

# GAP *The Paragraph*

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

June, 2005

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## WHAT HAPPENED IN VEGAS: 2005 CONVENTION REPORT

by: *Christina Weeks & Gina Farley*

The National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) 2005 Convention was held in Las Vegas Nevada April 28 – May 1 at the Golden Nugget Hotel and Casino. The convention was very well attended. There were 43 of our 51 associations present at the Convention, some from all over the country, including Alaska and Hawaii. The Georgia Association of Paralegals was represented by two delegates: Gina Farley, Vice President and NFPA Primary and Christina Weeks, NFPA Secondary. In addition Marcus Li, President and GAP member Mish Barbour also attended.



Thursday was the kick off of the convention and included a full day of seminars. The seminars available to attendees ranged from environmental law to stress management. On Thursday evening we attended an “ice breaker” social, which was held at the Ice House Lounge and was hosted by NFPA sponsors. The Thursday evening social was a fun way to meet members of other associations and to meet some of NFPA’s leaders. It was at the social that we discovered that GAP member Mish Barbour was attending the convention as well.



*Georgia Delegates (l-r) Christina Weeks and Gina Farley with GAP President Marcus Li*

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Marcus C. Li, President  
Georgia Association of Paralegals

Greetings,

The 2005 annual convention of the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA) was held on April 28<sup>th</sup> through May 1<sup>st</sup> in fabulous Las Vegas. Congratulations to the Paralegal Association of Southern Nevada for hosting such a fine conference. Under the bright lights of alluring Nevada we worked around the clock with national colleagues during four power packed days to address current trends, policy and regulatory issues facing the paralegal profession. New NFPA leaders also took oath at convention. Gina Farley, GAP V.P. & NFPA Primary Representative, Chrissy Weeks, GAP's NFPA Secondary Representative and I were very proud to represent GAP this year. Please see the following pages in this newsletter for more convention news.



On the local front you will want to make plans to attend GAP's annual June membership appreciation meeting on Tuesday, June 14, 2005. We have a few special surprises in store for this event! Also, in the true spirit of giving back to the communities in which we serve, GAP members will also have the opportunity to participate in a charity drive on the same evening. Be on the look out for future announcements by our Pro Bono Committee on how you can contribute to the worthy cause that they have chosen to support.

If you think the term "Shepardizing" involves a flock of sheep, then you won't want to miss the legal research seminar planned for Saturday, July 9, 2005. This is the chance to brush up on those legal research skills or to pick up legal research tips from a pro!

Also in this issue of the *Paragraph*, we take a peek at our paralegal neighbors in North Carolina to see how they are dealing with regulation of the profession. A story which I am sure you will find to be quite educational.

Enjoy the summer.

Cheers,  
**Marcus**

Marcus C. Li

# IMMIGRATION LAW EXPERTS ADDRESS GAP MEMBERS

by: Alice Chow



*Speaker Robert Banta talks to Vito DeGennaro and Linnie Bailey*

IKON and Ajilon Legal graciously sponsored GAP's February 8, 2005 Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's Restaurant in Buckhead, where several new members enjoyed a complimentary glass of wine courtesy of Andrew Grace Associates. Attendees benefited from informative presentations by attorney Robert Banta and paralegal Diane Soroko, both of whom work in the exciting field of immigration law.

Mr. Banta spoke regarding his practice, how he entered the field and what he looks for in hiring paralegals. After receiving his Master's Degree in foreign language from Duke University, he entered Vanderbilt University's law school with the vague idea of wanting to pursue a career as an "international lawyer". As an associate attorney in his first position after law school, he worked in a firm that primarily dealt with tax and estate planning. The growing need for Atlanta-area employers to hire foreign nationals, and the resulting legal hurdles involved, resulted in his firm's assumption of such duties. As chance would have it, Mr. Banta was the team member assigned to handle most of the immigration cases. That's where it all began.

***"I wanted to  
be an  
international  
lawyer,  
whatever that  
meant."***

In his current practice, Banta Immigration Law Limited, employment immigration law is the focus. According to Mr. Banta, there are many rewarding aspects of practicing this specialty of law. First, it is satisfying for goal-oriented individuals, as there is always an outcome. Either a person is admitted or denied entry into the country. Secondly, tongue-in-cheek, there is not much interaction with other lawyers. Finally, as a transactional billing structure is used as opposed to an hourly system, more time is available to perform actual work instead of recording minutiae.

Paralegals can work in various sub-specialties of immigration law. Politically minded individuals may be interested in assisting refugees in seeking asylum. Those interested in the business field may function in employment law. Additionally, some immigration cases may also involve criminal law.



*February speakers Diane Soroko of McKenna Long Aldridge and Robert Banta of Banta Immigration Law*

"Why are there so many opportunities [in this field]?" Mr. Banta asked. He then explained that one reason is due to the complications involved. Agency regulations, such as those of the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Labor and the State Department must be followed. Immigration law is not a lucrative field. Banta said the work is "not high dollar, but high volume". Also, if something were to go wrong, a huge problem might ensue. In litigation, sums of money are exchanged. However in immigration law, the stakes are higher.



# Immigration Law

*continued from page 3*

For example, a business may be crippled without the expertise of its overseas professional, or a person or his family member may be stranded in a foreign land.

In hiring paralegals in his practice, Mr. Banta seeks the same qualities as he would in a lawyer. These include attention to both detail and deadlines. The person must be a motivated “self-starter” with a desire to help people. Patience and cultural sensitivity are important. Excellent written and oral communication skills are key. Finally, a team player attitude is a must.

Ms. Diane Soroko, who exhibits all of the above qualities and more, manages the practice at McKenna Long & Aldridge. She spoke about what she has learned in over twenty years experience regarding what makes a successful immigration paralegal, and also gave some background on her firm’s role.

Diane said that immigration paralegals must be very people-oriented and patient, as there is much client contact. Some of the cases can start 5 to 7 years before entry into the country. Accordingly, one of the most rewarding aspects of her job is the long-term relationships with clients. At McKenna, paralegals are given “lots of latitude” and respect, and can “work on strategy with clientele” and even “brainstorm with attorneys” instead of performing mere grunt work, she asserted. She explained the role of an immigration paralegal as the interpreter between the foreign national’s skills and the needs of a company. They present the case to countries as to why to allow an individual to enter and

***“I’m just  
an Aussie  
farmer.”***



*Doorprize winner Christina Weeks of Topping & Associates with David Hyre of IKON*

work there. One self-described “Aussie farmer” client of hers grew an organic herb garden, of which said herbs were made into a line of holistic skincare products, which are now distributed in 20 countries.

A question and answer session followed the presentations. Then, GAP President Marcus Li proudly presented both Mr. Banta and Ms. Soroko with Speaker Awards.

Several wonderful door prizes were awarded. Dotty Pritchett of Andrew Grace Associates presented new member Janice Perry with a lovely gift basket filled with bath products, a china teapot and tea, candles and other items for relaxation. David Hyre, Sales Manager with IKON, presented GAP member and NFPA Secondary Christina Weeks with a heart-shaped box of chocolates in honor of Valentine’s Day and a \$100 American Express gift card. New member Sandi Johnson won a \$50 Border’s gift certificate, courtesy of Ajilon Legal, whom also provided each member with a festive Valentine’s candy gift bag. IKON also offered a \$25 American Express gift certificate to any member who signed up to take a 15-minute tour of their new document production facility.

An informative and enjoyable time was had by all. We hope to see all members and some new faces at the next GAP Membership Dinner Meeting!



*Laissez Les Bon Temps Roulez!  
New Member Mixer winner Janice Perez with  
Dottie Pritchett, Andrew Grace Associates*

# CORPORATE SPONSOR MEMBERS

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Ajilon Legal- formerly Co-Counsel	IKON Legal Document Services
Alexander Gallo & Associates	Iverson Business School
Andrew Grace Associates, LLC	Kelly Law Registry
Anthony's	King & Spalding LLP
Atlanta Attorney Services	LawStaff Group
Brown Reporting Inc.	LegaLink-Atlanta
CT Corporation System	Legal Eagle
Cambridge Professional Group	MLQ Attorney Services
ChoicePoint	Mariposa Publishing
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Corporation Service Company	Miller & Martin PLLC
Counsel On Call	National Corporate Research, Ltd.
DeKalb Technical College, Clarkston Campus	Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP
DeKalb Technical College, Covington Campus	OnSite E-Discovery
Discovery Support Services, Inc.	Paramount Staffing, Inc.
DocuTEAM	Paranet Corporation Services, Inc.
Document Resources	Premier Reporting
Document Technologies Inc.	Professional Translating Services, Inc.
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Estrin Professional Careers	Sandgren Intellectual Property Paralegal Services (SIPPS)
Fulton County Daily Report	Special Counsel, Inc.
Georgia Messenger Services Inc.	Summit Document Services
Georgia Pacific Corporation	TLS Service Bureau, Inc.
Georgia Perimeter College	The Norcross Group
Griffin Technical College	TransPerfect Translations, Inc.
Huseby, Inc.	Wheeler Reporting Company, Inc.

## **2005 GAP Community Service Project combines with GAP Member Appreciation Night**

**June 14 - Free dinner for the first 150 paralegal members registered to attend.  
This is a “members only” event!**

**GAP Community Service Project items to bring for Hillside children include:**

# WELCOME NEW GAP MEMBERS

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Donna Ashford  
Sally P. Blaine  
Monica M. Gilbert  
Joel Hoerner  
Karol McCluskey  
Jana Muduc-Morosanu  
Cherryl Oliver Neal  
Tiffany L. Pearson  
Ann Smith  
Jason Umusu  
Tammy Walton  
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Adrienne Y. Murphy  
**Alston & Bird, LLP**  
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**Anderson Bonding**  
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Shelly Rabinovitch  
Antonia Roberts  
**Atlanta Technical College**  
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**Barrett & Farahany, Crowne Office Suites Inc.**  
Candida Christine Kreeft  
**BellSouth, Inc.**  
John H. Langley  
**Brown Reporting Inc.**  
Charles Riebel  
**Burr & Forman LLP**  
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**Casey Gilson Leibel, PC**  
Denise Mann  
**Chamberlain, Hrdlicka, White, Williams and Martin**  
Quenia M. Medina  
**ChoicePoint**  
Trace Edwards  
Kathy Whiten  
**Clayton College & State University**  
Matthew Cornick  
**Davidson & Tucker, LLC**  
Angela Hanson  
**Delta Air Lines, Inc.**  
Jodi L. Philipson  
**Dietrick, Evans, Scholz & Williams, LLC**  
Angely Mims Cobb  
Michelle L. Foster  
**Document Transcribing Services**  
Michelle L. Milner

**DocuTEAM**  
Beth Gambel  
**Emory University**  
M. Vernice Currie  
**Fayette Division of Family & Children Services**  
Natalie Michelle Pfister  
**Georgia Pacific Corporation**  
Dyann W. Evans  
Marsha L. Fullard  
Kristan W. Inman  
**Griffin Technical College**  
David P. Bunnell  
Scott Silvas  
**Hall, Booth, Smith & Slover, P.C.**  
Laura J. Spencer  
**Harmon, Smith, Bridges & Wilbanks, LLP**  
June L. Watkins  
**Hinron & Powell**  
Nara B. Heard  
**Huseby, Inc.**  
Corri L. Rene'  
**IKON Legal Document Services**  
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**Kelly Law Registry**  
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LaTanya I. Bolden  
Jeanette Baldwin Clegg  
Matthew Collins  
Nancy S. Edwards  
Deborah R. Lightfoot  
Bruce Nelson  
Monica Roberts  
Vanessa W. Valentine  
Melissa H. Walton  
Debby Zeun  
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Caroline Ramsay  
**LawStaff Group**  
Sherrie Osterloh  
**Love, Willingham, Peters, Gilleland & Monyak LLP**  
Sharon Fancher  
**McKenna Long & Aldridge LLP**  
Chiquita Layne  
**Merrill Corporation**  
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Lakeila Meadows  
**Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP**  
Flossie Gillen  
**Pacific & Vine**  
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**Phyllis R. Williams, P.C.**  
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**The Coca-Cola Company**  
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**The Norcross Group**  
Harold Phipps  
Brad Wilson  
**TLS Service Bureau, Inc.**  
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Christie Wheeler  
**Trammell Crow Company**  
Barbara J. Blakes  
**Troutman Sanders LLP**  
Deborah W. Brown  
Monica J. Sherrard  
**Tyson & Millsaps, LLP**  
Amanda F. Barber  
**U.S. Pharmaceutical Corporation**  
Annette Golston  
**U.S. Small Business Administration**  
Nera J. Williams-Benson  
**United Parcel Service**  
Nicole Bailey  
La'Keeri Ferebee  
Jeffrey P. Harrison  
LaRal Milton  
**Weizenecker, Mottern & Fisher**  
Steven J. Richards  
**Wheeler Reporting Company, Inc.**  
Tom Adams

# NORTH CAROLINA BEGINS VOLUNTARY PARALEGAL CERTIFICATION

By Charlie Cromwell

If Georgia paralegals decide to pursue some type of certification, they won't have to look far for a potential model. North Carolina is the latest state to adopt a formal framework for those who work as paralegals.

Unlike California, which regulates anyone identified as a "paralegal," North Carolina created a voluntary certification process. A paralegal is not bound by the regulation unless he or she chooses to use the title "North Carolina Certified Paralegal," "North Carolina State Bar Certified Paralegal," or "Paralegal Certified by the North Carolina State Bar Board of Paralegal Certification."

"What we are hoping is that attorneys will see this gives them a much-needed benchmark to a certain level of competency among paralegals," said Sherri Wall, CLAS, of Raleigh, N.C., who chaired the task force that laid the groundwork for certification in the state. "We hope paralegals will recognize that reaching a certain level of competency lends credence to the profession."

Wall, a real estate and corporate paralegal, said there has been "a lot of ambiguity" in North Carolina about the paralegal profession.

The only requirement initially for those who want to be certified is six hours of continuing legal education each year. After a two-year grace period, applicants will have to meet certain educational requirements and pass a test in addition to obtaining CLEs. The first two years of regulation include a "grandfather clause" that takes into account on-the-job training.

The educational requirement "represents a profound shift in attorney attitudes towards paralegal education," according to Marisa S. Campbell, director of the American Bar Association-approved paralegal program at Meredith College in Raleigh, N.C., and a prominent member of the drive to achieve certification.

In a recent issue of *Update*, a publication of the ABA Standing Committee on Paralegals, Campbell said that while she preferred to have seen the term "paralegal" regulated, "I

believe this regulation meets the needs and concerns of all of the members of the legal community in North Carolina. It clearly recognizes education and continuing education as the bedrock of necessary training for paralegals."

The educational requirements that take effect in two years call for an associate's, bachelor's or master's degree or post-baccalaureate certificate from a qualified paralegal studies program, or an associate's or bachelor's degree in any discipline from any institution of post-secondary education and successful completion of 18 or more semester credits at a qualified paralegal studies program.

A qualified paralegal studies program is defined as one approved by the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association, or one that offers at least the equivalent of 18 semester credits of coursework in paralegal studies as prescribed by the *ABA Guidelines for the Approval of Paralegal Education Programs* and is an institutional member of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or other regional accrediting agency as recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Certification in North Carolina is the result of a 10-year effort that began in 1995 when the North Carolina Paralegal Association (NCPA) appointed a Regulation Task Force, chaired by Wall, to study the issues involved. After five years of research and polling its members, NCPA invited all known paralegal organizations, paralegal educators and attorneys from around the state to a special meeting in 2000. That gave birth to the Alliance for Paralegal Professional Standards (APPS).



**Background  
information is  
available  
online at  
[www.apps-nc.org](http://www.apps-nc.org)**

# NC Begins Certification

Including many groups early in the process is critical, according to Terry Irvin, CLA, a paralegal in Charlotte and immediate past chairman of the NCPA Board of Directors. "This certification could not have been accomplished by one group," said Irvin. "It needed the input from paralegals, attorneys and paralegal educators early on to develop a plan in which all the various groups could support."

Irvin also credits Wall with leading APPS through "difficult decisions and discussions" and doing so "professionally with integrity and diplomacy."

APPS met one Saturday every six weeks until the Paralegal Profession Act was introduced in the North Carolina General Assembly in April 2003. At that time, the North Carolina State Bar, charged with regulating the practice of law in the state, expressed its belief that regulation of paralegals should be within its jurisdiction.

After preliminary discussions with APPS, the State Bar formed a study committee. The committee worked closely with APPS to develop statutory authority for the North Carolina State Bar to regulate paralegals and to create administrative rules. Those rules incorporated much of the original APPS proposal and were supported by APPS.

Statutory changes giving the North Carolina State Bar authority to regulate North Carolina Certified Paralegals and to seek injunctive relief for improper use of the title became effective Oct. 1, 2004. The N.C. Supreme Court adopted the plan during its administrative session the week of Oct. 4, 2004. The initial Board of Paralegal Certification was appointed Oct. 22, 2004.

According to the American Bar Association, Maine, Indiana and South Dakota have defined the terms "paralegal" and "legal assistant," with Maine's definition also carrying fines for misuse.

Wisconsin could be the next state to adopt some form of certification. That state's plan is currently before the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

For any state pursuing some type of regulation, Irvin has several recommendations: "Obtain the support of paralegals and paralegal associations. Do your homework and research what is happening in other states. Invite everyone to the table ... and if certain groups choose not to participate keep them informed and re-invite them when major decisions/accomplishments have been made.

"Select a strong and very diplomatic leader," Irvin advises. "Unpleasant personalities and personal agendas may surface, and the issue of paralegal regulation is a very sensitive subject to some. Continue to move forward. It can be a slow process, but do not become discouraged if things do not go according to plan. Adjust and keep moving forward."

## *How it works*

- Only paralegals who choose to be regulated can use the titles "North Carolina Certified Paralegal," "North Carolina State Bar Certified Paralegal," or "Paralegal Certified by the North Carolina State Bar Board of Paralegal Certification."
- A generous "grandfather clause" during the first two years takes into account on-the-job training while requiring a minimum number of hours in the paralegal field and a three-hour class in professional responsibility. After two years, applicants must meet certain educational requirements (see story) and pass an exam that is currently in development.
- Six hours of continuing legal education (CLE) will be required each year of all regulated paralegals, including those who meet the grandfather provisions.
- Initial application for certification will cost \$125. The yearly renewal fee is \$50.
- The North Carolina program is administered by a nine-member Board of Paralegal Certification. Four slots are allotted to paralegals and five to lawyers, one of whom must be a program director at a qualified paralegal studies program. After initial appointments, each succeeding paralegal will be selected by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar from the top two nominees as determined by a vote of all active certified paralegals in the state. Terms will be three years and staggered so three positions come open each year. The chairperson must be a lawyer.
- Background information is available online at [www.apps-nc.org](http://www.apps-nc.org). By late May, information on North Carolina certification should be available on the North Carolina State Bar Web site ([www.ncbar.com](http://www.ncbar.com)) by clicking on a menu option of "Paralegals."



by: *Beth Magee, RP*  
*Pace Ambassador*

Yes, I'm baffled. I'm baffled because over the past couple of years so many of you have told me you've applied to take the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE) or you're studying to take it, or you're planning on taking it soon, or you're thinking about taking PACE. Yet, I don't see your names on the list of the new Registered Paralegals (RPs) in Georgia. Am I imagining all of this? Are you saying this to be nice and get me out of your face talking about PACE? Or is there a problem with your following through and taking the exam?

I want to think it's lack of follow-through. These reasons come up for so many things in life: you don't have the time or the money.

There's a secret about time - you really don't have time to do anything unless you make or find the time to do it. I spent lunch hours studying for PACE, and usually a couple of hours every other weekend. How much or how little studying you do depends upon your knowledge and experience. Or how paranoid you are.



Preparing flashcards is an effective study method. Prepare them as you study. You decide the content - legal terms, federal rules sections, ethics rules, etc. Carry them with you and review them almost anywhere when you have a few minutes. Get your co-workers, attorneys you work with, family and friends involved by asking you questions from the flashcards. Not only would you be studying, or maybe even enjoying studying, but you'd be building a support system too.

Your employer may even allow you an hour or two to study during the week since your studying not only prepares you for PACE but opens you to areas of law in which you may not have experience or are rusty. If your attorney sees how diligently you're studying for PACE and becomes involved in your studying for PACE, he or she may even agree to reimburse you for taking PACE.

If your employer is already willing to pay for you to take PACE, why haven't you grabbed the money and done it? The funds may not be available indefinitely.

For those who don't have an employer willing to pay, have you taken the initiative to ask your employer? Sometimes if you explain why your employer's paying for you to take PACE will benefit the firm or company financially, your employer may consider a \$300 - \$400 investment for your application and some study materials prudent.

If you're lucky enough to work for an employer or company that pays for CLE or has a tuition reimbursement program, ask your supervisor or human resources department if PACE qualifies.

If the money must come from your own pocket, you'll just need to find the money in your budget to pay for it. Yet, if you've been thinking about taking PACE, or saying you will for a year or two, you've probably been contemplating how you'll pay for it. For example, if you'd been saving \$5 a week in 2004 and into this year you'd have enough to pay for the application handbook, application fee and PACE Study Manual - a very good start toward taking PACE and becoming a Registered Paralegal (RP). Consider it an investment in your future.

I'm just getting started. If you want other ideas to overcome time or money constraints which may be keeping you from taking PACE, feel free to contact me. Once you become an RP, you'll realize how useful and valuable being one is and wonder why you didn't take PACE sooner.



## CLE Opportunity

Head Librarian Ruth Fuller of Sutherland Asbill & Brennan LLP will be the keynote speaker at GAP's CLE Legal Research Seminar. Join us from 9 AM to 3 PM on Saturday, July 9 at the lecture hall of Georgia Perimeter College's Clarkston Campus. For more information, please contact CLE Coordinator Dwan Young, or visit the GAP website at [gaparalegals.org](http://gaparalegals.org).

# LEGAL WORD POWER

**Malfeasance** - Wrongdoing, misconduct, misbehavior or doing something that is illegal.

Examples: Corporate malfeasance – Enron, WorldCom, HealthSouth, Adelphia, S&L scandal of the 80's

**Misfeasance** - Misuse of legal power; the incorrect, improper or wrongful performance of a lawful act.

Examples: false arrest, improper border seizures, improper refusal of licensing or any other such improper orders.

**Nonfeasance** - Not doing something that a person should be doing, especially under the requirement of legislative acts.

Ex - If a statute requires transportation officials to repair and maintain roads, yet the officials neglect to do so, then this is a case of nonfeasance.

## GAP Member Contest



*Alice Chow, newsletter contest winner  
Mish Barbour and David Hyre of IKON*

In your employment as a paralegal, have you had to deal with any of the situations described at the left? If so, submit your brief example(s) to [gap\\_editor@yahoo.com](mailto:gap_editor@yahoo.com). The member with the most interesting submission will receive a \$25 Barnes & Noble gift certificate, courtesy of IKON, to be presented at the June GAP Dinner Meeting. Congratulations to February's winner, Ms. Mish Barbour!

## Online GAP Dinner Meeting Reservations! Now available!

Starting with the June 14, 2005 GAP dinner meeting you can make your reservation online. All you need to do to make a reservation is go to [www.gaparalegals.org](http://www.gaparalegals.org). Our calendar of events is the first thing you will see. Then you simply choose the meeting you wish to attend and fill in your information. Your reservation will be sent directly to the GAP office, where it will be quickly and efficiently recorded. Please remember that you will still need to bring your \$25.00 cash or check payment to the meeting and as always if you make a reservation and do not attend you will be billed.

While you are at our website making your reservation, please take a look around. We have previous newsletters, national information, PACE information and much more all available to you. If there is something that you would like to see added to our website, or you have any comments or questions about our website, please do not hesitate to contact our web coordinator Christina Weeks at [Chrissy404@bellsouth.net](mailto:Chrissy404@bellsouth.net).

**Don't forget our June meeting is FREE to the first 150 people who make a reservation.**



*GAP President Marcus Li (l) and GAP Newsletter Editor Alice Chow (r) with Anthony Justice of Merrill Corporation, the sponsor of GAP's 2005 Membership Directory printing. Thanks to Merrill Corporation (Image Coding, Reprographics, Electronic Data Discovery, Financial Printing, Translations and MORE) the GAP directory will be printed in full color for the first time. Watch for your GAP directory in the mail in JUNE!*



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# 2005 NFPA CONVENTION REPORT

(continued from page 1)



*Top:  
Policy Meeting Observers*

*Above:  
Gina Farley & Christina Weeks*

*Left:  
Lourdes Bugari, Dallas Area Paralegal  
Association, NFPA Logal Outstanding  
Leadership Award Recipient*



*Vendor  
Exhibits*

On Friday morning we attended our region meeting, the purpose of which was to get a chance to meet members from the other associates in our region (we are in region III) and to learn what they are doing in their states. At the region meeting we learned that there will be a Leadership Con-

ference hosted by the Navy Legalman Association in Washington D.C. from August 26-27, 2005. We have tentatively set our next regional meeting for early October. The exact date and location will be announced later this summer. We also learned that Linda K. McGirr from the Indiana Paralegals Association (<http://indianaparalegals.org>) accepted the nomination to be the next region III director; she was elected for the position later at the conference.



*Vicky Newman,  
PACE  
Ambassador  
Award*

Throughout the first two days of the convention there were several vendor booths set up so that they could provide NFPA members with information about their services. The generous vendors gave out several door

(continued on page 14)

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# 2005 NFPA CONVENTION REPORT

(continued from page 14)



Anita Hayworth, NFPA Treasurer and Irene Yakovlevich, former region III director at region III meeting

prizes. GAP members won two of these prizes; Christina won a purse and \$65.00 and Mish won two Southwest Airlines tickets.

On Friday afternoon we attended workshops. Christina attended a workshop on paralegal regulation. At the regulation workshop she learned some of the history of how states have dealt with the regulation of the paralegal profession as well as what states are currently doing to promote regulation of our profession. Gina attended a workshop entitled "Working with Bar Associations" which was very informative and will help guide how we will build our relationships with our local bar associations.

The NFPA policy meeting began Saturday morning. There were several agenda topics proposed to the NFPA delegates. The topics included by-law amendments, adoption of policies and procedures and discussion topics. One of the most fiercely debated topics was the adoption of a position statement on paralegal outsourcing. After long and strenuous deliberation, a policy was adopted and will be used by NFPA to answer any questions that may arise as to our position on the outsourcing of paralegal work. Another hot topic was the issue of paralegal regulation. However, no formal position was adopted. This is an issue that has been debated at many past conferences and as a federation, we hope to adopt a position statement and move forward on regulation in the near future.

(continued on page 16)

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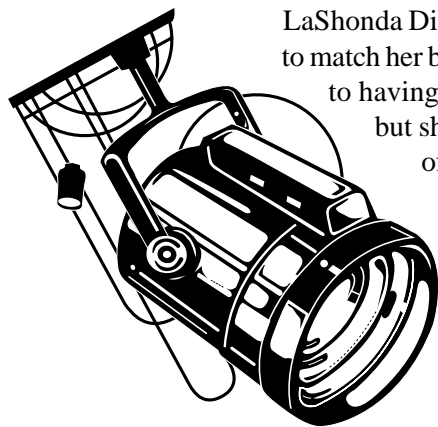
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# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT - LA SHONDA DILLARD

by: Charlie Cromwell



LaShonda Dillard may not be able to match her brother when it comes to having her foot in the road, but she has done her share of traveling. And she has picked up some valuable lessons along the way.

As a driver of big rigs, Dillard's brother navigates the network of highways crisscrossing the country, whereas her networking involves the links that connect people. That is how she has come, nearly full circle, to Atlanta.

From her hometown of Woodbury, Tenn., southeast of Nashville, Dillard traveled north to Michigan for college. She gained familiarity with the area through years of visiting family. She earned an associates degree in paralegal studies before earning a degree in criminal justice and business from the University of Michigan. She also began worked at the Michigan 68<sup>th</sup> District Court for seven years where she gained experience in criminal, civil and probation work.

One of her Michigan professors "had been in and out of prison for 12 years." He earned a bachelor's degree while in prison and obtained a doctoral degree after leaving prison. "The things he told us were fascinating. None of it was hypothetical," Dillard said.

After nine years in Michigan, the cold weather seemed unbearable. She decided to head south, to Dallas, Texas.

She sought help from the University of Michigan alumni office, which posted her information on its Web site. That resulted in two calls. "One woman was a supervisor in the court system who wrote some letters for me," said Dillard, who quickly found work as a court clerk.

Dallas provided one of her most memorable moments. She remembers attending a book signing by the late Johnny Cochran, the noted attorney whom she had "always admired."

Dillard returned home for four months when a serious car accident hospitalized her mother for three months. Wanting to move closer to home, she agreed to stay with a friend's parents in Atlanta briefly while seeking work here. "I came on a Saturday and told them if I didn't get a job by the end of the next week, I'd leave," she claimed.

Her friend's mother worked in Superior Court, and she helped make connections that led to Dillard being hired by Marci Rosenberg, a sole practitioner in Atlanta. "We do a lot of worker's comp and personal injury cases," Dillard said. "I do everything. I have a lot of contact with clients. I enjoy the contact with clients and legal research."

Dillard credits her mother for her ability to think through a situation and develop a plan. "I have a sister with cerebral palsy, and my mother was always fighting for my sister's rights. She has always been an advocate."

When not working, Dillard likes to read; listen to Grammy winner Anita Baker, rap and jazz; dine out and visit museums. Sometimes she'll catch a ride with her brother on pickups or deliveries in the Atlanta area, "but I haven't been cross-country with him – yet!"

Dillard seems to have done a pretty good job of that on her own.

## 2005 NFPA CONVENTION REPORT

(continued from page 14)

On Saturday evening we attended our region III dinner. This was a great opportunity to get to know some of our fellow NFPA members in a casual setting and it was a lot of fun.

On Sunday we reconvened the policy meeting. In addition to more discussion on agenda topics the annual NFPA budget was adopted and the 2005 – 2006 NFPA officers were installed.

If you would like any further information about the convention or any NFPA matters you can visit the NFPA website: <http://www.paralegals.org> or contact Christina Weeks at [chrissy404@bellsouth.net](mailto:chrissy404@bellsouth.net).

Mark your calendars for the 2006 convention to be held May 4-7 in Chicago. We hope to see you there!

# REPORT ON APRIL DINNER MEETING

by: Alice Chow



Dinner and theater tickets winner Venetia Stevenson of Atlanta Victim Assistance with Mike Schubert of Encore Lex Solutio

Securities practice area lawyer Ross Albert and paralegal Vjolla Prroni spoke at GAP's April 12<sup>th</sup> Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's in Buckhead. While GAP members dined on a lovely dinner, they were treated to an overview of the "Basics of Securities Regulation and SEC Practice" by

distinguished attorney and frequent media commentator Ross A. Albert of Morris, Manning & Martin, LLP, which was followed by an informative presentation by Vjolla Prroni of Powell Goldstein LLP.

Mr. Albert briefly explained the major federal statutes involving securities regulation, which are The Securities Acts of 1933 and 1934, The Investment Company Act of 1940 and The Investment Advisers Act of 1940. The Securities Act of 1933 deals with initial public offerings, while The Securities Act of 1934 provides for SEC regulation of market activity, and also requires public companies to file quarterly and annual reports. A favorite quote of Mr. Albert from U.S. Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis, which demonstrates the view of the federal securities law is "[s]unlight is the best disinfectant."

Ms. Vjolla Prroni, who was a lawyer in her native country of Albania, spoke regarding her role as a securities paralegal in the United States. At Powell Goldstein LLP, her domain is within the Securities, Corporate and Fiduciary Litigation group. She advised all paralegals, regardless of practice area, to learn as much as possible, be proactive in asking his or her supervising attorney to explain legal theory, and embrace technology in so much as it can improve and make easier a paralegal's daily recurring duties.

Fabulous door prizes were awarded by meeting sponsors Encore Lex Solutio and LegaLink.

Venetia Stevenson of Atlanta Victim Assistance was the surprised winner of dinner and tickets for a Broadway Across America series performance at the Fox Theatre, courtesy of Encore Lex Solutio.



Spa Sydell full day winner Beth Magee with Leah Spengler of LegaLink

Leah Spengler of LegaLink presented Beth Magee of The Convex Group with a gift certificate for a full day of pampering at Spa Sydell. Also thanks to LegaLink, a Spa Sydell manicure and pedicure gift certificate was won by LaKeila Meadows of Morris Schnider Prior. A special prize of a \$25 Barnes & Noble gift certificate, courtesy of David Hyre with IKON Office Solutions, was awarded to GAP member Mish Barbour, who won the February Legal Word Power contest.

Thanks to everyone who attended the meeting, and a special thanks to the meeting and door prize sponsors. *Remember that the first 150 registered attendees at the June 14 New Member Welcome Dinner Meeting will receive their dinner at no cost!* We hope to see all of you there!



Spa Sydell manicure winner Lakeila Meadows of Morris SchniderPrior with Leah Spengler of LegaLink



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# 2005 GAP Calendar of Events

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

**June 14, 2005**

**GAP Free Networking Dinner at Anthony's**

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

**FREE Dinner and cash bar**

**(5:00 – 6:00)**

**New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates**

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- (4) **The Norcross Group**
- (5) **TLS Service Bureau**
- (6) **Georgia Messenger Service**
- (7) **Anthony's Restaurant**

**Aug. 9, 2005**

**GAP Membership Dinner at Anthony's**

**Speaker: John Zwald, Esq., Chandler, Britt, Jay & Beck, LLC**

**Topic: Insurance Law**

**Sponsor: Kelly Law Registry**

**Sponsor: Discovery Support Services**

**Oct. 11, 2005**

**(5:00 – 6:00)**

**GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's**

**New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates**

**Topic: Sports / Entertainment Law**

**Sponsor: The LawStaff Group**

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**Dec. 6, 2005**

**7th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's**

**Installation of the 2006 Board of Directors**

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## **GAP Legal Research**

### **Continuing Legal Education Seminar**

**July 9, 2005**

**Georgia Perimeter College, Clarkston**

**9 AM - 3 PM**

# Announcements

## Take the PACE practice test online!

Consisting of 100 multiple choice questions, the PACE online practice test, administered by Castle Worldwide, is now available. Please note there is a \$50 fee. Follow the PACE link at [www.paralegals.org](http://www.paralegals.org). Check personal computer system requirements before beginning at [https://www.castleworldwide.com/tds\\_v5/asp/home.asp](https://www.castleworldwide.com/tds_v5/asp/home.asp).

## Member Updates

As of April 1, 2005, the former Topping & Austin, LLC became Topping & Associates, LLC. The address and phone numbers remain the same.

Topping and Associates, LLC  
2200 Century Parkway, Suite 980  
Atlanta, GA 30345  
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After eight years with Cohen Pollock Merlin Axelrod & Small, P.C., Julie A. Rachel is now with The Rachel Law Group, P.C. as the Senior Paralegal. Ms. Rachel can be reached at:

The Rachel Law Group, P.C.  
2625 Cumberland Parkway, Suite 110  
Atlanta, Georgia 30339  
Telephone: (770) 805-0087  
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## Help Hillside

GAP is sponsoring Hillside, a youth center that cares for boys and girls aged infant to 18 years old. Make GAP proud and bring your donations of clothing, shoes, sneakers, socks, pens, pencils, art supplies, toiletries, paper, markers, etc. to the June 14 Dinner Meeting. Thanks in advance for your generosity!

## Correction

In the February 2004 edition of The Paragraph, Jackson Dodsworth of Alexander Gallo & Associates was incorrectly identified as being from Paramount Staffing. We wish to extend our apologies for the error.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Readers,

Just yesterday we were in the throws of winter, and now summer is almost upon us. In this season of change, there are also changes afoot regarding our profession. North Carolina is moving towards requiring regulation of paralegals. In this issue we explore in depth their reasons and how their system works. It is only a matter of time before Georgia joins other states in enacting similar legislation.

Also, our NFPA representatives and President have returned from the NFPA's Annual Convention in Las Vegas. While their wallets may be thinner, their knowledge has been enriched. Learn about what transpired during this mega-meeting in our cover story.

This issue is packed with information. Feel free to send any feedback or Letters to the Editor to my attention.

Happy reading!

Alice Chow  
Newsletter Editor  
gap\_editor@yahoo.com



## SETTING THE PACE OF THE FUTURE

*by: Sabra Douglas, RP*

As a paralegal, I specialized in general litigation after receiving a BA in English from Georgia State University and obtaining my paralegal certificate from The National Center for Paralegal Training in 1986.

After relocating to Augusta from Atlanta in 1997, I was hired by Ingersoll-Rand Company/Club Car, Inc. and moved to the Product Safety department as the Legal Coordinator where I currently specialize in all aspects of product liability, state and federal regulation of golf and utility vehicles, Sarbanes Oxley, and ISO 9001:2000 requirements.

In December 2000, I obtained the Registered Paralegal (RP) designation. I made the decision to sit for this exam because it is only administered to paralegals who have reached a certain level of experience and education. After years of hard work in my field, I wanted that

distinction. Additionally, many states currently regulate, or are in the process of creating regulations governing the paralegal profession. Passing PACE assures that we meet or exceed even the strictest regulations and elevates us to a higher, more professional level in our field.

In order to maintain the PACE credential, I am required to attend continuing legal education seminars. Both my legal experience and on-going education have proven to be tremendous assets in this position as well as in this field. Since becoming an RP, I have been promoted, received several raises, led several teams dedicated to very specialized projects within the golf car industry and become an in-house Sarbanes Oxley auditor. My immediate supervisor as well as my company strongly support me with regard to my continuing education and it has become essential that I maintain my RP status as they recognize its importance to my position.



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**If you would like to bring items for the Hillside youth to the June 14<sup>th</sup> GAP dinner, please review the wish list below. Cash or check donations may be made to Hillside, Inc. and are fully tax deductible (Tax ID # 58-0603148)**

Please contact **Jodi Pruitt** at [jpruitt@gorbyreeves.com](mailto:jpruitt@gorbyreeves.com) or **(404) 239-1150** for more information on donations. You may also visit Hillside's web-site [www.hside.org](http://www.hside.org)

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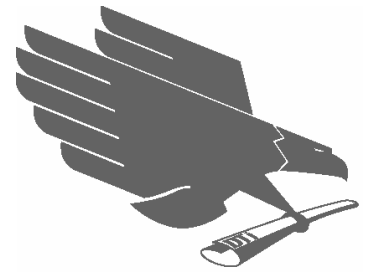
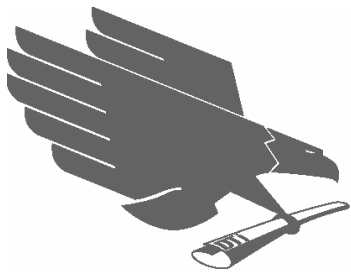
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Portable All Purpose Goals (for soccer, hockey, team handball)

**Other Items:** Grocery/Department store gift certificates for clothing and personal items, TVs/VCRs/DVD Players, and always appreciated are your checks made payable to: **Hillside, Inc.**

*Thank you in advance to all the GAP members, who traditionally bring in items from their whole office—even those unable to join us at the June 14<sup>th</sup> dinner!*

*Your generosity is appreciated!!!*



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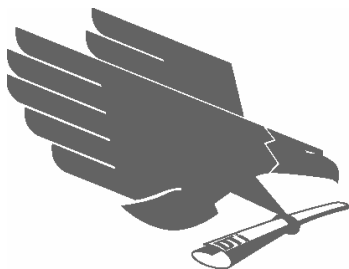
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