

Ab Initio

a publication of

Legal Assistants/Paralegals of Southern West Virginia

an Affiliate of the National Association of Legal Assistants, Inc.

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HAPPY NEW YEAR!

LAPSWV anticipates a great 2006! Please read this issue of *Ab Initio* in its entirety for updates and announcements. And please carefully **CONSIDER YOUR ROLE IN LAPSWV**. "An organization is as strong as its weakest link." How strong are you?

"Lunch & Learn" Meeting

The next "Lunch and Learn" will be on **Thursday, February 16**, from **noon until 1:00 p.m.** in Charleston at STEPTOE & JOHNSON on the 8th floor of the Bank One Center. Dr. Bobby Miller, Forensic Psychiatrist, will be speaking on an "Overview of a Forensic Psychiatrist - 'Who are they and what are they good for?'" The meeting qualifies for one (1) hour CLAE for participating paralegals.

ATTENTION MEMBERS

LAPSWV 2nd ANNUAL MEETING AND SEMINAR

MAY 12, 2006

**JACKSON KELLY PLLC
Charleston West Virginia**

Mark your calendar now!

LAPSWV Fund Raising Committee announces

VALENTINE'S DAY RAFFLE

a Sweet 2-Person/2-Day/2-Night
Lodging Package
Canaan Valley Resort
(Package good thru October 31, 2006)

Raffle tickets for sale
beginning **January 23**

Winner drawn **February 10**

More information later this week. Watch for e-mails and raffle tickets to be distributed in Charleston and Huntington.

OFFICERS' MEETINGS

November 17 - Shoney's in Teays Valley

- ◆ approved Minutes of Aug 18 meeting
- ◆ finalized plans for Dec 8 social
- ◆ determined details of 2005-06 raffles for fund raising
- ◆ decided on May 12 annual meeting and seminar location
- ◆ approved membership applications as follows:

Maria Cain - Huddleston Bolen, Huntington
Renee Clay - Steptoe & Johnson, Charleston
Donna Cramer - Marshall Community College
Megan Sayre - Baker & Lancianese, H'ton
Anna Skaggs - Bland & Bland, Charleston
Suzette Smalls, CLA - BB&T, Charleston
Terri Swindler - Huddleston Bolen, H'ton
Sandra Wick-Martin - State Farm, Charleston

- ◆ approved Treasurer's report and current membership list
- ◆ unanimously approved moving LAPSWV post office box from Huntington to Charleston
- ◆ finalized contact information for WV State Bar Regional meetings

January 12 - via telephone @ S&J

- ◆ approved Minutes of Nov 17 meeting
- ◆ set plans in motion for Valentine's Day raffle of Canaan Valley package revisited issue of moving post office box from Huntington to Charleston (new address to be announced immediately)

NEXT REGULARLY SCHEDULED OFFICERS' MEETING

FEBRUARY 16
6:00 p.m. Shoney's, Teays Valley

CLA 2006 EXAM SCHEDULE

Exam - March 24-25, 2006

Late Application Deadline - January 30

Exam - July 21-22, 2006

Application Deadline - May 15

Late Application Deadline - May 30

Exam - December 1-2, 2006

Application Deadline - October 1

Late Application Deadline - October 16

Contact any one of the LAPSWV officers (see Officers @ www.lapswv.org) for study group information for exams and retakes.

**NALA CAMPUS
LIVE! CONTINUES
Real Time CLE Online
with Live Presentations
PROGRAM CONTINUES AT
<http://www.nalacampus.com/>**

Ethics	Feb 3
Medical Records Review	Feb 7
Legal Research	Feb 10
Evictions	Feb 15
Blue Book Review of Citing	Feb 17
Legal Nurse Consultants	Feb 21
American Legal System, Pt 1	Feb 22
Estate Planning, Pt 1	Feb 23
Written Communications	Feb 24
American Legal System, Pt 2	Feb 28

Welcome New LAPSWV Members

“WHY PARALEGAL CERTIFICATION COUNTS”

by Debra J. Monke, CLAS, NALA President
(excerpts taken from “Facts & Findings”
January 2006/The Journal for Legal
Assistants/Vol XXXII Issue 4, pgs 39-41)

“Designation as a Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) or Certified Paralegal (CP) is more than the pinnacle of professional achievement for individual paralegals. It is also a sound indication of proficiency to the attorneys, firms, and organizations that hire them. Since the CLA program was launched by the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) in 1976, it has become widely recognized as the definitive credential for paralegals. More than 25,000 individuals have participated in the program, and some 12,500 paralegals are on the certification rolls today.

How Certification Helps

Voluntary certification programs are an esteemed tradition in most professions...certification programs influence career preparation as continuing career development. Three important ways that certification programs help those who hire paralegals are:

1. Assisting hiring decisions - No interview or single assessment tool can predict performance on the job with complete reliability, but certification is a

compelling indication of strong commitment to a chosen career and the ability to meet real-world standards.

2. Verifying educational background and experience - Certification programs provide the professional education and experience documentation that many employers need, but do not have time to check.

3. Helping develop recognition and incentive programs - As models for employee training plans, certification programs build confidence and competence in all employees, and they help employers provide greater service to clients.

Differences

Certification programs are unique to the professions they serve, and they are different from other qualification programs. Certification programs recognize high standards of knowledge and skills.

Professional certification programs are not the same as “Certificates of Completion” which are awarded to graduates of paralegal programs. This is often a point of confusion, and it is important for prospective employers to verify what the “Certified” on a résumé actually means.

(continued on next page)

Benefits for Paralegals and Firms

Because of the benefits of certification and the opportunities provided for professional development, creating a paralegal certification program was a top priority of NALA when the association was founded in 1975. A program was sought which would help employers identify proficient paralegals, would assist paralegal curricula development, and would provide an ongoing professional development program for paralegals. With the ensuing 30 years of research and development, the CLA/CP program has met and exceeded these goals.

For employers, certification means that the employee's education background has been checked and verified--an increasingly important detail--and that standards developed by those in the profession have been met. Certification gives employers more options in developing opportunities for growth. For private law firms, certification allows higher billing rates. Initial certification may take many years to achieve, and keeping it requires continuing effort. To maintain CLA/CP certification, paralegals must participate in at least 50 hours of approved continuing legal education every five years.

Through the certification program, paralegals take charge of their

professional and career development, and demonstrate a commitment to professional growth that rivals that of any profession."

Subscription to "Facts & Findings" available at www.nala.org

Additionally, **LAPSWV President Jill Francisco, CLA** is featured on pg 54 of the current edition of "Facts & Findings" with her list of *Cool Web Sites for Paralegals*.

LAPSWV Special Thanks

- to Joyce and Ray Wilson for the wonderful food at the LAPSWV Dec 8 Christmas Gala! In spite of the bad weather, 12 members and 3 spouses attended and had a great time!
- to Cindy Lowther, Tammy Welch, Jane Lambert, Donna Losey and everyone who sold raffle tickets for the extremely successful LAPSWV WinterPlace raffle. The December effort paid off with \$750.00 realized towards the LAPSWV scholarship fund.
- to Lorena Shingleton for constantly maintaining the LAPSWV website. Check it out - www.lapswv.org

Ab Initio

Latin for "from the beginning."

Ab Initio is a quarterly publication of Legal Assistants/Paralegals of Southern West Virginia (LAPSWV). None of the information contained herein is intended to be nor should it be construed as legal advice.

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