

# GAP *The Paragraph*

Georgia Association of Paralegals Quarterly Newsletter  
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National Federation of Paralegal Associations

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## **Recent GAP Dinner Meetings**



*GAP members interact with speaker (l-r): Leslie Lumpkin, Robin Sangston, Vicki Diamond & Dottie Pritchett*



*Gus Cawley of The Law Staff Group with new member Eric Lautzenhiser at Eric's first GAP meeting*

*October 10  
New Member Mixer  
Clarissa Leaks, Dottie Pritchett, Charlotte Barnett and Kipharnie Raeford*

# **2006**

## **Board of Directors**

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## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

*By: Gina S. Farley, CP, President*

*Change is the law of life. And those who look only to the past or present are certain to miss the future.*

**-John F. Kennedy**



Autumn has always been my favorite time of year. Somehow, more than January 1<sup>st</sup> when we are still locked in winter with spring so far away, autumn feels like the perfect time for change. The leaves are changing, daylight is changing, and the temperature is changing.

Autumn is also the time of year when we put together GAP's Board of Directors for the next year. I am very pleased that many of the excellent paralegals that comprised your 2006 board of directors have committed to continue in 2007. I also hope to work with many more members next year, on the board, on committees and through special projects. We have created several new coordinator positions on the board in an effort to focus more energy on areas where we want GAP to evolve...change for the better.

Based on my work with other paralegal associations through NFPA, I have come to believe that we are at a critical point in determining the future direction of paralegals. As our profession continues to struggle for appropriate recognition and "professional" status, I hope that you will work with me to grow GAP's membership so we can support each other and find ways to change the perception and reality of our profession for the better.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Gina S. Farley".

Gina S. Farley, CP  
GAP President

## FROM THE EDITOR

By: Alice Chow, Director of Communications

*"To everything there is a season."  
Ecclesiastes 3:1-8*



My season is winding down and coming to a close. Over the past two years, I have had the pleasure of working with two dedicated Boards of Directors, the GAP office, a talented newsletter committee, and many of you as I served as the Director of Communications. As I reflect upon my tenure, serving in this position has been an educational and rewarding experience for me.

I am especially grateful to the unsung heroes of the newsletter committee. This group has stepped up to write articles when needed, and has been especially helpful in proofreading and editing materials for the quarterly newsletter. You may not have been aware of their presence, but trust me, you would surely miss them if they weren't there. Thanks to this group for their hard work and dedication!

I urge newsletter committee members especially and anyone with a talent for writing and desire to lead and serve GAP to apply for the Director of Communications position for 2007. For more information, please visit <http://www.gaparalegal.org/boardvolunteer.html>. Also, feel free to contact me at [gap\\_editor@yahoo.com](mailto:gap_editor@yahoo.com).

Thanks again to all of you readers. The newsletter is for your benefit, and I hope you enjoy this issue!

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## SMART CONFERENCING





# CLOSING THE GAP:

## Incorporating Adequate Tech Skills Training into Paralegal Education

By: Duke Bradley, III, JD



As is the case with almost every segment of society, advances in technology have managed to influence business and industry, creating a new landscape upon which all professionals must function. Whereas the future impact of technology on the world has been incessantly written about, debated, and discussed, there is no doubt that even the contemporary law office has been reshaped by technological change.

In 1997, nearly 10 years ago, William C. Cobb\* most prophetically remarked:

*"The legal profession is not impervious to the changes that are occurring in the marketplace. The profession cannot stop those changes nor can the profession erect strong enough barriers to insulate it from progressive economic influences. The legal profession is bound by the evolution of the market and will be affected by the same forces that have affected all others who deliver products and services."*

\*William C. Cobb is the founder of Cobb Consulting, a professional services consulting firm based in Houston, Texas. The following quote was taken from a paper written in preparation for the *Seize the Future: New Strategies Conference* co-sponsored by the American Bar Association in Phoenix, 1997.

Cobb's insights ring true today. In recent years, judges, lawyers, and paralegals (the collective trinity of the legal profession) have increasingly injected technology into their daily practices. In many instances, particularly in the federal courts, racing to file a document at the courthouse before it closes has given way to punching the button on an online filing before midnight. Documents are provided on computer disks instead of in cardboard boxes.

The trend is undeniable, and so is the challenge to address it in legal education programs throughout the country. For people seeking entrance into the legal profession, the necessity of such change is underscored considering that professional success remains inextricably linked to the quality of students' academic training.

*continued on Page 9*



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# NFPA LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: WHAT A GREAT OPPORTUNITY!

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*By: Christina Weeks, Vice President & NFPA Primary*

San Francisco is a great city that Gina Farley, President, Michael Misenheimer, Pro Bono director and I got to experience first hand! This year's NFPA annual leadership conference was hosted by the San Francisco Paralegal Association at San Francisco State University. The NFPA Leadership Conference is a day and a half long event that focuses on providing training that equips paralegal association members to be better leaders on both the local and the national levels.

Though the focus of the conference is to build leadership skills, an official leadership position is not a prerequisite to attend the conference; membership in the NFPA is all that is required. (Remember, as a member of GAP you are a member of NFPA and are entitled to any associated benefits.)

The conference got underway with a session on ethics and how to deal with difficult people. Pat Madina, Program Director of the ABA Paralegal Studies Program at San Francisco State University, facilitated this session. It was a fun and informative session and was a great way to kick off the conference; after all, there is nothing like a little confrontation to get paralegals fired up.

Other speakers included: Linda McGirr, NFPA Vice President and Director of Membership, Anne Rosenthal & Andrea Shindlebower, NFPA Leadership Training Co-Chairs, Jane Kennedy, NFPA Managing Director, Anita Hayworth, NFPA President and GAP's President Gina Farley. Ms. Farley's topic was "Representing Your Association ... It's Not Just About Convention". Though participation in the annual national convention is a large part of being an association leader, there are many more opportunities to participate in the NFPA. Some of these opportunities include taking part in: the leadership conference, region meetings, the pro bono conference and the PACE ambassador conference. Gina used fun props and a skit to illustrate her speech; Michael and I were some of the actors in her skit. We will not be Hollywood stars anytime soon, I assure you.



*(l-r) Christina Weeks, Michael Misenheimer, and  
Gina Farley*

However, Michael and I are both threatening to move to San Francisco. This was Michael's first trip to the city by the bay. I have to admit it was fun to go there with someone who had not yet seen all the city has to offer. When we were not at conference activities we were eating, shopping, sight seeing, hiking up and down those famous hills and oh... did I mention eating? Gina was slightly more reserved but Michael and I sampled all the local fare we could stand.

In addition to the learning from the conference material and the enjoying the food, we got to know some of our NFPA leaders and fellow members better, and we even made what we hope will be lasting friendships with people from places such as Cleveland and Connecticut. I also got a hug from the President of NFPA who is a wonderful and kind woman, as this is one of the rare forums where I could get the chance to genuinely get to know her better. Keep this opportunity in mind when you are considering attending an NFPA event in the future. Additionally, this is a great time for you to consider getting more involved on a local level. Statements of interest are due soon! I look forward to some new faces joining the leaders of GAP.

As your NFPA Primary representative, I am responsible for making sure that you have all the information you want about NFPA, so please feel free to email me with any questions you might have at [chrissy404@bellsouth.net](mailto:chrissy404@bellsouth.net).

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# WELCOME NEW GAP MEMBERS!

Luis E. Cordero  
Nikita L. Hines  
Betty Keith  
Ronald Key  
Eric Phillip Lautzenhiser  
Laura Maggard  
Candace Paetzhold  
Tara D. Swainson  
Lorie Warner  
Melissa Williams  
Tracy M. Womack

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Laurie Michelle Taylor

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LeAnne Lovering

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Joe Pride

**Bernard V. Kearse, III, P.C.**  
Miranda W. Jenkins

**Christopher E. Chapman, PC**  
Stephanie Davies

**Clayton L. Jolly, III**  
Angela M. Clark

**Counsel On Call**  
Leigh Dowden

**D.A. Forensics**  
Peter Giroux  
Lee Walker

**Dow Lohnes PLLC**  
Michele Bowen

**Epstein, Becker & Green, P.C.**  
Leah D. Soto

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Karen Nagy

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Richard Coleman  
David Shelly

**Florida Metropolitan University**  
Lakishia Abraham

**Fulton County Daily Report**  
Cynthia Blackshear

**Georgia Perimeter College**  
Frank Falcetta

**John Marshall Law School**  
Virginia Richardson  
Rachel Scott

**Medavent Healthcare Solutions**  
Lisa Eppard Scully

**Miller & Martin PLLC**  
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Janet Brock  
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Lori Williams-Martin

**U.S. Franchise Systems, Inc.**  
Lisa Louise Sims

**Weissman, Nowack, Curry & Wilco, PC**  
Nancy A. O'Donnell  
Tammie J. Prieto

## Announcements

### Save the Dates!

**NFPA** is scheduled to host two exciting events in 2007, in which all GAP members are eligible and encouraged to attend:

- NFPA 2007 Tech Institute - July 19-20, 2007 - Pittsburgh, PA
- NFPA 2007 Annual Convention - October 18-21, 2007 - Tampa Bay, FL

**GAP** is planning and hosting the:

- GAP Technology Conference - March 22-23, 2007 - Westin Peachtree Plaza, Atlanta, GA

### For the Record

Christina Weeks was identified as a Registered Paralegal in the previous edition of The Paragraph. While Ms. Weeks is studying to become an RP, she has not yet taken and passed PACE. We regret the error.

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# Closing the Gap

*Continued from page 4*

To be adequately prepared for the influx of technology-inspired changes in the legal field, the time has come to rethink *how* legal education can be improved. This may be accomplished by examining the effectiveness of curriculums that do not aggressively employ technology. As an educator, committed to improving the delivery of legal instruction, I am more interested in responding to these concerns by creating a much needed dialogue among legal professionals on this matter.

A peek into most law school and paralegal curriculums reveals very few course offerings centered on the use of, introduction to, or familiarity with the technology commonly used in today's law office. While the preeminent legal research giants Westlaw and Lexis/Nexis remain hallmarks of virtually all legal skills training programs, training on the use of these research modalities represents the extent of most students' technology exposure. This is problematic, particularly for paralegals and legal assistants, as many law offices and corporate legal divisions have become more demanding of their new hires - now requiring functional competency with more oft used legal software designed by companies like Amicus, Juris, Genlex, Abacus Law, and others. Hiring managers are more frequently abstaining from training inexperienced paralegals and legal assistants on the many software applications available for use. Actually, there exists a quiet expectation (especially of those entrants who have completed certified education programs) to possess basic legal software knowledge and usage skills.

Anecdotal evidence and personal experience has proven that young paralegals, not fortunate to work in environments that offer meaningful training opportunities for employees, have long survived with a "learn-as-you-go" approach to familiarizing themselves with technical resources used in the profession. As an instructor of legal studies, this is particularly disturbing. With knowledge that the profession expects a certain level of proficiency with these technologies, schools now have an obligation to take note of ongoing industry changes, and to respond to those changes by adjusting their curriculums accordingly.

Although unlikely to occur, more tech-driven enthusiasts tend to think that some curriculums need to be entirely revised in order to sufficiently incorporate technology into their course offerings. As ambitious as this may seem, the reality is that until there is a technology assessment added to the PACE, the CLA exam, or even state bar exams, schools that offer any level of legal education will not substantially alter their curriculums because such change will not appear particularly necessary. For career-driven technical schools, one might argue the opposite – that technology usage skills *beyond* Westlaw and Lexis are vitally important and intimately linked to the prospect of students securing employment based on the practical skills training they should receive while in school. Recent industry changes support the latter proposition.

*Continued on page 14*



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## 2006 GAP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Anthony's Restaurant \*\* 3109 Piedmont Road \*\* 5:00 cocktails - 6:00 dinner

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### **9th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's Installation of the 2007 Board of Directors**

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## 2007 GAP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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Feb. 6, 2007  
(5:00 - 6:00)

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's  
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April 10, 2007

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's  
Speaker:

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June 12, 2007

### **GAP Free Networking Dinner at Anthony's "Member Appreciation Night" - What's On Your Mind? Free Dinner and cash bar**

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Aug. 7, 2007

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's  
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Oct. 9, 2007  
(5:00 - 6:00)

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's  
New Member Mixer Sponsor: **Andrew Grace Associates**  
Speaker:

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Dec. 4, 2007

### **10th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's Installation of the 2008 Board of Directors**

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## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

By: Rosalyn Floyd



**Shana Elliott**

Shana Elliott gives every indication of being a born leader. Her intelligence and positive outlook on life are recognized by everyone with whom this young professional comes in contact. Ms. Elliott is the person who gives you encouraging words to keep you going and support to ensure you stay on the right path.

Shana Elliott is an active member of the Georgia Association of Paralegals, which she joined in March. With her dedication and respect for GAP, she looks forward to expanding her membership to a leadership role as GAP's Director of Continuing Legal Education.

Ms. Elliott grew up in West Palm Beach, Fla., and moved to metro Atlanta at age 15. Following graduation from Duluth High School, Ms. Elliott attended Georgia State University. After earning a bachelor's of business administration degree with an emphasis in management, Ms. Elliott began to find her niche. Landing her first legal job at King and Spalding, she discovered a career that was perfect for her. She enjoyed working with attorneys, legal secretaries, and fellow paralegals preparing documents and getting ready for trial. She began taking paralegal classes at Kennesaw State University, where she earned a paralegal certificate in 2002.

Currently Ms. Elliott is employed at How Stuff Works, an Internet company, as a litigation paralegal. She has trained three contract paralegals on proper procedures and protocols.

In her spare time, Ms. Elliott enjoys creating scented candles for friends and family. Due to the positive feedback from the lucky ones who received her candles as gifts, she decided to open her own candle company, *By Shana*. Ms. Elliott is also a board member of her home owner's association.

Clearly, Shana Elliott is a person who is not content to sit on the sidelines.

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# MAKING THE PACE RESOLUTION

By: Karen Prouty, RP

The weekend of September 15<sup>th</sup>, I represented GAP at NFPA's 2006 PACE Ambassador Conference. The conference was hosted by Stoel Rives, LLP in Portland, Oregon. I gained invaluable knowledge from this experience, which will assist me in fulfilling my duties as GAP's PACE Ambassador. PACE Ambassadors of other NFPA member associations from across the country came together to learn how each association encourages its members to take PACE and assist paralegals preparing to take the exam. At the conference, I discovered that 20% of the paralegals who had passed PACE as of June 30, 2006, were members of GAP. GAP members should be proud of our strong representation among new Registered Paralegals, and also proud of our contribution in pioneering the future of the profession.

At the conference I learned the reason most paralegals do not take the exam is because of fear of not passing. GAP members in 2006 have already shown courage in studying for, taking and passing the exam. The pass rate for PACE has continually increased as more study materials and resources have become available, and as PACE Ambassadors have determined effective methods of assisting PACE candidates in preparing for the exam.

One method paralegals around the country employ is forming and participating in study groups. These groups typically have an initial meeting to: determine the speed at which they will cover the material, establish a schedule and designate a location for future meetings. Study groups encourage and support each other, so candidates do not feel alone as they prepare for the exam.

I encourage GAP members to make a New Year's resolution to take PACE during 2007. Let's have an even stronger showing next year and prove to not only Georgia's legal community but also the nation's, that Georgia's paralegals are highly skilled professionals. To assist those of you making the resolution to meet this challenge, I will be organizing a PACE study group for the first part of 2007. If you are interested in joining the study group, please contact me by December 30, 2006 at [kprouty@fjl-law.com](mailto:kprouty@fjl-law.com) or at (404) 586-2039.



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## Closing the Gap

*Continued from page 9*

I submit, however, that wholesale curriculum change may not be absolutely necessary in addition to being somewhat impractical. Perhaps only minor changes, like new and innovative course offerings, are sufficient to improve the breadth and quality of technical exposure for the profession's newest entrants. If the goal is to promote student proficiency in commonly used technology-based legal applications, surely this objective can be accomplished by employing a few simple measures, which from an implementation standpoint, fall well short of complex curriculum overhauls. This should be pleasing to the schools themselves. After all, most education professionals loathe complications relating to curriculum development as issues regarding accreditation and program goal conflicts can abound upon the introduction of groundbreaking new courses.

The addition of new tech-based classes to already less than inspiring elective course offerings is not an all encompassing remedy. It is merely a temporary solution to a problem that may become more apparent as the legal profession continues to evolve given technology's perpetual influence on it. The impetus, however, rests with the schools that facilitate legal education to take note and respond to industry changes. Although there is research that suggests that technology in education is not always proper, the astronomic increase of technology within the legal profession should compel educators to pause and consider what change awaits. Once the proper importance and emphasis is placed on technical training within legal education, then will the quality of the overall educational experience improve.

*Duke Bradley, III, JD is an instructor of Legal Studies at DeKalb Technical College in Clarkston, Georgia. Mr. Bradley has 3 years experience in legal education and is an active member of the Georgia Association of Paralegals. Bradley is a graduate of Morehouse College, holds a Masters of Arts in Teaching from Brown University, and a Juris Doctor from Atlanta's John Marshall Law School. His professional affiliations are numerous, including NALA, NFPA, and AAJPE.*

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# PARALEGAL SUPERCONFERENCE EARNS ITS NAME

By: Susan Draeger Coker, RP

You may have seen advertisements for the Paralegal SuperConference over the last few years. If so, like me, you may have wondered if the actual event lives up to the hype. The answer is, in a word, *YES!*

I attended the 2006 Paralegal SuperConference on October 12<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup> in Atlanta. The conference was well-attended with people coming from all over the Southeast, and even as far away as Texas.

In reviewing the seminar information prior to the event, I was impressed with the menu of topics, which ranged from various issues on electronically-stored information to legal research and writing to employee blogging to formation of international corporations to intellectual property. The variety and scope of topics appeared carefully developed with an eye toward keeping the subjects fresh and on the cutting edge of modern legal practice.

During the conference, I found the presenters to be knowledgeable, dynamic, and clearly experts in their field. All of the speakers were engaged with the attendees, readily discussing questions, and some offered their e-mail addresses for further follow-up. The conference also featured an informative and lively panel discussion concerning career enhancement.

As part of the conference package, attendees were presented with the complete course materials on a compact disc. What more convenient way to access that information than by a few mouse clicks! Another added benefit was the opportunity to speak with other paralegals and share ideas and opinions about information and issues affecting our profession. A spirit of camaraderie prevailed throughout the conference, and I enjoyed the chance to meet new people as well as touch base with friends.

In the end, the conference was so much more than I expected. I left feeling invigorated and ready to take on new challenges in my career. This is CLE at its finest, folks — don't miss next year's event! The Paralegal SuperConference is, indeed, *SUPER*.

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