



*On*Point

The Premiere Publication for Legal Professionals in the DC Metro Area

Annual Meeting of the Members
and Awards Reception

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A Message from **NCAPA's President**



President
Lisa Medoro

Happy New Year and welcome, everyone, to 2011! To start the year, I would like to express extreme gratitude and thanks to NCAPA's immediate past president, Heather S. Howard, RP®, for all of her hard work and dedication to the association in 2010. I would also like to thank all of NCAPA's sponsors and the volunteer work of our membership for making 2010 a great year.

Building on the successes of last year, NCAPA welcomed quite a few new members to its Board of Directors in 2011, bringing fresh insight into the challenges facing paralegals. NCAPA is also very pleased to be working with the CLE Committee to continue to bring you a full array of legal education courses, including the cite checking courses offered by Deborah Bouchoux, Esquire. NCAPA's first successful Hot Topic Series Meeting presented by Melanie Klinghoffer, Esquire, LL.M. on February 2, 2011, captures the focus of NCAPA's mission this year: providing successful tools and knowledge for paralegals seeking new employment or current career advancement.

Coming later this year, the Education Conference will further enhance NCAPA's mission to provide paralegals seeking new employment or career advancement with the knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in today's legal market. The NCAPA Education Conference Committee is working with area vendors, professionals, and leading authorities in developing courses on a wide range of topics, including legal research and writing, e-discovery tools and best practices, and resume building.

This year is shaping up to be a great year for NCAPA, but we can only go as far as our membership takes us. NCAPA is looking for more volunteers to help us gear up for more events later this year, including the Mid-Year Meeting, Education Conference, and Paralegal Week, and I encourage all members interested to contact me at president@ncapa.com. I cannot stress enough the personal benefit and career advancement opportunities that open up to you by taking an active role in your local paralegal association. I look forward to seeing each and every one of you at an NCAPA event in the near future.

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NCAPA News & Events

UPCOMING EVENTS

March 7	NCAPA Board Meeting
April 4	NCAPA Board Meeting
April 19	<p>CLE Course - Cite Checking: Bridging the Gap This three-hour cite checking seminar is a follow-up to the basic "Introduction to Cite Checking." It is intended to "bridge the gap" for relatively new cite checkers who have some familiarity with The Bluebook but who are not yet at the advanced level. Taught by Deborah E. Bouchoux, Esquire.</p>
May 2	NCAPA Board Meeting
May 17	<p>CLE Course - Advanced Cite Checking This three-hour seminar was developed for experienced cite checkers, and provides a review of basic citation principals, as well as a look at the citation forms for less frequently cited materials (e.g. court rules, administrative materials). All attendees will be given a hands-on cite checking exercise followed by group discussion. Taught by Deborah E. Bouchoux, Esquire.</p>
Summer 2011	<p>Save the Date! NCAPA Semi-Annual Education Conference</p>

The continuing legal education courses are approved for CLE credit hours by the NFPA. Dinner is included with evening courses.

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Get Your Career **in Gear**

Advice and insight from Stephanie Deckter of Deckter Consulting

Q: Dear Stephanie,

Most of the job postings I see online ask that you send a cover letter along with your resume. If my resume already includes all of my relevant experience, what should I put in a cover letter?

From,
Paralegal Job Seeker

A: Dear Paralegal Job Seeker

Cover letters are extremely important to your job search. They are the first (and possibly only) opportunity you will get to speak directly to an employer! The cover letter is your chance to explain to an employer how what you have done in the past will allow you to excel at the job to which you are applying

A great cover letter includes four ingredients: (1) who you are, (2) what you want, (3) why you should get it, and (4) what you will do next.

INGREDIENT 1: *Who You Are*

You should open the letter by telling the employer who you are. For example, “I am a paralegal with eight years of law firm experience.”

INGREDIENT 2: *What You Want*

This is where you tell the employer which job you are applying for and how you came to learn about the opening. For example, “I seek to be considered for the position of Senior Paralegal at Dewey, Cheatem, and Howe (job # 12345), which has been posted on the law firm’s career website.” If someone in your network suggested you apply or has some connection with the employer, you should mention that here, as well. For example, “After speaking with Jane Smith about the excellent work environment at Dewey, Cheatem, and Howe, I have decided to apply for the Senior Paralegal position posted on the law firm’s website (job # 12345).”

Ingredient two also includes a brief discussion of why you want to work for the employer. Good reasons for wanting to work for an employer relate to your interest in, and ability to help perform, the employer’s work. For example, “I am interested in working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency because I want to use my paralegal skills and experience to help protect human health and safeguard the environment.” It is best to paraphrase the organization’s own description of its mission or goals; make sure to research the employer’s website to learn them.

But be careful not to give a bad reason, which I call the “me, me, me” reason, for wanting to work for an employer. A bad reason is anything that only conveys how getting hired will help you and not help the employer. An example of a bad reason is “I am keen on working for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency because the office is near my house and I heard that everyone gets to go home at 4:00 p.m.”

INGREDIENT 3: *Why They Should Give It to You*

This is the most important ingredient to creating an effective cover letter. It is your chance to explain why you are perfect for this job and set yourself apart from all of the other candidates who want the job to which you are applying!

To approach ingredient three, you have to explain to the employer why your background, experiences, and education will allow you to perform the work required by the position. You need to do the work for the employer and connect the dots! It is not effective to just send along your resume and reiterate your past experience in a cover letter. The employer cannot read your mind! You have to provide detail about your skills and experiences, in a way that is relevant to the position, to entice the employer to read your resume.

The best way to identify the skills and experiences you have that will be useful to an employer is to create a Job Match Matrix. The Job Match Matrix should include (1) a list of the employer’s needs—which can easily be gleaned from a particular job announcement posted by the employer, the employer’s website, or information provided to you by a contact—and (2) a list of your skills and experiences that match up with those traits. Here is a sample portion of a Job Search Matrix for a position with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

Employer Needs	My Skills and Experiences
Legal research and writing skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Received A+ in legal research and writing course during paralegal studies
Knowledge of/interest in environmental law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked on environmental litigation at last job • Took undergraduate environmental science class • Volunteer work with Save the Whales

Use your Job Match Matrix to develop a clear thesis to start off ingredient three, such as “I would be an asset to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency because of my strong legal research and writing skills and demonstrated commitment to protecting the environment.”

From there, support your thesis by explaining each aspect of it in turn, using one or two brief, to-the-point sentences to get the point across. For example, you could start with “I developed my research and writing skills during my paralegal program—where I received the only A+ grade in my legal research and writing class. I also wrote a sixty-page office memorandum for a partner as a paralegal with Howard, Fine & Howard, which the partner sent to the client with minimal edits.” You could then discuss your interest in environmental law by stating “I gained experience with environmental law issues through my work on an international environmental law litigation and an undergraduate course in environmental science. I also volunteer with Save the Whales in my free time.”

INGREDIENT 4: *What You Will Do Next*

Let the employer know that you look forward to hearing from them, appreciate their time, and plan to follow up within two or more weeks. If you are applying to jobs in a different city and plan to be in that city in the near future, let the employer know that as well. For example, “For the reasons stated above, I believe I would be able to contribute to the work of Dewey, Cheatum, and Howe as the Senior Paralegal. I plan to be in the New York City area from April 1st through April 15th and will follow up with you to see if it might be possible to arrange to meet during that time. Thank you for your consideration, and please let me know if you need additional information.”

If your cover letter includes all four ingredients, your application for a position will be off to a great start: you will show the employer that you understand the job, you are well-qualified, and even be able to provide a preview of your great writing skills!

Good luck!
~Stephanie

In my response to “New Paralegal” in the last Get Your Career in Gear column, I provided an example of how to present a certification such as Registered Paralegal on a resume. Because a paralegal who is brand new to the field would not have the requirements necessary to sit for the PACE exam (and therefore gain the RP® designation), she would not be able to include that certification on her resume. However, she could certainly note that she is preparing for, or working towards, that certification. Also, please note that the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA), (NCAPA’s national organization) is currently in the process of developing an entry-level Paralegal Core Competency Exam that would be applicable to such a situation.

Get Your Career in Gear is written by Stephanie Deckter of Deckter Consulting. Stephanie is a career consultant who works with individuals in career transitions to identify the next step in their career development, improve their networking skills, and prepare for and execute an effective job hunt. Check out her website at <http://www.deckterconsulting.com> and follow her on twitter at <http://twitter.com/decktercareers>.

The information in this column is meant to provide generally-applicable career advice only. You should speak with a career consultant for assistance with your personal job search and career development.

FACE YOUR BIGGEST INTERNATIONAL LEGAL MATTERS HEAD ON



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The Whole Truth and Nothing but the Truth:

Why You Should Run a Challenge History Report on Your Expert

by Jamerra J. Cherry

With the emergence of Carfax, employee criminal checks, nanny background checks, and professional licensure checks, it is apparent that we have become a “fact checker nation.” No matter your age, we all want to double check the facts before we act. Just to prove my point, this past autumn my fourth-grade daughter asked if it was going to rain the next school day. I told her yes and proceeded to grab her umbrella and rain jacket. She abruptly asked me what proof I had that it was going to rain. I answered, “It rained today, and I think I heard tomorrow would be the same.” She replied, “I don’t think it’s going to rain, you should check the weather station.” Long story short, I checked weather.com and the following school day forecast was for a sunny, 75-degree day with no chance of showers. I put back her umbrella and looked through her wardrobe for appropriate clothes on a sunny 75-degree October day.

When I thought about it, our encounter was funny and I couldn’t be mad that she challenged my assumption, besides moms are usually right and there was no way for me to get in trouble. On the flipside, if this were a court of law, would the situation be funny?

In most legal cases, we depend on experts to give our cases validity. Depending on the type of expert you use, the outcome of your case can depend on your expert’s assessment of the evidence and facts in the case.

On a typical plaintiff’s cardiac medical malpractice case, you would need a cardiologist/cardiologist expert to explain why your client’s heart issues are the cause of a doctor’s malpractice. On the defense side, you would need a cardiologist/cardiologist expert to explain why the defendant doctor was the not the cause of any heart-related medical issues. If the heart condition became fatal, you might need an economist to compile data on your client to determine what wages your client would have earned during his or her lifetime. If the heart condition caused your client to become paralyzed, you would want to consult a life care planner expert to determine the cost of living expenses your client would need for the duration of his or her life. In a civil or criminal wrongful death case, you may need a pathologist and an assortment of other experts to testify to the facts in your case.

We retain experts because we want a reliable scientific conclusion for our case. The judge and jury need more than just an attorney’s opinion or case law to clarify issues in a case. Your expert brings knowledge of the subject area and, whether you like it or not, your expert’s decision can make or break your case.

Author Douglas N. Walton gives a very in-depth description of the expert’s role in trial. In his book, “Witness Testimony Evidence: Argumentation, Artificial Intelligence, and Law,” Mr. Walton states, “The expert is permitted to state an opinion as a factual proposition, because he/she has credentials and expertise that jurors do not. Thus the expert witness can draw an inference that supports the conclusion of the one side or the other in the trial. But the examination of an expert witness also has a peirastic aspect for two reasons. One is that the examiner or cross-examiner is permitted to elicit and even compel the assertion of propositions that are or should be a part of the expert’s commitment to explaining. Such further commitments, once elicited, may even be used to undermine the basis for the expert’s opinion. The other is that the cross examiner is ordinarily permitted to challenge inferences necessary to the expert’s opinion, or to challenge derived propositions on which these interferences were based.”

Recently I received an expert referral and I did what most paralegals do. You read the curriculum vitae, make sure that the expert is certified in the areas your case requires, and check the fee schedule to confirm that your client can afford the expert’s retainer fee and hourly charges. Just to be on the safe side, you do a little more research and obtain two or more curriculum vitae for your attorney to review. In my cases, I like to call the experts first just to ask if they are available and if they have the time to dedicate to a new case. Most paralegals and attorneys use the referral system when retaining an expert. This system has worked for years and if isn’t broken, why fix it? This referral system may not be broken, but how many of you have found some cracks?

For the first time ever, I needed to retain a handwriting expert and I needed to familiarize myself with what handwriting experts require for a case. After talking with three potential experts, I received two different versions of what was needed on a typical handwriting expert case and how long an expert re-

view would take. This prompted me to do some research of my own. I contacted local handwriting analysis organizations to determine which expert had given me the appropriate response. Imagine my surprise to find out that one of the experts gave me false information. I immediately went to my attorney, gave him my findings, and went back to my desk to research how often experts have their testimony challenged.

Challenges to your expert's testimony can be detrimental to your case. Your attorney depends on you to give him or her a complete background history of the expert. Once you turn over the expert's resume, the expert becomes stamped with your approval. After your attorney notifies the opposing side that an expert has been retained and reports become exchanged, your expert becomes one of the main focal points of your case. With testimony this important, challenges to testimony need to be reviewed and evaluated. The last phrase you want to hear in your case is "Daubert challenge."

USLegal.com describes the "Daubert challenge" as "A hearing conducted before the judge where the validity and admissibility of expert testimony is challenged by opposing counsel. The expert is required to demonstrate that his/her methodology and reasoning are scientifically valid and can be applied to the facts of the case."

If you want to Daubert-proof your case, you need to be thorough from the very beginning. Take the extra step to request a challenge history report on your expert. Obtaining a challenge history report ("CHR") is a simple and relatively inexpensive way to confirm that your expert is as good as the curriculum vitae makes them appear. Many companies offer CHRs, but if you would like a recommendation, I personally like TASA Group. The New York Law Journal ranked TASA Group as one of the best expert witness provider companies for 2010. According to their website, A TASA Group CHR "compiles reported and many unreported decisions involving an expert's challenged testimony. When challenges appear in the search results, your CHR will provide case summaries with major reasons for admission or exclusion of testimony, and, where applicable, all supporting documents, such as briefs, motions to exclude, and transcripts, for [a] low price."

TASA Group's CHR can be ordered online and the CHR is drawn "from an integrated database that compiles both federal evidentiary gatekeeping decisions, such as Daubert, Frye, Joiner, Kumho, Scheffer, and Weisgram, and Uniform Rules of Evidence for state and federal courts dating back to 1993."

Referrals are a great way to obtain an expert, but the referral is only the first step. Fact checking is your next step. Research your case issue and find out what other experts say. If you have a few minutes, call some experts and get

a deeper look into why you need this expert and what type of testimony you can expect. Don't be afraid to research your expert and review their previous deposition testimony and trial history in other legal suits. You may even want to go so far as to "Google" what your expert looks like. Some attorneys prefer older experts, but I have found that others prefer a younger expert who can be more relatable to a jury.

I urge all paralegals to look past your expert's curriculum vitae. Oscar Wilde once said, "Experience is the name so many people give to their mistakes." In the legal field, mistakes come in the form of surprises. I have yet to come across an attorney who likes a surprise in the courtroom. The next time you review a curriculum vitae, keep in mind that your expert's flaw may become yours. ➔

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Jamerra J. Cherry has been a paralegal for twelve years. Ms. Cherry is litigation paralegal with the firm Joseph Greenwald & Laake, P.A. Her specialty areas include constitutional, civil rights, sexual harassment, job discrimination, and whistleblower litigation. Jamerra is a staff writer for The Philadelphia Forum and serves as Co-Chair for the Technology and Health Care Issues Committees of the Philadelphia Association of Paralegals. Jamerra currently serves as a Director of the Board for the Philadelphia Association of Paralegals, an Advisor for the CCP Paralegal Studies program, and a faculty member for the Institute for Paralegal Education.



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The No. 1 *MYTH* You Should Never Believe

by Vicki Voisin, ACP

MYTH

Once you have your paralegal education and your job as a paralegal, you don't have to do anything else to have a successful, fulfilling paralegal career.

TRUTH

Your paralegal job and education are just the foundation for your career. That foundation simply serves as a facilitator for the rest of your career, much the same way a blank canvas serves as the facilitator for a beautiful portrait.

While your job may be interesting, time-consuming, and challenging, it is not the sum total of your career. Consider my situation for a moment:

My entire working life has been spent in a small law office in a very small town. This has been a job I've enjoyed immensely. The attorneys would come and go . . . and the name of the firm would change . . . but I remained like a favorite old shoe: reliable, durable . . . and also knowledgeable.

Had I remained in that comfortable cocoon, where would I be today? Probably preparing to retire with a cheese and cracker reception attended by people I've known all my life . . . wonderful people, I might add.

Instead of choosing that cocoon, I chose to make my world large and if I were to retire today (and I'm NOT!), I could at least expect good wishes from paralegals from every state in the U.S.

HOW DO YOU MAKE YOUR WORLD LARGE? HERE ARE SOME TIPS FOR YOU:

NEVER STOP LEARNING

If you follow the Thirteen Questions column in *Paralegal Strategies*, you'll notice that everyone says that, to make your career interesting, you must never stop learning. This includes new technology, new systems, and new areas of the law.

ACCEPT CHALLENGES

If you think you can't speak before a large group of people or that you could never write an article for a professional journal, you're dead wrong. But how will you know what you can do if you don't try? When you're asked to do this, always jump at the chance. What if you're not asked? Volunteer! You'll always be glad you did.

JOIN GROUPS AND PARTICIPATE

Joining groups (professional associations in particular) is like throwing a pebble into a pool of water and watching the ripples widen. You will widen your circle of acquaintances (who will probably become best friends!) as well as your professional network.

You will be surprised at your capacity for growth. The ripples spread even wider when you take an active part, run for office, serve on a committee, and attend annual meetings. Wide ripples are good for your career.

WRITE AND SPEAK

Considering your capacity for growth, you will be shocked by the words that will come from your mouth and flow from your pen as you expand your horizons.

GET OUT OF YOUR COMFORT ZONE

When I traveled just from tiny Charlevoix to Detroit to join a professional association, I might as well have been traveling to Mars! Today, I can maneuver most any travel and enjoy it immensely. You can do this, too, but you have to take chances and leave your cocoon.

YOUR CAREER IS ALWAYS A WORK IN PROCESS

It doesn't happen all at once. In fact, it takes a lifetime. As you take the steps above (and there are many others), you will be painting on the canvas where the brush strokes illustrate the bright colors you've chosen for yourself.

YOUR CHALLENGE?

Consider the steps above and choose at least one challenge. This will be your first step in painting the gorgeous picture that will, in the end, be your outstanding career. 🖌️

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Vicki Voisin, "The Paralegal Mentor," delivers simple strategies for paralegals and other professionals to create success and satisfaction by achieving goals and determining the direction they will take their careers. Vicki spotlights resources, organizational tips, ethics issues, and other areas of continuing education to help paralegals and others reach their full potential. She publishes a weekly ezine titled Paralegal Strategies and co-hosts The Paralegal Voice, a monthly podcast produced by Legal Talk Network. More information is available at <http://www.paralegalmentor.com>.



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The 2010 Annual Meeting of the Members & Awards Reception

by Theresa Wong

The National Capital Area Paralegal Association (NCAPA) Meeting of the Members and Awards Reception at the Old Ebbit Grill was a lovely evening. You cannot get more “DC” than the Old Ebbit Grill, the oldest and most historic saloon in Washington, DC, only steps from the White House. The reception was held in the open space next to the fountain under the trees of the dimly lit atrium with an elegant touch of white tablecloths and candles. An open bar welcomed guests as they arrived and checked into the reception. Striking poster boards listing the recipients to NCAPA’s awards surrounded the tables to draw conversation and recognition during the evening. The buffet dinner stations featured a delicious array of foods. It was a beautiful evening for mingling and applauding the achievements for the year.

The well-attended meeting included members and sponsors from Henderson Legal Services, TransPerfect Legal Solutions, Howrey LLP, McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP, Georgetown University, U.S. Legal Support, The MCS Group, Esquire, CaseDriven Technologies, Special Counsel, Same Day Process, Kroll Ontrack, Clicks, and many other supportive members and their guests. As always, NCAPA appreciates and recognizes the outstanding achievements of its members, sponsors, and supporters. As a not-for-profit and member-driven association, NCAPA volunteers, sponsors, and supporters are extremely essential to the organization.

Many professionals received the President’s List Award for their contribution, participation, and commitment through attendance at meetings, seminars, and events and through volunteer service to NCAPA in 2010. Listed below are the many member recipients of the President’s List Award. Also listed below are the dedicated professionals who were recipients to awards of exceptional commitment. NCAPA’s outgoing President, Heather Howard, RP®, received acknowledgement of her dedication and commitment for her years serving NCAPA, both as President and as a Director, with a special crystal award.

Congratulations to all on your achievements! Thank you for your support and contributions. NCAPA welcomes and appreciates your continued support in 2011. ➔



Sandra Guinan and Bettina Myers Prepare for the Guests

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Theresa Wong

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Erica Nantais, Nirmala Punnusami, Joyce Thaden, RP®, and Sgt. Katrice Mueller



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NFPA Awards

Get ready to nominate your members!

by *Theresa A. Prater, RP®*

NFPA Vice President and Director of Profession Development

Do you know that the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) gives yearly awards to its members? There are awards for associations and for individuals – including a scholarship to take PACE. Each award has specific requirements for what the nomination letter must contain and what supporting documents need to be submitted. Ask your board to look in the NFPA Procedures Manual for all the details as outlined in Section 25.

First is information on what the awards are and later I will explain how they are judged and how the judges are chosen.

NFPA Individual Pro Bono

Recognizes an individual practicing paralegal who has exhibited extraordinary dedication to the delivery of quality legal services to a portion of the population that cannot afford to pay for legal services. Any individual or association may nominate a practicing paralegal for this award. Individuals may also nominate themselves. The nomination form shall be submitted with a letter of nomination of no more than two pages and must include a variety of information including a clear identification of the services and accomplishments of the nominee in the area of pro bono services.

The nominee need not be a member of NFPA or an NFPA member association. Among the criteria the judges consider are that the nominee must have offered pro bono services designed to target that portion of the population that cannot otherwise afford legal assistance and have contributed to the delivery of quality legal services directed to members of the community who are unable to pay reasonable or customary legal fees. Additionally, did the nominee further enhance the delivery of such legal services and does the nominee exhibit a true dedication to the delivery of quality legal services?

However, a greater weight shall be given to those nominees who provide pro bono services outside of or in addition to their normal course of employment.

This award includes expenses to attend the NFPA Annual Convention, a commemorative plaque, and a \$1,000 donation to the pro bono project of the recipient's choice.

NFPA Association Pro Bono

Recognizes an NFPA member association that has exhibited outstanding dedication and service in the area of pro bono services. Anyone may nominate an NFPA member association for this award, or the association may self-nominate. As with all awards, there are specific topics the nomination letter must include, which are outlined in the NFPA Procedures Manual at Section 25.

- The general criteria to be considered shall include, but are not limited to:
- The program must be designed to target a portion of the community that cannot otherwise afford to seek legal assistance.
- Each paralegal participating in the program shall comply with the ethical standards of NFPA and the local association.
- At no time will the judges consider the number of hours contributed by the association's members, nor the number of individuals assisted by the program.

This award comes with a \$500 check for the association's chosen pro bono project.

PACE Ambassador

This award will soon be renamed to include the Paralegal Core Competency (PCC) exam. It was designed to recognize outstanding achievement in promoting NFPA's paralegal certification exams. The nominee must be an NFPA member association and the association can nominate its Paralegal Certification Ambassador and the association for the award by submitting a letter of nomination and providing evidence of all the marketing efforts made by the ambassador and/or the association in the previous year. The nomination must be specific as to dates with respect to accomplishments, projects, or any other information submitted. It should address the answers to such topics as:

- Has the association appointed a Paralegal Certification Ambassador?
- Has the association sent its ambassador or other representative to the NFPA Paralegal Certification Ambassadors' Conference?
- How effective has the ambassador been?
- Any other evidence presented by the association.

The judges weigh the evidence as follows:

- 20%: Utilization of the Paralegal Certification Ambassador Program
- 20%: Assisting members by helping them prepare to take the PACE or PCC Exam
- 20%: Participation by individual members in PCC Exam and PACE
- 20%: Marketing PACE and the PCC exams within the association
- 20%: Marketing the PCC and PACE exams to other members of the legal community

The award includes expenses to attend the NFPA Annual Convention and a commemorative plaque.

William R. Robie Leadership

This award recognizes an NFPA member in honor of the Honorable William R. Robie and his dedication to the paralegal profession, the expansion of the delivery of legal services and equal access to justice for all Americans. Any NFPA member association may nominate a voting, student or affiliate member of an NFPA member association for the William R. Robie Leadership Award. The nomination must be accompanied by a letter or letters of nomination from the nominating association's president and/or other individuals and contain a description of the following qualities of the nominee: dedication to the paralegal profession; service to the legal community; leadership; participation in the NFPA member association work; positive attitude toward paralegal education either by service on an advisory board, as an instructor in a paralegal program, or as a speaker in a continuing education project; and whether the nominee has created a lasting legacy to the paralegal profession through some distinct contribution(s).

The award includes expenses to attend the NFPA Annual Convention and a commemorative plaque.

NFPA Outstanding Local Leader

This award recognizes an individual NFPA member for outstanding leadership contributions to his or her local association. NFPA member associations or an individual member of an NFPA member association may nominate an individual NFPA member for this award. Nominations must be accompanied by a letter of nomination by the nominating member or association detailing how the nominee meets the criteria for eligibility.

The nominee will have demonstrated influential behavior in the paralegal profession; promoted interest and active participation in the activities of his or her local association; motivated others to work toward establishing and carrying out professional goals; and will have been recognized by the legal community as a committed professional dedicated to the advancement of the legal profession.

The award includes expenses to attend the NFPA Annual Convention as well as a plaque.

NFPA Paralegal of the Year

This award recognizes an individual NFPA member, whose on-the-job achievements have contributed to the expansion of the paralegal profession, including contributions to his or her employer, colleagues, and the paralegal profession in general. Anyone may nominate a member of an NFPA member association or an individual sustaining member of NFPA for this award. The letter of nomination must include information on how the nominee has taken the initiative beyond typical job duties to contribute to expansion of the paralegal profession, including how an expanded role has served the paralegal's employer and/or others for whom the paralegal performed additional duties, cost savings, added efficiency, added professionalism, increased visibility, or other factors that have been a positive result of the paralegal's initiative and how his or her efforts have been recognized and appreciated by the individuals for whom the paralegal performs paralegal duties.

Paralegals working as either traditional or non-traditional paralegals are eligible to receive this award. If the nominee is a freelance or independent paralegal (within the scope of the authorized practice of law), the nominating individual may be a client.

The award also includes expenses to attend the NFPA annual convention together with a plaque.

Judges for all of the awards are chosen by the NFPA Board of Directors at the winter board meeting, from the NFPA Advisory Board. It is the duty of the Vice President and Director of Profession Development to suggest the judging panels for the Thomson-Reuters' scholarships, as well as the annual awards. The nominations open on April 1 and close on July 1 - without exception.

All nominations are handled by the NFPA management team at headquarters, under the supervision of Cindy Byfield, the managing director. The NFPA board does not know who is nominated, how many nominations are received, or when they are received. Cindy oversees the delivery of nominations and receives the judges' decisions, orders the plaques, and contacts only those individuals who must make arrangements to get the winners to the Annual Convention. The NFPA Board does not know who wins an award until the announcement is made by the individual vice presidents announcing the winners.

Please think about the members of your association who have given to the paralegal community and to the public - honor them by placing their names before an independent panel of judges for recognition of their accomplishments. Ask your NFPA primary or secondary representative or your association president to get the procedures, read them, and nominate someone by July 1.

NFPA also awards a PACE scholarship and further recognizes excellence in paralegal students by the presentation of two student scholarship awards. If you would like more information on the scholarships, please visit the NFPA website. These scholarships also have an application deadline of July 1. Of course, you are free to contact me at vppd@paralegals.org with any questions. ➔



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National Federation of Paralegal Associations, Inc.

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