

THE VERDICT

DENTON COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION

APRIL 2012

Inside this issue:

President's Message	1	Benefits of DCPA Membership	3	Tip of the Month	5-6
2012 DCPA Officers	2	Birthday Congratulations	3	Minutes	6
2012 DCPA Committees	2	CLE Speaker	4		
Meeting Notice	2	Events/News	4		
Agenda for DCPA Meeting	3	DCPA Fundraising Announcement	4		
DCPA Website	3	Support Our Sustaining Members	4		
Membership News	3	In The Know	5		

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Jennifer Stout

My goal this month is to bring awareness to our members on where to find essential information with regard to our Association. It was recently brought to my attention that a few of our Committee members were unaware of where to find the Denton County Paralegal Association ("DCPA") By-laws and Standing Rules and Procedures. I was under the assumption that all of our Committee members either had a copy of both or, at least, knew where to find them. We all know what happens when we "assume" don't we? If some of our Committee members did not have or know where to find our By-laws and Rules I wondered how many of our current members would know, not to mention our new members. Thus, my desire to enlighten our membership on where to learn a little about the "who and what" of DCPA, where to find and meet our Executive Committee, our Committee Chairs and members, our members, our By-laws and Rules, membership requirements, seminars, social and fundraising activities, job opportunities, Denton County's legal community and general information about DCPA.

I believe the DCPA website (WWW.DENTONPARALEGALS.ORG) is the greatest source of information on DCPA to our members, the general public and our legal community. The DCPA website offers a plethora of information to members and non-members alike. It provides information about the history of DCPA, our purpose, mission and our Code of Ethics. It provides legal resources and links; a list of current members, Officers, Committees and Committee Chairs; upcoming State Bar Seminars, DCPA monthly meetings, Speakers and most importantly, our By-laws and Rules by which each of us, as knowledgeable DCPA members, should know or at least know where to find. The By-laws and Rules govern our Association. The more knowledgeable our members are of the By-laws and Rules the more effective our Association will be and the bigger impact DCPA can have on our legal community. The By-laws and Rules are the voices of DCPA members. Through our By-laws and Rules each member has a

voice, the opportunity to be heard and to make a difference.

It is incumbent upon each of us to acquire the current and historical knowledge of our Association in order for DCPA, as a group, to move forward, grow and change; to know where we have been in order to move forward as an effective and vital resource to the public and our legal community. I believe DCPA is a vital part of our legal community and the more our members have an active voice in "who and what" DCPA is as an Association, the better DCPA is and can become.

I encourage all of us to learn more about DCPA and our members to become knowledgeable about our mission, what DCPA can mean to each of us as individuals, the general public, our legal community, even to the State of Texas. I encourage each and every one of us to take an active roll as a DCPA member to acquire the knowledge of "who and what" DCPA is, what DCPA is to each of us, the general public and our legal community.

DCPA can only be as good as its members so let us all put forth the effort to make it a great Association. One that is vital to our legal community.

Go to our website and explore!

Jen



2012 DCPA OFFICERS

President – Jennifer Stout

President Elect – Ria Sherman

Secretary/Parliamentarian – Kim Guertler

Treasurer – Lisa Pittman

Historian – Vicki Schmidt

2012 DCPA COMMITTEES

CLE Committee -

Lisa Bowles, Chairman
Michelle James
Debbie Mitchell
Marguerita Alba
Allison Martin

Fund Raising Committee -

Jenna Earhart, Chairman
Lisa Pittman
Ria Sherman
Michele George

Legal Directory Committee -

Debbie Maldonado, Chairman
Ava Watson
Lisa Pittman

Membership Committee -

Priscilla Brooks, Co-Chairman
Linda Lewis, Co-Chairman
Sunnie Palmer
Jennifer Harris
Denise League
Michelle Beecher
Rachel Huntman

Newsletter Committee -

Lisa Pittman, Chairman
Jennifer Earhart
Wanda Woodworth
Michele George

Social Committee -

Christy Powell, Co-Chair
Pam Snavelly, Co-Chair
Carolyn Ganzer
Carol Pelzel

PLEASE NOTE: EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY

Due to the increase cost in food & beverages, and to insure there is no increase in cost to DCPA members, the DCPA monthly luncheon meetings will now be held in the smaller banquet room at Oakmont; space will be limited. Therefore, it is imperative you make your reservation to attend and eat or to attend with no lunch. And per policy if you RSVP and do not attend an invoice will be sent to cover the expense.

MEETING NOTICE

The Denton County Paralegal Association's next Luncheon will be on Thursday, ***April 26, 2012*** at noon at Oakmont Country Club, 1901 Oakmont Drive, Corinth, Texas.

The all-inclusive cost of lunch is \$13.00 payable when you sign in. We cannot accept debit or credit cards, or make change, so please bring ***exact*** amount of cash or a check made payable to DCPA.

RESERVATIONS ARE REQUIRED and can be made via e-mail to jennifer.stout@dentoncounty.com. The Deadline for making your reservation is ***5:00 P.M. on Monday, April 23, 2012.***

Notice: We must notify Oakmont of the number attending prior to the meeting for preparation of adequate food and seating arrangements. Those that have RSVP'd will get served and seated first. We cannot guarantee that you will have seating or food if you do not RSVP. Please note we are also required to bill those individuals who make reservations and do not attend.

Directions to Oakmont: Oakmont Country Club is located in Corinth off I-35 East between Lewisville and Denton.

- Exit 461 – Shady Shores Rd/Post Oak Drive
- Turn west onto Post Oak Drive
- Turn right (west) onto Robinson Rd at stop sign
- Turn left (south) onto Oakmont Dr – you will see an Oakmont sign in the median
- Turn right into Oakmont Country Club (second right)



AGENDA FOR APRIL MEETING

- Date: Thursday, April 26, 2012
- Place: Oakmont Country Club
1901 Oakmont Drive
Corinth, Texas 76210
- Time: Noon
1. Welcome members and guests
 2. Old Business - Approve March minutes and Treasurer's report
 3. New Business
 4. Speaker: Attorney, Robert N. Eames
 5. Door Prizes
 6. Adjournment

DCPA WEBSITE

Check out what's new on our website at www.dentonparalegals.org. Let us know what you think, and what you would like to see on our website in the future. If you have any changes that need to be made to your contact information, please let us know.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

- Rodney Bernal**, Duane Coker & Associates, *Associate*
Patti Biffar, Denton County, *Active*
Toya Brown-Phillips, Duane Coker & Associates, *Active*
Cole Hoheisel, Bowen Law Group, *Active*
Jeff Philbrick, The Wright Firm, LLP, *Active*
Diana Rivera Serrano, Sally Beauty Company, *Associate*
Stephanie Skipworth, Durand and Associates, P.C., *Active*
Cindy Stewart, Weiner Law Firm, *Active*

MEMBERSHIP

Please encourage those paralegals and others in the legal field, whom are not currently members, to join. If you know of anyone who would like to join, please contact Priscilla Brooks at Priscilla.brooks@dentoncounty.com, (940) 349-2758 or Linda Lewis at linda@dentonfamilyattorneys.com, (940) 591-1191.

BENEFITS OF MEMBERSHIP IN THE DENTON COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION INCLUDE:

- ❖ Receipt of the monthly issue of *The Verdict*
- ❖ Free Accredited CLE at monthly meetings
- ❖ Continuing Legal Education seminars on various topics
- ❖ Job Bank
- ❖ Motivation
- ❖ Networking with other paralegals in Denton County
- ❖ Professional growth through participation
- ❖ Communication and promotion of professional conduct and responsibility
- ❖ Continued individual and professional growth as paralegals
- ❖ Fulfillment that is received from being involved in the direction of the paralegal profession

DCPA SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION

The Scholarship Committee offers a \$500.00 scholarship annually towards certification and we urge members to apply. The scholarship application is on our DCPA website for your convenience.

For those legal assistants seeking certification with State Bar of Texas Paralegal Division - Texas Board of Legal Specialization, the filing deadline was March 30th for filing the application and sitting for the exam on October 13, 2012. The sitting fees are \$50.00 for the Application and \$100.00 for the exam. Our apologies for not getting this information out sooner.

However, there is still time to get in your applications for NALA (National Association of Legal Assistants) certification. The fees are \$275.00 for non-members and retake fees are \$60.00 per section.

<u>Application filing deadline</u>	<u>Exam Date</u>
August 1 st	September 1-30
December 1 st	January 1-31
April 1 st	May 1-31

For more information, please call Michele George or Jackie Cox at (940) 387-3158 or Ria Sherman at (940) 566-6649.

BIRTHDAYS!

Our members with May birthdays are:



- Georgya Rankin (5/4)
- Kathy Klein (5/11)
- Allison Martin (5/16)
- Linda Lewis (5/20)
- Denise League (5/31)

Hope each of you will have a **Happy Birthday!**

SPEAKER INFORMATION



Our Speaker this month is attorney Robert N. Eames with Holmes, Diggs & Eames and he will be speaking on "Mediation: An Ancient Ritual for Modern Dispute Resolution"

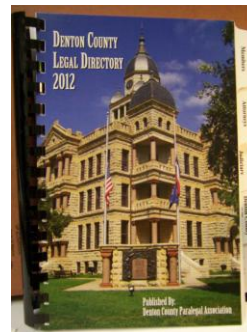
Remember - these items will be great for tackling early Christmas shopping, upcoming birthdays and baby showers too. Be sure to participate during the bidding at the Auction - donations are great, bidding wars are even better!!

Please email Jenna Earhart, Fundraising Committee Chair, at jeahart@hbwvllaw.com or call at (940) 387-3518, with your donation commitment.

EVENTS/NEWS



Do you have a recipe, informative tip/idea, or joke, etc. that you would like to share with your fellow DCPA Members? If so, please submit your idea to Jenna Earhart at jeahart@hbwvllaw.com. Thank you!



Members, please get your 2012 Legal Directory if you haven't already picked it up! This latest directory has been updated to include some of the newest attorneys in Denton County. The cost of the directory is \$25.00 each. If you have an old directory, turn it in for a \$2.00 rebate on the purchase price. See attached Order Form. This is a great resource! Get yours today! For more information contact Debbie Maldonado at (940) 387-0404 or Debbie@spinger-lyle.com.

DCPA FUNDRAISER ANNOUNCEMENTS



Let the Silent Auction BEGIN!!

Our first annual silent auction was a big hit with our Members, so we are gearing up for our Second Annual Silent Auction benefitting our Thanksgiving and Christmas families. This year we have set in place FIVE very exciting categories to help our Members decide where their own talents might lay. Categories are as follows: Baby, Baked Goods, Gift Boxes, Photography/Art and Theme Baskets.

This is what we are looking for in each Category:

- ▶ **Baby** - Hand-made: blankets, clothes, hats, bibs, bags, etc.
- ▶ **Baked Goods** - Hand-made: pies, quiche, cookies, cakes, etc.
- ▶ **Gift Boxes Stuffed with Fun** - Birthday, Christmas, Pamper, Goodies, Crafts, Teachers, Boys, Girl, etc.
- ▶ **Photography/Art** - Hand-made: Photo session, Framed Art, Paintings, Drawings, Woodwork, etc.
- ▶ **Theme Baskets** - grab another Member or two, and create a theme basket of your choosing and create something fun. Some theme ideas include: movie, pamper, bbq, scrapbooking, Nascar, sports, cooking, games, candles, music, etc.



SUPPORT OUR SUSTAINING MEMBERS

Our Sustaining Members give so much to our Association, please be sure to think of them when you are in need of services that require their

Jay Freeman @ Accurate Concept Insurance
 Dana Miller @ Zenith Investigations
 Cheryl Perlich @ The Reporting Professionals
 Bruce Stewart @ Stewart Process Service Inc
 Janel Stoffels @ Stoffels & Associates Inc.



IN THE KNOW

By Wanda Woodworth

Talking with: Monica Smith, Durand & Associates, P.C. in Lewisville.

Employed with Durand & Associates, PC for how long:

I've been there 11 years.

Years experience as a Paralegal: 11 years

What made you want to become a Paralegal? I was always interested in the Law and becoming a paralegal was the first good step. I'm entering Law school (Texas Wesleyan) in the Fall so I can pursue my interest in becoming a Family Law attorney.

What type of law does your attorney practice? My attorney handles Civil Litigation & Family Law. The other attorney does Bankruptcy, traffic tickets and light criminal (misdemeanor) cases.

How did you become a Paralegal? I had a 2 year degree in Calculus and was working as a Retail Manager at Super Target and not really liking it. I earned my Paralegal certificate online through Kaplan University and had the opportunity to move to a Paralegal job at Durand & Associates. I finished my 4-year degree in Business Management at the University of Phoenix (online). I worked fulltime while attending school.

What was it like being a new Paralegal? Being a new paralegal was kind of intimidating. It's not like any other job because your work affects people's lives. There is so much to learn and know. Making mistakes can really damage someone's life.

How many Paralegals are at your current firm? We currently have three paralegals at our office.

What drew you to pursue Family Law? I became interested in Family Law after seeing the difficulties my husband encountered in dealing with his ex-wife. It is nice to know how a Family Law attorney/paralegal team can make someone's life easier during a difficult time.

What is your advice to new Paralegals? If you love it, stick with it. You'll learn the law so you can make things smoother and easier. My mentor was the attorney I work for. He explained steps and reasons for my assignments instead of just telling me to do the tasks. It really helped to have such a great mentor.

To which Paralegal organizations do you belong? DCPA

How do you relax after a tough day at work? I go home and play with my daughter and son – they are 5 and 7 years old.

TIP OF THE MONTH

- ❖ Do not assume, always verify the facts.
- ❖ Pay attention to detail. No one ever lost a case by knowing the facts too well.
- ❖ If you don't know the answer, know the resources you can use to find it. Knowing the resource is half the battle.
- ❖ Proofread all work. One mistake can compromise your case. Even though I didn't like it, I learned this lesson-sometimes the hard way-but I learned it.
- ❖ Respect your attorney and their client by meeting or exceeding deadlines. No one has ever been fired for finishing a project early.
- ❖ Networking is invaluable. You can never know too many knowledgeable people.
- ❖ Treat legal secretaries and office assistants with respect. You will find that they actually know more about some things than you do.
- ❖ Listen and learn. Everyone has something to offer. You can learn from the most experienced of veterans and the most inexperienced "greenhorns." Great ideas sometimes come from the most unexpected sources.
- ❖ Document, document, document...each task completed, each client communication, each conference with an attorney and all deadlines.
- ❖ Do not participate in office gossip, in the end it serves no purpose and is a distraction from your assigned tasks.
- ❖ Do not lose sight of who you are really working for: the client. You may have twenty files on your desk, but to each client, their file is the only one that is important to them.
- ❖ Never give the "only" copy of a document to the attorney, keep the original and one copy in the file.
- ❖ Join and participate in local, state and national professional organizations, and take advantage of continuing education programs offered to their members. Through these activities you can exchange

ideas, learn new resources, and develop a valuable network of peers.

MARCH MINUTES

1. President Stout called the meeting of March 29, 2012, to order at 12:00 p.m. at the Oakmont Country Club. There were 30 in attendance, which included 29 members and the speaker, all of whom were welcomed by the President.
2. President Stout asked for a vote of approval for the February minutes. A motion for approval was presented by Michelle James and seconded by Vicki Schmidt, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.
3. President Stout asked for approval of the Treasurer's Report. A motion for approval was presented by Ria Sherman and seconded by Christy Powell, and the motion carried by unanimous vote.
4. President Stout made the announcement that, beginning in April, invoices will be sent out to members who RSVP for lunch but do not actually attend the luncheon. President-elect Ria Sherman gave an update on the responses she has had to the questionnaires she sent out. She requested that all members fill out the questionnaire and send it to her so the Association can be responsive to the needs of the members.
5. Michelle James introduced the speaker, Dr. Michel Flynn, who presented "*Personality Disorders (Axis III Disorders) Understanding your Most Difficult Clients*"
6. Stephanie Villa won the door prize which was an Olive Garden gift certificate.
7. There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:01 p.m.