an enriching and rewarding experience.

Next year's conference will be in New Orleans. The New Orleans Convention Bureau is doing a fantastic job in getting convention facilities and attractions ready. Several large organizations are holding conventions there later this year; New Orleans has assured NALA that it will be ready for us.

If you have not attended a NALA conference, I encourage you to do so. You will not be disappointed. Start making plans now for New Orleans. You will be glad you did.

### **KNOW YOUR MEMBERS** By Linda R. Hess, Certified Paralegal Specialist

The presentation by Marge Dover, NALA Executive Director, on Wednesday of the NALA Convention was my wake-up call. She titled it "Building and Sustaining Membership." An alternate title might have been "Who Owns Your Organization?" I would like to share with you some of her key points.

Marge is an impressive organizer and a talented executive, with a direct manner of speaking. She shared with the audience some hard truths about membership:

- For every non-renewal, you must recruit two new members to achieve growth.
- The average term of membership for a student member is 2 years.
- Most non-renewing members have been members for 2 years or less.

These truths supported her philosophy that "membership retention is the key to association growth and survival." Members will maintain membership in organizations that help them.

Recruitment is the first step in retention. As members join, ask why they are joining and how the association can benefit them. The new member application is the place to find out the years of experience, area of practice, special skills, and needs of the new member. Then the association has an on-going duty to know its members. Surveys are one method of gathering member information, but they are time-consuming and expensive, if professionally done. Dialogue between leaders and members should be continuous. Don't limit it to seminar evaluation forms. Poll non-renewing members for ways to improve the association.

What is known about the members? The database contains names, addresses, practice areas. Leaders should know how best to reach members—what communication techniques work to disseminate information; what activities members regard as beneficial; what involvement level members desire; what value members seek for the dues paid. Without an understanding of who the members are and what those members want, the association's leadership is acting for itself, not the members.

Associations today face the fiercest competition, not from rival associations, but from the members' lifestyles. Each of us has family, work, and other organizations competing for our hours and our dollars. It is imperative that an association take a hard look at its structure, its membership classifications, its programs, its mission.

I joined NeALA over ten years ago. Our association has changed little in that time; only the faces of the members change. Our profession has changed; the member profile has changed; the world has changed. To be a viable organization, NeALA may need to change too.

If we think of NeALA as a business and its members as its consuming public, we would be doing market research and remodeling our "store" to keep the loyal customers coming back and spreading the word about the value of membership. If a member thinks of NeALA as a business and the members as its owners, each member should capitalize on the investment made and speak up, speak out, and work to assure the association's success.

## BOARD ACTIVITIES

~ Summary of actions of the Board. For official, approved minutes of any meeting, contact Jodie Gardner-Grandberry, Secretary.

### Regular meeting on June 21, 2006

A meeting of the Board of Directors of the Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants was held at the offices of McGrath North Mullin & Kratz, PC LLO in Omaha, Nebraska, on June 21, 2006. Present were Stephanie Henson, CLA, President; Janie Boswell, CP Specialist, President-Elect; Vicki Gradowski, Vice-President; Joni Hickey, CP, Treasurer; Jodie Gardner-Grandberry, Secretary; Linda Hess, CP Specialist, NALA Liaison; and Loretta Phillips, District I Director

The minutes of the April 19, 2006, Board of Directors meeting were presented and approved.

The minutes of a special meeting held May 3, 2006, were presented and approved.

Janie announced plans for visits to paralegal classes at Metropolitan Community College and College of St. Mary in the upcoming school sessions.

Vicki presented an application for active membership from Astria Williams, which was approved by the Board.

Jodie reported upcoming deadlines for publishing proposed amendments to the Bylaws and Standing Rules, call for nominations, and membership meeting notices.

The Board received and approved the Treasurer's report presented by Joni.

Linda, Janie, and Ann Atkinson are working on a display board for the Affiliated Associations Exhibit for the NALA convention in July.

Loretta reported a record number of reservations for the 30th Anniversary Luncheon to be held on June 28, 2006. There will be centerpieces and door prizes given away. She will have a sign-up sheet for the proclamation signing at the luncheon.

The Board voted to donate \$100 to Alegent Hospice in memory of Ken Koerselman, who died June 18, 2006.

Janie offered to draft amendments to the Bylaws and Standing Rules to name the Web administrator an appointed member of the Board.

The Board voted to budget \$500 for the CLA scholarship, with the amount awarded up to \$500 to be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Board.

In other business, the Board authorized Linda to sort and index historical records for the Association, and discard those records deemed superfluous. Linda will research the cost and

availability of a storage unit, with the cost to be included in the 2006-07 budget.

### Special meeting on May 3, 2006

By electronic mail on June 28, 2006, the Board accepted the recommendation of the Scholarship Committee and awarded the student scholarship to Wendy Tolles.

TREASURER'S REPORT	
October 1, 2005, through, July 31, 2006	
Beginning balance	\$24,868.27
Income	
Active * Associate Dues	1,755.00
Student Dues	300.00
Initiation Fees	350.00
Interest Income	9.82
Seminar Income	<u>1,682.00</u>
Total Income	\$4,096.82
Expenses	
CLE Seminar	2,072.78
District 1 Director	264.02
In Brief Publication	604.58
Internet Web Site	50.00
Membership Expenses	1,252.21
NALA dues	200.00
NALA Liaison	465.00
Postal Expenses	585.10
Public Relations/30th Anniversary	2,072.56
Stationery & Printing	100.00
Treasurer's Bond	75
Treasurer's Expenses	<u>-8.59</u>
Total Expenses	\$7,732.66
Ending balance	\$21,232.43
Unaudited Treasurer's Report. Full report available from Treasurer on request.	

## DUES REMINDER

**Dues for 2006-07 are due August 1, 2006, and delinquent if not paid by October 1st. Failure to pay dues before they become delinquent may result in incursion of a reinstatement fee, as provided in the Standing Rules.**

**If you did not receive a dues statement, call or e-mail Treasurer Joni Hickey, CP. The dues statement should not be used instead of a new membership application or an application to change your membership classification.**

## Calendar of Events

**August 16, 2006 (Wednesday, 5:45 p.m.)** - Meeting of the Board of Directors of NeALA.. Check with a Board member for location..

**September 21, 2006 (Thursday)** - NeALA Recognition Breakfast & 30th Anniversary Celebration at Holiday Inn Central, Omaha.

**September 21-22, 2006 (Thursday-Friday)** - NeALA Fall Seminar and Annual Meeting at Holiday Inn Central, Omaha.

**October 1, 2006 (Monday)**-Application deadline for NALA certification exams to be held December 1-2, 2006.

**December 1-2, 2006 (Friday & Saturday)**-NALA certification exams.

## Editorial Policy

*In Brief*, the official publication of the Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants ("NeALA"), is a newsletter published at least quarterly by and for NeALA members. It is an attempt to be an independent and thoughtful presentation, to best serve the needs and interests of NeALA members. Publishing and editorial decisions are based on the editor's judgment of timeliness, writing, and potential interest to the NeALA membership. Articles included within this publication contain views of individual authors and may not reflect those of NeALA or the editor of *In Brief*.

Subscription costs are included in dues for NeALA members. Subscriptions are also available at a cost of \$25.00 per year for non-members.

For subscription inquiries, changes of address, or correspondence concerning *In Brief*, contact the Nebraska Association of Legal Assistants, P.O. Box 24943, Omaha, Nebraska 68124, or the editor.

NEBRASKA ASSOCIATION  
OF LEGAL ASSISTANTS  
P. O. Box 24943  
Omaha, NE 68124

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