

Paralegal Focus

INSIDE

Board Openings 4

Member Spotlight 5 - 7

NFPA News 8-10

Real Estate Corner 11

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR ADVERTISERS!

Paralegal Focus is the quarterly
newsletter of Vermont
Paralegal Organization, Inc.

Vermont Paralegal Organization, Inc.
is a Member of the National
Federation of Paralegal
Associations (NFPA).

Vermont Paralegal Organization, Inc.
P.O. Box 5755
Burlington, VT 05402-5755
vermont@paralegals.org
www.vtparalegal.org

*Newsletter Design By
www.jtmoreau.com*

President's Message

By Lucia White, CP®

It has been a weird three months.

Our world looks very different today than it did three months ago. Who could have anticipated how much our daily lives would change?

Some of us are working from home. Some of us have been let go due to lack of work. Some of us might be busier than ever. Courts are closed for many of us. Court filing rules are changing at a pace we are not accustomed to. And while we are navigating all this change in our lives and our workplaces, we are working with clients who are all facing novel challenges of their own, and who might be waiting for a legal solution to their problem for quite some time.

I don't know about you, but I am a bit of a control freak. It's a personality feature that (like being a little OCD) seems to make me good at my job. After all, attorneys rely on us to know the filing rules, to help them stay on schedule, to edit their documents with a fine-toothed comb, and to make sure they don't miss a deadline. We need to be able to shift priorities quickly and not lose sight of the thing that was a priority 10 minutes ago. These are the job skills that make us excel at what we do. But all our sense of control goes out the window during times like this when something as routine as ordering a pizza raises all sorts of questions and bring up all kinds of fears.

Needing to postpone the Annual Meeting was hard. The Board is planning a 30-year celebration in September, in addition to our rescheduled Annual Meeting, but we acknowledge that we might not be able to realize this plan this year. And the day to day uncertainty we are all feeling is probably way outside our comfort zones.

Yet as we navigate this new normal, we also recognize new ways of being together. We had our first ever VPO Board meeting via Zoom, and we will be having another one soon. Our members-only forum has been more active than it has in years as we support each other through our changing landscapes. We are learning new skills, and we continue to put one foot in front of the other to support our attorneys and serve our clients. We are making our way through this and learning new ways of being, and of being there for each other.

Continued on Page 2

President's Message Continued from Page 1

Things may not go back to “the before times” for a while. Maybe they never will be quite the same as they were. Crisis begets opportunity. If we are paying attention, maybe we can help create a world where the things that fall away in “the after times” are the things that should never have been there in the first place. Maybe our new normal becomes a world where the things that remain are the things we value the most.

Editor's Message

By Louise Reese

When I asked Penny Hannigan to be a Member Spotlight for this issue, I had no idea that she would announce her retirement from Vermont Land Trust about five weeks later. A response to COVID-19 resulted in employment changes at Vermont Land Trust, and Penny accepted an offer for early retirement. As you will see in the Spotlight, Penny has been with Vermont Land Trust a long time. They were lucky to have her talents for that long, and the VPO was lucky to have her as a longtime member – so long, that we were unable to easily track when she started! My fondest and earliest memory of working with Penny was when I was Membership Chair and we spoke to a group of students at Woodbury College on a Saturday morning. Since then, Penny has always offered to be a point of contact for the Montpelier area, and I always looked forward to seeing her at the annual meetings. I hope we continue to find a reason to stay connected!

Responses to COVID-19 have certainly stalled plans or events across the country, but Tina Wiles has been very busy as your NFPA Representative and as a member of the NFPA Change Management Task Force. Please read her summary of current activity in this issue. More to come in the next issue.

Unfortunately, the Board had to make the difficult decision to put off celebrating the VPO's 30th Anniversary until next year, and also decided not to hold the usual annual meeting of short seminars that had been rescheduled to September 10th. There remains a great deal of uncertainty, and we decided that holding an in-person event would be challenging for several reasons. However, we will be brainstorming on whether we can still offer some CLE's by Zoom or other virtual means, so stay tuned for updates while we further develop those ideas.

Be a member. Not just a number



**CO-OPERATIVE
INSURANCE
COMPANIES**

292 Colonial Drive, Middlebury, VT 05753-5890

(800) 639-4017

www.co-opinsurance.com

Member owed. Member committed.

Membership News

As of June 1, 2020, we have 73 active members: 57 voting; 14 associate; and 2 sustaining corporate.

Please welcome the following new members to our VPO family: Benjamin Luna; Amanda Schrader, and Jennifer Gagnon. We would also like to welcome the following paralegals with the State of Vermont who are new members: Megan Gregory; Jennifer Francis; Sarah Cloutier; Krista Weir; Tara Rogerson; Jessica Mishaan; Jeannette Martin; and Peggy Lord.



Special Shout Out to All of Our Members New and Renewed!

The Stay at Home Order in response to the Covid-19 pandemic has required many of our members to be employees, spouses, moms, dads, teachers, entertainers, coaches, and friends – all at the same time! Virtual high fives, fist bumps, elbow bumps, and hugs to you all on pushing through this with chins up and heads held high. Give yourselves a pat on the back; you are most deserving.

Members on the Move

Robyn Sweet, CRP has been awarded the VPO's 2020 Paralegal Certification Scholarship. Robyn recently earned her Associates degree, and is currently working on obtaining a Bachelors degree. Way to go, Robyn!

Board Openings

By Lucia White, CP®

We all know these are unprecedented and stressful times. We have been very fortunate to have a group of very dedicated and committed paralegals on our Board, but due to personal circumstances, some of them have had to resign their duties as Board members. They have all done so because they want the Board to have more attention than they feel like they can give right now.

Please join me in thanking Lynn Wdowiak, Robyn Sweet, and Lisa Pettrey-Gill for their work on the Board as Certification Ambassador, Membership Chair, and NFPA Secondary respectively. We appreciate your dedication and your service.

We would also like to welcome Melinda Siel as our newest Membership Chair. Thank you, Melinda, for joining the Board.

That leaves two open positions - Certification Ambassador and NFPA Secondary. These positions are open to Voting Members of the VPO. The Certification Ambassador must also be NFPA certified as either an RP or a CRP.

If you are interested in either of these roles or you want more information about what they do, let me or another Board member know.



Q&A

Penny Hannigan Member Spotlight

How old are you?	64
Describe your family?	I was the youngest in a family of six kids. I am married to Francis, and we have two children – Amber (born 1984) and Seth (born 1988). We also have two grandchildren – Caleb (age 15) and Shealee (age 8).
Town in which you live?	I actually pay taxes in two towns. My house is in Montpelier, but my back yard is in Middlesex.
What is your favorite food?	Chocolate!
Do have any pets? If so, what are they, and what are their names?	I have a 17 year old Maine Coon cat named Sabu (after the original “Jungle Book” boy star), and the best dog ever, a 4 year old Leonberger named Loki (after the Norse god of mischief). I am hoping to breed him.
What kind of hobbies do you have?	I love plants and flowers, and my house is full of green, including growing house plants, and a table of orchids. I also love swimming in the cold, clear, and clean big northern lakes from May to September.
How do you unwind at the end of a long work week?	Spending time with family and friends enjoying the great outdoors.
What is your educational background?	I graduated high school in 1973, and moved out to live on a farm with my then boyfriend, and worked for the State of Vermont. In 1978, I attended Woodbury College’s paralegal program. I am so glad that I did!
Where do you work?	Vermont Land Trust, Inc. in the Montpelier office. I started in 1997.
When did you first become a paralegal?	I did a full year internship at the Public Defenders’ office while still attending Woodbury College, along with two other students.

<i>What area of law do you work in?</i>	Real Estate.
<i>What do you enjoy about working in that area of law?</i>	Everything, including going through title work, sometimes as far back as the 1800's, helping landowners conserve Vermont's farms and forests, and the chance to work with different attorneys.
<i>If you could work in any other area of law, what would it be?</i>	I've worked in criminal law, for private attorneys, at the Office of Child Support, and I was at Vermont Legal Aid from 1988 to 1995. I liked all of those jobs.
<i>What is the one thing about being a paralegal you would change if you could?</i>	I guess it would be that anyone who calls him or herself a paralegal or works in that field has actually been trained and schooled as one – and not just hired for the position.
<i>How or why did you first enter the paralegal field?</i>	I always had an interest in the law and helping others, and I felt fortunate when a paralegal school opened locally.
<i>Did you hold other positions, or have a different career, prior to becoming a paralegal, and if so, what was it?</i>	A lot of different jobs, including waitress, chambermaid, clerical worker at DMV, burned plates in print shop at National Life Insurance Co, and later worked in its Creative Services Dept., and performed retail inventory at local stores at night.
<i>What do you love about the paralegal profession?</i>	Everything! I have met and worked with many wonderful paralegals, and enjoyed a variety of jobs and tasks, but mostly enjoy the feeling that I am helping people.
<i>What things about the profession do you dislike?</i>	Not everyone gives paralegals the credit or recognition they deserve.
<i>How long have you been a member of the VPO?</i>	Too long to remember, but long enough to know how important and helpful it's been.
<i>Tell me about the skills or traits you possess that you find most useful in your position?</i>	Good listening skills, ability to read and understand case law, natural curiosity to investigate information, and working in partnership with others.

<i>What character oddities or personality traits do you find at odds with your career?</i>	Sometimes have to hold back my sense of humor.
<i>What brief advice or friendly tip would you offer to someone just entering the paralegal field?</i>	Listen and talk to other paralegals and learn as much as you can.





NATIONAL
FEDERATION
of
PARALEGAL
ASSOCIATIONS Inc.
®

NFPA News

By Tina Wiles, NFPA Primary

The NFPA Board, Coordinators, and various task forces, and the management company, Management HQ, LLC, have been very busy getting to know each other, the organization processes, and working with Block|Reed on the change management project. Lisa and I have been closely monitoring the various Board Meetings and Board trainings that have taken place in the last four months.

The NFPA Change Management Task Force has been working tirelessly on preparing recommendations to the organization as the organization works toward better operations. The first Town Hall Meeting of the Task Force and Association members was held on June 2, 2020, and was an overview of the model being utilized by the Task Force as well as how the process of change will unfold and be inclusive of all of NFPA's local associations. Lisa, Louise and myself attended the first Town Hall as VPO representatives. Lisa, as the VPO Secondary Representative, will continue to attend and report on the future Town Hall Meetings, as I am also a member of the Task Force and don't want any misinterpretation of my role or recommendations as the VPO Primary and as a Task Force member. However, I can assure all VPO members that my recommendations will always be in the best interest of NFPA and the VPO. Future Town Hall Meetings will be held every Tuesday evening beginning on June 9 through the end of August, with all meetings open to up to two (2) VPO Board leaders. There will also be three additional Town Hall Meetings that will be open to all Association members and board leaders. The first in the Town Hall Meeting series will discuss recommendations on the change of the governance documents and structure of NFPA followed by the Strategy and Culture of NFPA. I encourage all members to share their comments with Lisa and I so that we can share those comments or concerns at the Town Hall Meetings.

In response to inquiries and concerns raised by association delegates regarding the pass fail rate of the exams, and in response to the changes required by COVID-19, the NFPA Board together with the Certification Task Force, instituted the Certification FastTrack Pilot Program for PACE and PCCE to assist NFPA members and credentialed paralegals for a six month period. The FastTrack Pilot Program will begin on June 1, is temporary in nature, and will be reviewed and reevaluated at the end of the six-month period. As part of the program the application and renewal fees have been reduced and the processing fee has been suspended. Test takers will still need to meet educational and/or work experience criteria in order to sit for the exam. More information about the exam is available on the NFPA website at <https://www.paralegals.org/i4a/pages/index.cfm?pageid=3813>.

In other news, the Region V Spring Meeting was held via Zoom on May 2, 2020. Region V delegates discussed current activities of NFPA and upcoming events. All topics discussed are included in this article.

At this time, the NFPA Annual Convention is planned to be held in Minneapolis, Minnesota, October 22-25, 2020. The Annual Convention provides CLE opportunities, ability to meet with legal service vendors, leadership opportunities, and of course the ability to build your nationwide network of paralegal friends. The NFPA Board is cautiously watching the requirements instituted by officials relating to COVID-19 and have not yet canceled the in-person convention. The Board will continue to monitor whether or not the convention will take place in person, via electronic meetings, or postponed.

NFPA presents several awards and scholarships to paralegals and NFPA Associations at the Annual Convention. Any member of the VPO can apply for and/or nominate a paralegal or association for the awards and scholarships. Nominations for the awards are currently open and include the following:

William R. Robie Leadership Award - This award recognizes an NFPA member in honor of the Honorable William R. Robie and his dedication to the paralegal profession, the expansion of the delivery of legal services and equal access to justice for all Americans. Submit your nomination.

Outstanding Local Leader Award - This award recognizes an individual NFPA member for outstanding local leadership contributions to his or her local association. Submit your nomination.

Paralegal of the Year Award - This award recognizes an individual NFPA member whose on-the-job achievements have contributed to expansion of the paralegal profession, including contributions to his or her employer, colleagues and the paralegal profession in general. Submit your nomination.

Association Pro Bono Award - This award recognizes an NFPA member association that has exhibited outstanding dedication and service in the area of pro bono services. Submit your nomination.

Individual Pro Bono Award - This award recognizes an individual paralegal who has exhibited extraordinary dedication to the delivery of quality legal services to a portion of the population that cannot afford to pay for legal services. Submit your nomination.

Justice Champion Award - This award recognizes a practicing paralegal whose conduct, actions and activities demonstrate extraordinary dedication to diversity and inclusion as defined in NFPA's Position Statement on Diversity, Inclusion and Equity. Submit your nomination.

Certification Ambassador Award - This award recognizes outstanding achievement in promoting the PACE and PCCE programs. This award is sponsored by the Advanced Paralegal Institute (API). Submit your nomination.

PCCE Scholarship - This scholarship covers the costs of a review manual, an online review course, and the exam fee for the Paralegal CORE Competency Exam™ (PCCE). This scholarship is sponsored by the Paralegal Education Group (PEG). Submit your application.

NFPA Student Scholarships - NFPA will award annual scholarships to paralegal students in the U.S. which are to be used to pursue a paralegal education. Submit your application.

Thomson Reuters Student Scholarships - In partnership with Thomson Reuters, NFPA will award two scholarships to paralegal students in the United States. The first place recipient will receive \$3,000 and the second place recipient will receive \$2,000; both scholarships will be paid directly to the students' schools. Recipients will also receive complimentary registration and a \$1,000 travel stipend to attend the NFPA Annual Convention.

Buckfire & Buckfire, P.C. Paralegal Scholarship - Buckfire & Buckfire, P.C. is offering a scholarship to help aspiring paralegals who are in need of financial assistance achieve their academic and professional dreams. Applicants must be enrolled in any paralegal education program for the 2019 spring, summer, winter or fall semester of classes. The scholarship will award \$1,000 to one student selected by our scholarship selection committee. Note: The application for this scholarship is separate from the other NFPA scholarships and awards. [Click here to access the Buckfire & Buckfire, P.C. Paralegal Scholarship application.](#)

Just a reminder to all members that there are several webinars provided by NFPA on the website. You should be receiving emails from them about the webinars, but if not, you can find them on the NFPA website under events. Check them out – they are inexpensive and give you an edge on keeping current.

Lastly, as an update, Carie, Jim Knapp, and I have continued to work with Marnie at Burlington Technical Center Adult Ed to create a paralegal program in Vermont. We have, of course, hit a couple of road bumps, but still anticipate a partnership with a local higher education institution and a program roll out within the next year.



We have recently learned that the State of Washington has sunset the Limited License Legal Technician (LLLT) program. It is considered a step backward for Access to Justice, and comes at a time when we need to open more doors – not close them. There may be more on this in the months to come.



Vermont Attorneys Title Corporation has given us permission to reprint the following information from its May newsletters.

What is (and isn't) RON?

With current efforts to minimize in-person interactions, there has been a push across the country to implement emergency measures to allow notarizations to be conducted remotely. However, what processes are permissible under these emergency measures and how they stack up to other closing methods, including remote online notarization, can be confusing.

A remote online notarization (RON) is a process of notarizing a document in a digital, online platform while the notary and the signer are in different physical locations. RON involves electronic documents executed by the signer using electronic signatures and notarized electronically using an electronic version of any required stamp or seal. The electronically notarized document should then be sealed in a tamper-evident manner to prevent any unauthorized changes to the document.

In contrast, remote ink notarization (RIN), is permissible under many states' emergency executive orders, rules, legislation, and other guidance (including Vermont). RIN allows a notary to be in a different physical location from a signer and to observe the signer executing the document over a recorded video conference. The signer executes the document with wet-ink signatures and transfers the document by mail or other delivery service to the notary.

Remote Online Notarization (RON)	Remote Ink Notarization (RIN)
* Electronic documents	* Paper documents
* Electronic signatures	* Wet-ink signatures
* Electronic notarization	* Wet-ink notarization
* Signing process done in online platform	* Signing process done on paper and observed over video conference



In response to issues raised by COVID-19, NFPA and Prometric have announced a release of remote proctoring for both PACE and PCCE via ProProctor. You can still take the exam in a Prometric Testing Center, or you can take it remotely using your computer's camera, microphone, and internet connection. Contact your local Certification Ambassador, or Vice President and Director of Paralegal Certifications or the Certifications Manager, with questions.

NFPA Award and Scholarship nominations will be accepted through July 1, 2020, and recipients will receipt the awards and scholarships at convention in October.

E-FILING WITH ODYSSEY

Odyssey is now operational in the Orange, Windsor, and Windham trial courts and the Judicial Bureau. Electronic filing began in these trial courts on April 20, 2020 and on April 27, 2020 for the Judicial Bureau. Please use the following links to access the Odyssey case management programs and for more information.

- * **Odyssey File & Serve.** Odyssey File & Serve is the platform through which you will electronically file with the courts. To access Odyssey File & Serve, please visit <https://vermont.tylerhost.net/ofsw eb>. This page contains user guides in the lower left-hand corner. They include instructions on how to register and use the File & Serve. Please note that docket specific filer guides will be posted in the near future on the judiciary's main website.
- * **Odyssey Public Portal.** The Odyssey Public Portal allows you to view your case files. To access the portal, please visit <https://publicportal.courts.vt.gov/Portal>. Before you can view your case files, you must first register in the portal and then request elevated access. The Public Portal User Guide contains instructions on how to register and request elevated access. You can read the user guide via this link: <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/sites/default/files/documents/VT%20Public%20Portal%20User%20Guide%20v8.pdf>. For full information on how to use the portal, please visit <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/about-vermont-judiciary/public-portal>.
- * **FAQ.** Please visit <https://www.vermontjudiciary.org/odyssey> for answers to frequently asked questions and updates about the project.



Vermont Paralegal Organization partners exclusively with Liberty Mutual to help you save \$782 or more a year on auto and home insurance.¹

Enjoy the benefits of being part of a community.

You could **save up to \$782 a year**, and you'll have access to all the advantages of being a Liberty Mutual customer:



24-Hour Claims Assistance

Online or by phone



Accident Forgiveness²

No premium increase due to an initial accident



Better Car Replacement^{TM3}

If your car is totaled, we'll give you the money for a model that is one year newer.



24-Hour Roadside Assistance⁴

Real help when you need it



Contact me for a free quote.

Jennifer Goeke
 170 South Main St Ste 102
 Rutland, VT 05701
 802--665-8045
 Jennifer.Goeke@libertyMutual.com
 Client # 114704



¹ Average combined annual savings based on countrywide survey of new customers from 1/1/15 to 1/29/16 who reported their prior insurers' premiums when they switched to Liberty Mutual. Savings comparison does not apply in MA. ² For qualifying customers only. Accident Forgiveness is subject to terms and conditions of Liberty Mutual's underwriting guidelines. Not available in CA and may vary by state. ³ Optional coverage in some states. Availability varies by state. Eligibility rules apply. ⁴ With the purchase of optional Towing & Labor coverage. Applies to mechanical breakdowns and disablements only. Towing related to accidents would be covered under your Collision or Other Than Collision coverage. Coverage provided and underwritten by Liberty Mutual Insurance and its affiliates, 175 Berkeley Street, Boston MA 02116. ©2017 Liberty Mutual Insurance Valid through November 11, 2017.

Vermont Paralegal Organization

P.O Box 5755
Burlington, VT 05402-5755
info@vtparalegal.org
www.vtparalegal.org

Board of Directors 2019-2021

		<u>Phone</u>	<u>Fax</u>	<u>E-mail</u>
President:	Lucia White, CP®	878-8775	878-8790	lwhite.home@gmail.com
Vice President:	Louise Reese	859-7063	859-8763	lreese@dinse.com
Secretary:	Jill Drinkwater, CRP	864-4555	864-4659	jdrinkwater@healaw.com
Treasurer:	Sara Boyden, RP	859-7062	859-8762	sboyden@dinse.com
NFPA Primary:	Tina Wiles	388-7933	388-9200	vponfpa1@gmail.com
NFPA Secondary:	VACANT			
Past President:	Kristin Provost, RP®	540-7920	658-1643	kprovost@veic.org

Standing Committee Chairpersons

Membership:	Melinda Siel	495-5260	860-1208	msiel@dunkielsaunders.com
Finance:	Diane Drake	864-0880		ddrake@primmer.com
Professional Liaison:	Carie Tarte, RP®	489-5258	489-5386	carie@maleyandmaley.com
Paralegal Certification Ambassador	VACANT			

Special Committee Chairpersons

Advertising:	Carie Tarte, RP®	489-5258	489-5386	carie@maleyandmaley.com
Bylaws:	Melinda Siel	495-5260	860-1208	msiel@dunkielsaunders.com
Continuing Legal:	Carie Tarte, RP®	489-5258	489-5386	carie@maleyandmaley.com
Ethics:	Carie Tarte, RP®	489-5258	489-5386	carie@maleyandmaley.com
Employment Opportunities:	Heather Rylant	846-8355	862-7512	hrylant@drm.com
Legislative Paralegal Affairs:	VACANT			
Newsletter:	Louise Reese	859-7063	859-8763	lreese@dinse.com
Website:	Corinne Deering, RP®	658-2311	658-0042	cdeering@pfclaw.com
Pro Bono:	VACANT			
Sponsorship:	Carie Tarte, RP®	489-5258	489-5386	carie@maleyandmaley.com