



The Paragraph

Georgia Association of Paralegals Quarterly Newsletter
Charter Member of the
National Federation of Paralegal Associations

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THE RESULTS ARE IN

Paralegals and support staff open up about their salaries and their satisfaction levels

by Karen A. Dean
Special to the Daily Report

What really makes a paralegal happy? Challenging tasks and a little recognition.

Those were just two of the often revealing answers in a confidential survey of Atlanta-area paralegals conducted by the Daily Report. The online survey received 217 responses.

The survey polled paralegals on a myriad of career topics: experience, training, education, salary and benefits. It also examined how paralegals view their jobs, their likes and dislikes, and suggestions for improvements.

The majority of respondents, nearly 75 percent, were located in downtown, Midtown or Buckhead. The rest worked outside the perimeter. Nearly 75 percent of the respondents were from litigation firms, followed by corporate, real estate, bankruptcy, intellectual property and immigration practices.

Most participants were employed by private firms. Twenty-one percent worked for corporations, with a small sampling working for government agencies. Office size ranged widely—from sole practitioners to those with more than 800 lawyers. Firms with two to 10 lawyers had the most representation (27 percent).

More Than Money

Yes, salary is an important issue. But the paralegals surveyed placed a higher emphasis on work challenges. Thirty-one percent of respondents pointed to the challenge and interest level of work as what they valued most in a job.

Flexibility was the most important issue for 24 percent of respondents. Only 13 percent named salary as the most important consideration. "I would rather have flextime and/or more vacation than more pay," wrote one respondent.

Those opinions were not eye-opening for some. "People like to be recognized in their career for their efforts," says Marcus Li, president of the Georgia Association of Paralegals. "The kind of acknowledgement we most often hear lacking is acknowledgement and advancement of position. It's sometimes appreciated more than simply money."

That was a theme woven throughout the survey. Lack of advancement possibilities was named by 25 percent of respondents as what they liked least about their jobs.

"It's the nature of the career path," observes Andi Wysocki, a paralegal with Arnall Golden Gregory. "I don't know what can be done about it."

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Marcus C. Li, President
Georgia Association of Paralegals

Greetings,

2005 has been another excellent year for the Georgia Association of Paralegals! The Association goals in the main areas of education, legislation, community involvement, professional development and membership growth have all been well met during the year through the actions of our members, volunteers and board of directors. Our activities have indeed contributed to the overall furtherance of the paralegal profession while continuing to uphold Georgia's stellar reputation as a leading paralegal organization among our national peers.



The December Holiday Party will mark the end of my term as President of the Georgia Association of Paralegals. It has been such a great honor to serve as your President for the past two years. I truly appreciate each and every member entrusting me with the important roles and responsibilities of this office. I am proud to report that I am leaving the Presidency with a strong membership base of over 550 plus active members, a balanced budget, a cohesive strategic long range plan and strong positioning for your future President and board members to continue our association growth.

I would like to extend my most sincere appreciation and warm recognition to our association management company Norene Quinn, Margaret Bryce, and Joe Bryce and to the board of directors for your fine work, standard of excellence, and friendship throughout the past two years. The experience of serving as your President has been both professionally and personally enriching! There are more great things to come!

Best regards,

Marcus

Marcus C. Li

2006 GAP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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

Dec. 6, 2005

7th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's

Chief Charles M. Walters, Gwinnett County Police Department

Installation of the 2006 Board of Directors

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February 7, 2006

(5:00 – 6:00)

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's

New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates

Speakers: TBD

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April 11, 2006

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's

Speakers: TBD

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June 13, 2006

FREE Dinner and cash bar

(5:00 – 6:00)

GAP Free Networking Dinner at Anthony's

"Member Appreciation Night"– What's On Your Mind?

New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates

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Aug. 8, 2006

GAP Membership Dinner at Anthony's

Speakers: TBD

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Oct. 10, 2006

(5:00 – 6:00)

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's

New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates

Speaker: TBD

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Dec. 5, 2006

8th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's

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Daniel Codman
Charles Davis

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FROM THE EDITOR

*Alice Jordan Chow, Newsletter Editor
Georgia Association of Paralegals*

This issue is full of information relevant to you as a paralegal. From the cover story regarding job satisfaction, to recounts of GAP happenings this fall, to member kudos and contests, it is all about you. Be sure to take advantage of the contests, scholarships, learning and networking opportunities available.

Email me (gap_editor@yahoo.com) with any newsworthy announcements regarding promotions, job changes, office moves, degrees and credentials obtained, etc. to keep your fellow members updated.

Have a happy holiday season, and I look forward to seeing you at the holiday party!

Happy reading,

Alice



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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



More than 20 years after becoming a paralegal, **Lorraine Glynn** of Tauber & Balser, P.C. feels as if she's found the right place to apply her skills. Hired in May 2004 as an administrator supporting the CPA firm's Forensic Accounting Services Team, Glynn's abilities didn't go unnoticed. Tauber & Balser, P.C. decided her paralegal skills would provide a greater benefit to servicing the firm's clients and added her to the forensic professional staff in early 2005. She works on a variety of matters, from breach of fiduciary duty to employee theft.

"Forensic accounting is all the rage now and it is just beginning to come to the forefront," said Glynn, who received her Bachelor of Science degree from Florida State University. Uncertain of her career plans, Glynn moved back to Westchester County in New York and worked for Coca-Cola Bottling Co. of New York.

Glynn heard about the paralegal program at Mercy College in nearby White Plains. With a family that already had five lawyers and two more in law school, the legal field seemed enticing. In six months Glynn completed the ABA-approved program "with distinction" while working full time.

In the mid-1980's, paralegal work began to be recognized as a distinct profession, but gaining entry into the field as something other than a "legal secretary with a different title" was still rare. Glynn opted for a job with Coopers & Lybrand's Tax Department in Boston. Three years of non-stop tax work resulted in burn-out.

Glynn held various jobs with Turner Broadcasting, the 1996 Olympic Games and a professional soccer team that all made use of the research, writing and organizational skills of which good paralegals pride themselves. In 1998, Glynn found her way back into the legal field, taking a job in the Legal Department of Holiday Inn Hospitality, Inc. (now known as InterContinental Hotels Group).

After the tragic events of September 11th wreaked havoc on the hospitality industry, Glynn found herself at Tauber & Balser, P.C. Forensic accounting combines investigative, accounting, research, and litigation work. Glynn has demonstrated there is room in this field for paralegals, and you don't need to be a CPA to gain entry. You just need an inquisitive mind, a good work ethic and a willingness to try something new.




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JOB SATISFACTION REPORT

continued from page 1

Sure, she says, junior paralegals can move into senior paralegal spots, but the pay difference is negligible and the work is not significantly different. “They hit the ceiling, and that’s it,” Wysocki says, adding she has known people who left the profession as a result.

In the legal field just shy of a decade, Wysocki was promoted last spring to paralegal from a more clerical position. Doing so was not easy, she says, and required advocacy by others who wanted her to succeed.

Although 23 percent of respondents were not happy with their salary, money doesn’t matter when you don’t like the environment. A congenial work atmosphere and a feeling of teamwork were reported by some as factors in their job satisfaction.

“Our firm does a great job of making their employees happy. The little benefits, welcome coffees, etc. really make a difference in employee morale,” Wysocki says.

Michelle Reiss, a legal secretary at Morris, Manning & Martin, says the small things make a big difference. “When the attorneys and administrative staff all work to create relationships, it results in a very cooperative environment. Work becomes more pleasant,” she says.

Most participants got along with coworkers—only 2 percent reported that to be the worst aspect of their jobs. No doubt the participant who cited “stingy, self-absorbed, mean superiors” was in that category.

A long commute and Atlanta’s notorious traffic woes, while not on the list of choices, also were frequent complaints.

An enjoyable work environment becomes more important when a large part of people’s waking hours are spent at work. When questioned about work hours, nearly three-quarters of respondents averaged 40 to 50 hours per week. Twenty-two percent clocked fewer than 40 hours, and 4 percent worked 50 hours or more. Workaholics are becoming scarce—no one reported averaging more than 60 hours per week.

Overtime compensation appears typical in many firms. Of those who reported overtime, 62 percent received an hourly-plus-half rate for overtime worked. A small number received compensation time or regular pay, but 27 percent of the responding paralegals received no overtime compensation.

Dollars and Sense

Respondents were largely paralegals with careers spanning more than 11 years. Forty-two percent had fewer than 10 years’ experience. Compensation seemed to reflect that, with 57 percent reporting annual salaries of more than \$50,000. Only 4 percent had salaries of less than \$30,000, and the vast majority of those work outside the perimeter or even outside metro Atlanta.

“The days of paralegal salaries under \$30,000, even for an entry-level paralegal, are nearly gone,” says Joan Krull, president of LegalPros, an Atlanta legal staffing company. “The low side had to come up due to the cost of living. Unfortunately, the high end doesn’t always follow.” On the heels of an economic slowdown, some firms have been slow to raise salaries.

However, most paralegals have received recent salary increases—only 8 percent reported receiving no raises. Nearly 54 percent of paralegals received increases between 1 percent and 4 percent. Thirty-four percent received increases between 4 percent and 10 percent. Nearly 4 percent of respondents received pay increases of more than 10 percent.

Seventeen percent of respondents worked for firms with a salary cap; most did not know if salary caps were applicable to their positions. Of those with a cap, 36 percent had salaries capped at \$55,000 to \$65,000. Thirty-six percent had caps ranging from \$65,000 to more than \$95,000. Twenty-eight percent reported salary caps between \$30,000 and \$55,000.

Most survey participants felt they were compensated fairly, yet 44 percent believed their current job duties warranted a higher salary.

Health insurance was available to nearly all the respondents. Most packages included life insurance and 401(k) participation. Disability insurance was offered to 67 percent of respondents. Nearly one-quarter of the paralegals received pension, tuition reimbursement and paid parental leave. Benefits offered to a few included health-club memberships, additional leave time, paid parking and a subsidized car lease.

Evident of the continued maturation of the paralegal profession, most survey participants had advanced degrees. Fifty-six percent had a bachelor’s or graduate degree, and 37 percent had attended some college or earned an associate’s degree.

Employment bonuses varied, no doubt due to the variances in firm size. Thirty-two percent of survey participants received a bonus of \$1,000 to \$3,000 in 2004. Twenty percent received less than \$1,000. Nearly 26 percent received more than \$3,000 in bonus payments. More than 18 percent of survey participants didn’t receive bonuses.

Regardless of the method a firm uses to calculate bonuses, making a marked distinction between paraprofessionals and professionals can cause division in an office. When staff workers are expected to contribute their best efforts, excluding them at bonus time might send an unintended message about the value of their efforts.

To make the financial end of bonuses more manageable, some firms divided bonuses into mid- and end-of-year amounts. There are other options, as well. “Bonuses aren’t always about money,” says Krull. “Job rewards can be non-monetary and still be appreciated.” Extra time off or flexible time are ways to reward staff members.

Announcements

- GAP Board Member and Communications Director [Alice Chow](#) has recently joined Arby's Restaurant Group, Inc. as Franchise Paralegal. In this position she will be responsible for filing and updating the UFOCs, administering the default and termination processes, and drafting various contracts and agreements.

- **Mark your calendars for the 2006 NFPA Annual Convention!**

The convention will be held at the Navy Pier in Chicago from May 4 to 7, 2006.

All GAP members are welcome to attend. If a group from GAP is interested, we may be able to travel as a group at a reduced cost.

For more information on the convention and Chicago's Navy Pier, visit:

<http://www.paralegals.org/displayconvspecific.cfm?convnbr=2333>

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If you have recently changed jobs, had an office move, been promoted, or obtained credentials or awards, we want to recognize you. Email your update to gap_editor@yahoo.com

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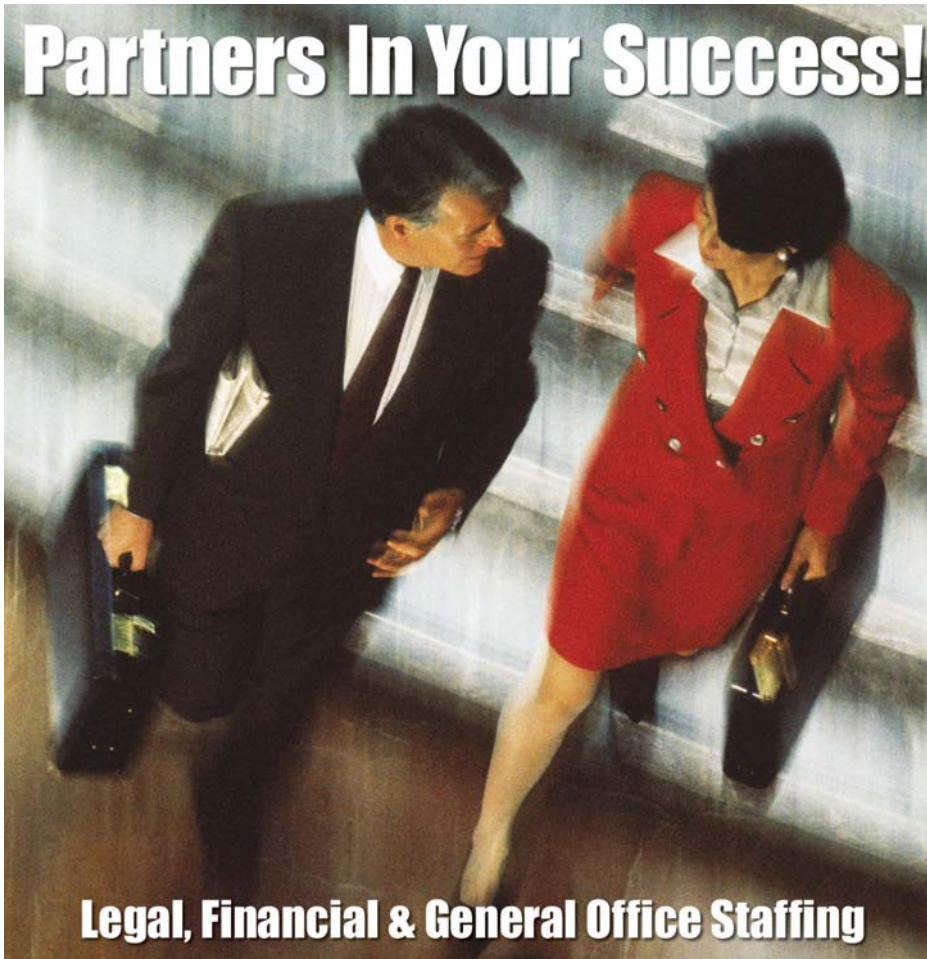
Announcements

Congratulations to GAP Member Charles Mingle, who received an Award of Distinction from the National Federation of Paralegal Associations. NFPA recognized Mingle for his "outstanding service and dedication to providing *pro bono* service by volunteering to assist low-income residents in need of legal assistance." They also praised him for having "dedicated 114 hours towards *pro bono* service and [having] exceeded the 24-hour aspirational goal set by NFPA's leaders and incorporated in NFPA's *Model Code of Ethics and Professional Responsibility and Guidelines for Enforcement*."

Thank you for representing GAP, NFPA, and paralegals in such a great light!



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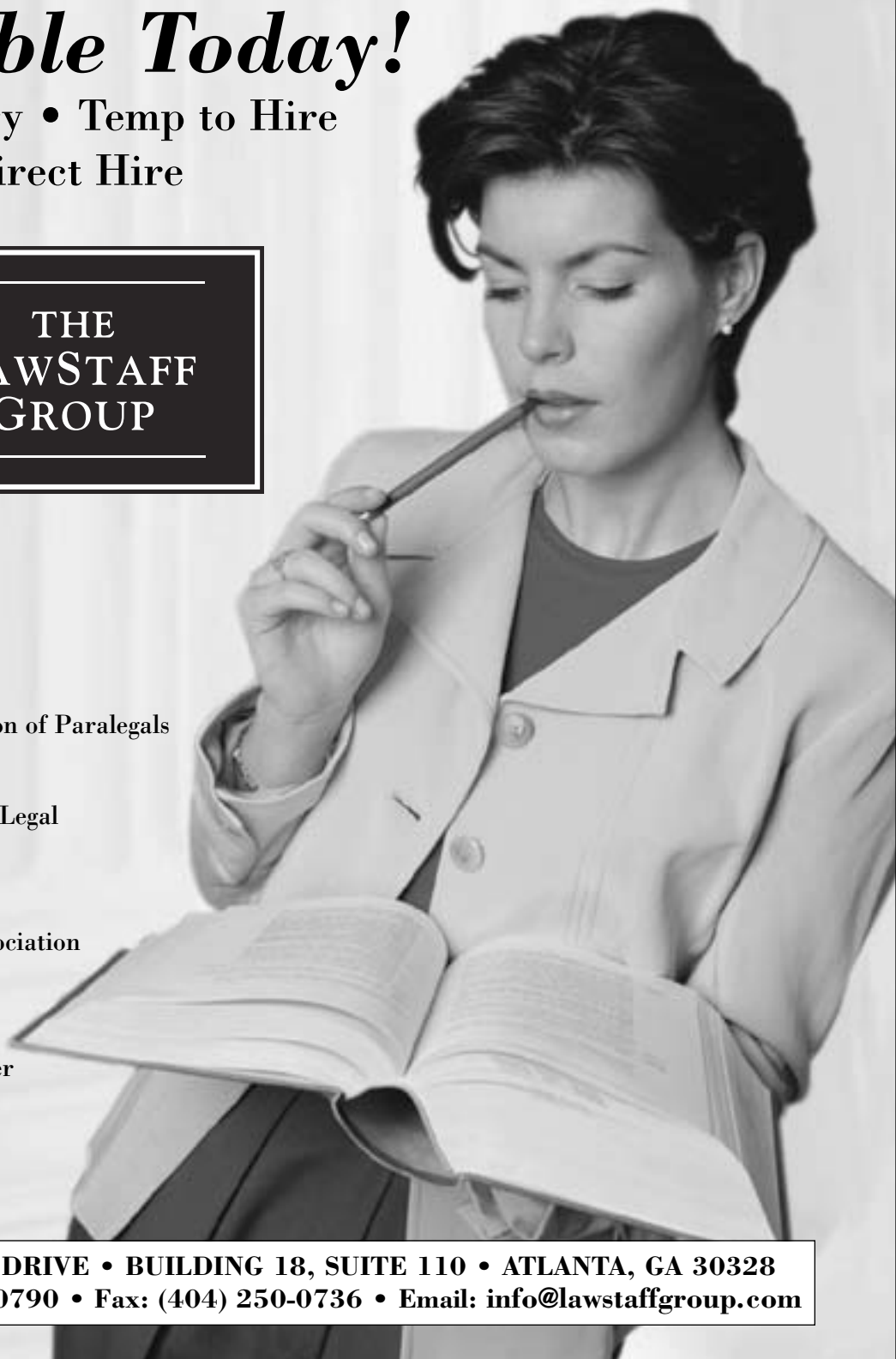
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YOU JUST HAVE TO PASS, YOU DON'T HAVE TO EXCEL

*by: Beth Magee, RP, Pace Ambassador
and Interim Director of CLE*

This was one of the useful concepts to emphasize to members which I learned at the NFPA PACE Ambassadors Conference in August. We spent time going over ideas and discussing information about PACE which PACE Ambassadors should know to inform members and the legal community about PACE. Since GAP has been building our program for several years, and will continue building our program in the coming years, I enjoyed being the "been there and done that" attendee. However, while I was able to share information and methods for things we'd been doing, it was good that I was able to learn new things and gather information to help GAP and its future PACE Ambassadors.

Another useful idea for current PACE Registered Paralegals, or future PACE Registered Paralegals, is to ask your employer to pay your renewal fee. If your employer paid for you to become an RP originally or pays your GAP dues and CLE registrations, then it makes sense. I never thought about asking for it, but you can bet I will when I renew my credential next year. Naturally, if you want to take PACE, it doesn't hurt to ask if your employer will pay for all or part of your application fee or study materials.

At the conference we decided that instead of having excuses for not taking PACE, people just have hurdles to overcome, which I believe is true, and have written about this year. I'm excited that next year GAP expects to publicize PACE more actively to attorneys and paralegal managers. Once they learn about PACE and its value to them, their clients, and of course their paralegals, some of your hurdles for taking PACE may be easier to jump.

A day and a half of useful PACE information and ideas, and my highlight might have come at the end of the last day when NFPA President Kristine Farmer, RP committed to recognize any association attending the PACE Ambassadors Conference which has two new RPs by the 2006 NFPA Annual Convention at the Convention. Let's make sure GAP is one of those associations!



Ann Price, RP, Assistant PACE Coordinator-PACE Ambassadors, did a great job of planning the event, with the support of her law firm Patton Boggs LLP, her local association, the National Capital Area Paralegal Association, and Document Technologies, Inc. Dianna Noyes, RP, PACE Coordinator, did a great job of planning an agenda and presenting an event that was useful and interesting. Of course both Ann and Dianna would say they couldn't have done it without the help of the other NFPA Assistant PACE Coordinators, and that's true. Thank you to Suellen Honeychuck, RP, Assistant Coordinator-PACE Renewals, Kathleen Miller, RP, Assistant Coordinator-Public Relations, Vickie Newman, Assistant Coordinator-Study Materials, and Cindy Welch, RP, Assistant Coordinator-Education. Kudos to the PACE Coordinator and Assistant PACE Coordinators for your time, efforts, materials, ideas and support. I really appreciate the support of GAP's Board and thank the membership for its continued interest in becoming PACE Registered Paralegals.

ARE YOU AN RP OR DID YOU TAKE PACE IN 2005?

At the end of the year GAP will submit its application for NFPA's annual PACE Ambassador Award. The application asks us to list the number of PACE Registered Paralegals we have at the end of 2005 and how many members took PACE during 2005, whether or not you passed. We do not list names, only statistics. To assure that we report this information accurately, please send me an e-mail at bmagee@convexgroup.com, before December 25, 2005.

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REPORT ON OCTOBER 11, 2005 DINNER MEETING



Since the movie *Jerry Maguire*, we've all become familiar with this refrain. GAP members were excited to attend the October 11th dinner meeting in which featured speaker Jesse J. Spikes of McKenna, Long & Aldridge LLP set out to demystify the practice of sports and entertainment law.

Many star athletes have not had extensive training in the financial and legal fields, so they seek the assistance of advisors. Mr. Spikes maintains that although some firms may represent the client from a legal side, he advises against offering "one-stop shopping" wherein legal and financial advice would be provided. This best avoids a potential conflict of interest.



There are few administrative barriers to entry into sports entertainment law. According to Mr. Spikes, there is only one requirement to being a sports agent, which is to "have a client". Not only are legal professionals involved, but also individuals with backgrounds in industries such as accounting, automotive sales, etc. are in this line of work. As a sports agent's primary duty will be negotiating team contracts and the real revenue generator, endorsement deals, excellent negotiation skills are a must. Due diligence may also be required before a recommendation regarding the client's deal is made.



What makes a good sports entertainment paralegal? The same qualities that make a paralegal in any other field do, qualities such as insightfulness, a sense of humor, patience, diligence, and the ability to make others look good, according to the speaker.

was the lucky winner of Atlanta Thrashers suite tickets courtesy of AIRE.

Preceding and at the closing of the meeting, GAP member attendees were regaled with the opportunity to win door prizes. Cynthia Ortego won a Night at the Movies themed basket from Andrew Grace Associates. Marliissa Crawford won a portable DVD player courtesy of the Law Staff Group, who also provided gift bags at each place setting. Brown Court reporting presented a \$100 American Express Gift Check to both Erica Mims and Alice Chow. They also distributed goodie bags to each member upon departure. Finally, member Fawn Alston

GAP thanks Mr. Spikes, the sponsors, and Anthony's Restaurant for a lovely evening. Reserve your and a companion's (spouse, boss, or potential member) place at the 8th Annual GAP Holiday Party on December 6 online at <http://www.gaparalegals.org/rsvp.html>.

JOB SATISFACTION REPORT

continued from page 8

Money is also not at the top of the list of what it would take to lure most paralegals away from their current jobs. More than 63 percent cited reasons other than salary necessary to consider a job change. Shorter commutes (19 percent), a different type of work (15 percent), better advancement possibilities (10 percent) and better hours (2 percent) were on the list. Thirty-seven percent named salary as a reason for leaving.

A revealing 73 percent of respondents voiced a desire for higher-level work, and 74 percent of those have indicated such to their employers. Yet employers' commitments to continuing education for paralegals were divided. Almost 53 percent of respondents participated in a professional development program, but 47 percent did not.

The Blurry Line

By far, the biggest concern most paralegals reported was what they saw as professionalism issues. There seems to be a fine line between legal secretary and paralegal in many offices, and one that some feel causes confusion.

The terms "paralegal" and "legal assistant" frequently are used interchangeably. "Paralegal" was the job title of 65 percent of survey participants, and nearly 12 percent used "legal assistant." Another 17 percent of respondents were called "legal secretary." Fifty-two percent had secretarial support available to them.

"The attorneys lump the paralegals together with the secretaries and treat us more like higher-functioning secretaries than associates," said one respondent. After doing associate-level work, the writer said, it was "disheartening" to be repeatedly performing secretarial or file-clerk duties.

More than 55 percent of responding paralegals reported spending more than 20 percent of their time on clerical duties. Ten percent spent more than three-quarters of their day performing clerical tasks. "The work I am given is extremely mundane and could be better performed by a secretary or other non-timekeeping employee," wrote one. "I have a strong background in this line of work and have been given no opportunity to use real skills or show what I'm capable of."

A lack of clear job definitions can backfire when hiring. One paralegal cited an instance in which a firm advertised a legal-assistant job that was actually a secretarial position. The attorney started handing the new hire dictation tapes for transcription, and the firm soon was dealing with a disgruntled employee who regretted bypassing other positions for that job.

Unfortunately, paralegals' training also puts them in competition with associates for tasks. While this is an advantage in many firms, it can contribute to the feeling of an unbalanced workload. "I'm currently doing paperwork that an entry-level attorney would be doing; however, my salary does not reflect

that," commented one paralegal. "You may say that I'm gaining vital experience, but I would also like being paid according to my duties."

The paralegal industry is trying to address the issue of job standards and definitions, and many feel licensing is on the horizon. "There is no regulation yet, but it appears to be coming," says Li of the Georgia Association of Paralegals. "Right now paralegals have the option of advanced certification, but it's something that attorneys are still being educated about."

Two national associations offer certification to paralegals who want to improve their skills. The National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) and the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) both offer voluntarily skill testing.

Paralegals receiving the Registered Paralegal designation from NFPA have demonstrated skills and knowledge across a broad range of practice areas. The Certified Legal Assistant Program offered through NALA is a five-section exam covering a range of subjects. Paralegals also can receive advanced certification in their legal specialty.

"A mandatory educational requirement would help weed out problems of qualification," says Susan Coker, a registered paralegal with Fortson, Bentley and Griffin in Athens. "But until that happens we need to educate attorneys on what a paralegal actually is, and what they should look for in terms of education, experience qualifications and skills."

The market, however, remains inconsistent on whether certification is necessary. Krull of LegalPros says it depends on where a hiring attorney places his priorities. "There are firms that demand college but are flexible about the paralegal certificate," she says. "Others require both. But almost all firms hiring will want at least one degree."

Lack of advancement was an oft-cited concern of the respondents. As a nonattorney, options can be somewhat limited. But many firms are redrawing the lines to accommodate varying skill levels. "Many employers are starting to segment paralegal levels," says Li. "They have entry-, mid- and senior-level paralegals, also supervising paralegals. Some employers are also appointing paralegals to head up their own departments."

Despite whatever problems they reported, nearly three-quarters of survey respondents felt they were treated as a professional member of the legal team. And being a valued team member seems to be the result most are searching for.

"My attorneys treat me as an equal, recognize my skills/capabilities, and I participate in day-to-day decisions regarding each case," wrote one paralegal. "I don't think I'd leave this job, even for more pay. I have found a position that is very fulfilling."

The preceding article was published September 12, 2005 in the Fulton County Daily Report's Law Office supplement. It is reprinted with permission

LEGAL WORD POWER

Match each of the contract-related terms on the left with its meaning on the right. Email your answers to gap_editor@yahoo.com. The first respondent with the most correct answers will win a \$100 American Express Gift Cheque courtesy of IKON Office Solutions, to be awarded at the 8th Annual GAP Holiday Party on December 6.

1. BINDER:

2. BAD FAITH:

3. BUY-SELL AGREEMENT:

4. CAVEAT EMPTOR:

5. CLOSING:

6. CONSIDERATION:

7. CONTRACT:

8. ESCROW:

9. GOOD FAITH:

10. LEMON LAWS:

11. QUID PRO QUO:

12. STATUTES OF FRAUD:

13. WARRANTY:

A. An outline of the basic terms of a proposed sales contract between a buyer and a seller.

B. A promise about a product made by either a manufacturer or a seller.

C. Dishonesty or fraud in a transaction, such as entering into an agreement with no intention of ever living up to its terms, or knowingly misrepresenting the quality of something that is being bought or sold.

D. Laws in most states to protect against false claims for payment from contracts that were not agreed upon. The specific laws vary from state to state, but most require that certain contracts be in writing.

E. An agreement among business partners that specifies how shares in the business are to be transferred in the case of a co-owner's death.

F. Latin phrase that means what for what or something for something. The concept of getting something of value in return for giving something of value. For a contract to be binding, it usually must involve the exchange of something of value.

G. Latin for "buyer beware." This rule generally applies to all sales between individuals. It gives the buyer full responsibility for determining the quality of the goods in question. The seller generally has no duty to offer warranties or to disclose defects in the goods.

H. Laws that require manufacturers to repair defective cars. If the repairs are not made within a reasonable amount of time and number of attempts, the manufacturer is required to refund the purchase price, less a reasonable amount for the use of the car.

I. In a real estate transaction, this is the final exchange in which the deed is delivered to the buyer, the title is transferred, and the agreed-on costs are paid.

J. Honestly and without deception. An agreement might be declared invalid if one of the parties entered with the intention of defrauding the other.

K. Something of value that is given in exchange for getting something from another person.

L. Money or documents, such as a deed or title, held by a third party until the conditions of an agreement are met. For instance, pending the completion of a real estate transaction, the deed to the property will be held "in escrow."

M. An agreement between two or more parties in which an offer is made and accepted, and each party benefits. The agreement can be formal, informal, written, oral or just plain understood. Some contracts are required to be in writing in order to be enforced.

All definitions were taken from <http://www.gulfcoastlaw.com/legalterms.html>



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