Fall/Winter 2011

THE CHESTER COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

An Article from the President

I recently watched a documentary on Abraham Lincoln, arguably one of the best presidents in the U.S. In it, the narrator referenced the fact that Lincoln had not attended law school, but, rather, worked as an attorney's apprentice and learned his skill through training and experience.

For purposes of this article, Lincoln serves only as an example of what intelligence, determination, and focus can produce in the legal field. In time, law schools and bar exams became the standards by which attorneys were granted permission to practice law. However, Lincoln, among many others, proved that formal education was not the only way one could excel in the legal arena. His "apprentice-model" proved that in-house training could produce excellence.

But we need not look so far into the past to find other examples of successful "apprentices" in the legal field. In fact, I direct you to the many paralegals who have shown through the same intelligence, determination, and focus as exhibited by Lincoln that they too can be valuable assets without achieving a formal education. Many law firms, corporations, and governmental agencies will attest to this fact.

However, just as law schools became the standard-bearers for attorneys, the paralegal profession has, for some time now, evolved to where a formal education is not only preferred, but often required. The Chester County Paralegal Association (CCPA), along with many other associations, offer scholarships to worthy paralegal students, in recognition of this change. But, to find out more information, I decided to go directly to those in the know-- the esteemed representatives of the three educational institution members of CCPA: Pierce College, Villanova University, and Widener University.

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TUITION (amount pending)

Paralegals:

Early Bird Registration for paralegals –

registration received no later than October 15, 2011:

Members of Chester County Paralegal Assoc. $

Non-Members of Chester County

Paralegal Association…….. $

Regular Registration:

Members of Chester County Paralegal Assoc. $

Non-Members of Chester County

Paralegal Association…….$

Attorneys:

Members of Chester County Bar Assoc. $

Non-Members of Chester County

Bar Association…….. $

REGISTRATION FORM

Name:_____
Phone No.:_____
E-mail:_____
Law Firm:_____
Association:_____

CCPA Member? _____
Non-CCPA Member? _____
CCBA Member? _____
Non-CCBA Member? _____

$ AMOUNT_____

The Chester County Paralegal Association

proudly presents its

Annual CLE Seminar

******Pending PA CLE BOARD approval******

Date: Friday, October 28, 2011 ***3 (pending) substantive CLE Credits***

Location: Chester County Bar Association, 15 West Gay Street, West Chester, PA

ALL DETAILS WILL BE PROVIDED BY OCTOBER 1st, 2011

Breakfast	**8:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m.**
Lisa Comber Hall, Esq.	**9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.**
Break	**10:30 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.**
Nicholas Staffieri, Esq.	**10:45 a.m. – 12:15 p.m.**

Program

1.5 (pending) substantive CLE credits – 90 minutes

Lisa Comber Hall, Esq.
is a West Chester attorney who specializes in Estate Planning and is on the Board of Directors of the Chester County Bar Association. She is married to the Honorable John L. Hall, who serves on the Court of Common Pleas in Chester County, PA.

1.5 (pending) substantive CLE credits -- 90 minutes

Nicholas J. Staffieri, Esq.
Counsel to the Board of SEPTA

I first met with Ed Miller, *Professor and Assistant Dean, Legal Studies* of Pierce College. Ed has been a leader at Pierce College for over 10 years. As an attorney who has worked extensively with the Philadelphia legal community in both the public and private sectors, he has been an advocate for the paralegal profession. Through that advocacy, Ed became a member of Peirce's Paralegal Studies Advisory Committee, which led to his current position. During our meeting, Ed explained to me that, with a tip of our hats to the "pioneer paralegals"-- the Lincolns of the paralegal profession, we must acknowledge society's dictates as to how any profession evolves, and in the current legal market, the demand for increased billable hours makes it much more difficult for attorneys to find time to train legal employees to become fully-functioning paralegals. Therefore, the rise in population and litigation has increased the need for a formal education for paralegals. Ed, who greatly appreciates our "paralegal pioneers," believes that as the pioneers pass the torch to those who are acquiring a formal education, they are gratified to see that attorneys are more aware of paralegals' value. Essentially, legal providers can better service clients because the paralegal is arriving educated, thereby freeing up the attorney's time. Ed asserts that this is especially valuable with those who also have a bachelor's degree, which inherently developes skills in critical thinking, analysis, organization and interpersonal communication. In support of this belief, Pierce offers ABA-approved associate and bachelor degrees in Paralegal Studies, as well as a post- baccalaureate paralegal certificate. As to career development, Pierce offers internships, co-ops and workshops with paralegal-focused individual counseling. Finally, Pierce will be presenting a symposium on Legal Technology in November 2011. (www.peirce.edu/DegreesPrograms/Paralegal/Default)

In my next interview, I spoke with Jim Kane, the *Director of Continuing Studies,* which houses the paralegal program at Villanova University. Jim has a unique perspective on the paralegal evolution, having been a formally-educated and practicing paralegal himself before earning his master's degree. Jim emphasizes the importance of paralegals being good generalists when first entering the legal field, along with their fully understanding the essentials of legal practice. He explains that, 25 years ago, there was much more of a singular focus for paralegals, most of whom worked strictly for law firms. Now, Jim furthers, they are eligible to contribute in all industries, as a formal education gives paralegal candidates a wide background and important skills learned in the classroom, such as writing, applying appropriately the legal vernacular, and interpreting the law. Moreover, Jim believes in the importance of a bachelor's degree, which is why Villanova University was the first paralegal program in the area to offer an ABA-approved, post-baccalaureate paralegal certificate, with all faculty members also working as practicing attorneys. He explains that, because of this pedigree, Villanova stays abreast of the latest trends by consistently updating their curriculum so that, for example, most classes now have a legal technology component. Furthermore, Villanova reaches out to the legal community through networking, as well as in-house and on-site full-day CLE seminars for practicing paralegals who may have never attained formal paralegal education or for those who simply want to broaden their knowledge base. In addition, this paralegal program offers its touted full-day Career Training Seminar every spring and fall to Villanova paralegal students. Jim proudly asserts that Villanova's paralegal program has developed a reputation such that there is an extremely high direct-hire rate for its graduates. It is clear to this Villanova University paralegal graduate that the program is indeed Jim's pride and joy. (www.villanova.edu/vpaa/continuingstudies/programs/certificates/paralegal)

Continued on page 4

COMING IN DECEMBER!!

THE ANNUAL CCPA HOLIDAY PARTY…

Details forthcoming.

My final interview was with Peggy O'Neill, who is the *Assistant Director of the Legal Education Institute* of Widener Law Center, and holds a JD and CPA. In addition, I had the pleasure of attending a CLE seminar she had presented for CCPA. Clearly, Peggy is one of the "good guys" when it comes to promoting the paralegal profession. In our conversation, she echoed the sentiments of her Pierce and Villanova colleagues in observing that law firms and corporations are looking for paralegals with a bachelor's degree and paralegal certificate, or a specific bachelor's degree in Paralegal Studies. She also agrees that all types of companies are utilizing paralegals more than ever and that labor statistics support these observations. Peggy sees the paralegal profession as among the fastest-growing, thereby making it more competitive. All paralegal programs, including Widener, she explains, are vying to provide something unique to give the paralegal candidate the edge. To that end, Widener offers ABA-approved associate and bachelor degrees in Paralegal Studies, which include conferring a paralegal certificate. Or a student with (60) sixty college credits may earn an ABA-approved paralegal certificate alone, with concentrations in Corporate Law, Criminal Law, Estate Administration, Health Law, Litigation, Real Estate or Intellectual Property. When Widener's program began, there were no online courses and very little that included legal technology. Now, Peggy explains, 85% of classes incorporate legal technology and a variety of online classes are available, although limited in number because of ABA mandates. Widener's career development offers internships (non-credit) and practicum (140-150 hours = 3 credits) with an assigned advisor to monitor. http://law.widener.edu/ParalegalLNC/Academics/ParalegalPrograms.aspx)

In partnership with college paralegal programs (www.aafpe.org) are various state and national paralegal associations. For example, in PA, the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Associations (www.keystoneparalegals.org) has been certifying qualified paralegals for nearly three years. On a national level, the two premiere associations are National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) (www.paralegals.org) and National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) (www.nala.org). Available within the national organizations are exams, whereupon their completion, the paralegal is issued credentials by that respective organization. While certification and registration are currently voluntary, their existence speaks to the trends observed by the above-referenced college representatives. Specifically, these credentials seem to express the desire among some paralegals for separate state regulations.

However, trends do not necessarily negate all positions held by those in the legal community. Such is the case with the esteemed International Paralegal Management Association (IPMA) (www.paralegalmanagement.org). This association, founded in 1984, is comprised of paralegal managers who "typically supervise traditional paralegals." In its position paper, the IPMA defines a traditional paralegal as one who is "supervised by an attorney and is regulated by the various statutes and codes that govern attorney conduct," and therefore see little need for separate state regulations for paralegals. (For purposes of clarification, the IPMA defines the non-traditional paralegal as one who provides direct legal services to the consumer.) The IPMA addresses its understanding of the rationale for regulation by stating that "the primary purpose of regulation is to protect the public from unqualified or unscrupulous legal service providers," but that "these public interest concerns are less like to apply to traditional paralegals since they work under the supervision of licensed lawyers" and "are also supervised by paralegal managers who can ensure that the work assigned to paralegals by lawyers is appropriate."

Speaking directly to paralegal association certification, the IPMA states the following: "Certification is a mandatory or voluntary scheme monitored by governmental agencies, non-governmental entities, or professional associations that certifies that individuals have met the qualifications required by the sponsoring entity." Moreover, "the legal community has not recognized a single certification exam as the definitive credential for paralegals. The IPMA recognizes that some employers may find certification credentials useful when making hiring decisions, but it also believes that the decision of whether to recognize certification, and which certification credential to recognize, should be left to the employer's discretion."

The IPMA addresses the impact of mandatory regulation of paralegals in general: "Regulating paralegals could create obstacles to the profession's growth in a number of ways: (i) increasing salaries requested by licensed paralegals; (ii) mandating specific education requirements to employers; (iii) barring professionals with expertise in other industries from entering the profession due to regulatory hurdles; (iv) restricting an employer's ability to recruit law school bound college graduates who may not meet regulatory restrictions, and (v) negatively impacting employers flexibility to hire contract/temporary employees by requiring those individuals to be regulated."

As to registration, such as the NFPA-administered Paralegal Advanced Competency exam, per its position paper, "the IPMA sees no need for and does not support mandatory registration," but it "does support voluntary registration when it results in expansion of paralegal responsibilities."

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Nevertheless, and likely to the delight of our paralegal educators, the IPMA recommends that paralegals have a bachelor's degree, but also "believe that it is up to individual employers to determine the value of paralegal educational levels to their businesses and their clients."

To the extent that most of us are indeed traditional paralegals, I am grateful for the multiple perspectives that exist in the legal community. Only through continued dialogue and determination can we as a profession reach our potential. But no matter what the position, there can be no argument as to the value of education. Most of all, though, the fact that the paralegal profession is clearly growing in excitement and controversy is reason, in and of itself, to find satisfaction and pride in calling ourselves "paralegal."

Carry on!

Wendy Reczek

The Paralegal Pipeline is a quarterly publication of the Chester County Paralegal Association. Anyone wishing to write a column, letter to the editor, or offer any ideas of a topic, please contact Suzie A. Marker 610-732-7179. All ideas are welcomed and encouraged. The Committee reserves the right to edit for space and grammar. Every precaution is taken to ensure the accuracy of articles published. The Chester County Paralegal Association cannot accept responsibility for the correctness of the information supplied

The Chester County Paralegal Association

P.O. Box 295

West Chester PA 19381-0295

We're on the web!

http://www.chescoparalegal.org/

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CHESTER COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

GENERAL MEETING

DATE: September 22, 2011

TIME: 5:30 p.m.

PLACE: Chester County Bar Association
15 W. Gay Street
West Chester, PA, 19380

Please join us as we present the 2011-2012
Chester County Paralegal Association Scholarship
to **Pauline Michel** and **Stephen Young**,
students from the paralegal program at the
Legal Education Institute – Widener Law Center

Light dinner and wine will be provided

General Business of the Association will also be addressed

R.S.V.P. by September 16th via e-mail to wereczek@aol.com.

Hope to see you there as we congratulate Pauline and Stephen!!!

KARASCH & Associates

WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE DO

"RAISING THE BAR"

For more than 30 years, the award winning services of Karasch and Associates has been the most trusted name in the modern legal arena for complete legal support.

The company was founded by Henry Karasch. Henry had a vision of providing the most current litigation support services, keeping up with technological advances within the industry. With the help of his wife Linda Karasch (President/CEO) their combined efforts have placed Karasch in the forefront of the litigation support industry.

Karasch partners with hundreds of litigation firms because they understand the necessity of having a partnership with someone who appreciates the demanding fast-paced nature of their business. We offer an entire suite of services designed to streamline your work and trial preparation.

When you think of a litigation support service, you may only think of scheduling a court reporter for a particular case, but in reality Karasch provides more than just court reporting services. Karasch also has their own in-house legal video production department. Karasch can also schedule video conferencing services around the world. Below is a list of services that Karasch provides.

- Court Reporting Services
- Real Time Reporting
- Video Depositions
- Interpreting Services
- Fully Integrated Document Vault (Free)
- Video Conferencing
- Multi Media Trial Director – Courtroom presentation software
- Video Deposition Playback
- Duplication – all formats, all media
- Notary Services
- Subpoena Services
- Evidence Preservation
- Video Production – 2D and 3D animations, Reenactments, Day-in-the-life videos, site surveys, interviews, video syncing, video with transcript

If there is a litigation support topic that you are unfamiliar with, please email me and we will consider it for the next issue.

Thank you**,**

Chuck Egolf
Litigation Support Specialist
litigationsupports@karasch.com
800-621-5689 ext. 107

For more details regarding all of our services, please visit: www.karasch.com

CCBF's Annual Casino Night 2011

CASINO

Royale

10.22.11

SAVE THE DATE FOR CCBF's 2011 Casino Night!

Join us for our 5th Annual Chester County Bar Foundation's Casino Night as we expect a sell-out again this year! Silent Auction, Buffet Dinner, Open/Cash Bar, Gaming + more - Don't miss out to be part of *Casino Royale 2011.*

Saturday, October 22, 2011

6:30 pm - 11:00 pm

Radley Run Country Club

1100 Country Club Road, West Chester, PA

RSVP by October 14, 2011 to Janae Lindsay

jlindsay@chescobar.org or 610.692.1889

CHESTER COUNTY BAR FOUNDATION