

Paralegal Focus

INSIDE

Membership News 3

Member Spotlight 4-6

NFPA Joint Conference 7-9

Did you Know? 10

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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).

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President's Message

By Laurie S. Noyes, MBA, PHR®



As we wind down summer, and transition to fall here in Vermont, I wanted to share with you my thoughts on how I am feeling this year. This year has been one of a transition for me. Not so much on a professional level, although I did shift this year to spend more time in the employment and labor law practice, and also obtained my certification as a Professional in Human Resources as part of that team. More of what I am speaking to is the passage of time, and how much it seems to affect me lately.

In just a few short months, I will turn 50, and I think that has started this journey I have been on lately. This look back over my last nearly half-century in this world, and really evaluating whether I have lived the path I wanted to during my time. The pandemic started that focus for me, and it has continued as I near the half-century mark. I began to weigh the intrinsic value of everyday things more carefully, and have tried to find joy in small moments that I otherwise might have overlooked in the past.

For many, we have begun to focus more on our lives, and what we truly value in both our personal and professional worlds. I became more focused on finding a better work/life balance. I wanted to spend my time at work becoming more efficient and more productive, but also work less and still be a valued member of the team. I approached my firm about using my generous vacation time allotment to take Fridays off during the summer, rather than taking 1-2 week vacations during the year. I have managed to swing that schedule for the last two summers, and it has provided me with a sense of fulfillment and renewed appreciation in my work that was often missing because I felt

Continued from Page 1

tired and too busy all the time. Disconnecting on Fridays allowed me to reconnect with other things – family, friends, nature. Of course, life generally seems a bit lazier during the summer, and disconnecting can often be easier when the court schedule is slower, clients are taking vacations, and life moves at a different pace.

With all that said, I am sure you are also feeling these moments of transition as we move toward fall. The kids are going back to school, the leaves are changing, the temps are cooling off, and schedules are picking up again. The seasons of our lives change so quickly, and we move through them often without thought or care. Life marches on and yet sometimes also flexes its vulnerability without notice, so that even our best laid plans can go astray in the blink of an eye. I wish you all smooth transitions as we collectively head into this new season. I hope the summer left you feeling renewed and relaxed, and that the brisk autumn wind fills you with contentment as we begin yet another chapter.

Editor's Message

By Louise Reese

I feel much like Laurie does (and not only because I also turn 50 this year). The events of 2020 put me on a path of self-reflection, confirming what was important to me and how I wanted to approach life's challenges. One thing that has not changed is how I feel about my VPO family. The wonderful friends that I have made both on and off the Board keep me actively involved in our small but mighty organization. Please consider being a part of this wonderful organization, not only to keep it going strong for our members, but for you individually.

Kudos to the Board for putting in place an online payment option. It has been put to use already with the upcoming Zoom events. Please review the instructions provided by Melinda in this issue.

Krista Cadieux has provided us with an update on Joint Conference, which is jam-packed with valuable information.

We also have some information in the Did You Know section that you may find useful in your practice or your life!

In case this issue is not distributed until after the Zoom events during the last week in September pass, I wanted to thank Ben Luna, Esq. for presenting to us on Probate Litigation. This is Ben's first presentation for the VPO, but his firm has been a corporate member for a couple of years. My second round of thanks goes to Samara Anderson, Esq., who provided us with a Mindfulness session on how to identify stressors and simple coping mechanisms. Neither hesitated to accept my invitation, and we greatly appreciate the support of our legal community.

Membership News

By Melinda Siel

As of August 2022, we have 65 active members: 49 voting; 6 associate; 1 student; and 2 sustaining corporate.

Please welcome our newest members: Theresa Budzik from Dinse P.C., and Zackary York from Sheehey Furlong & Behm, P.C.!

ANNOUNCEMENT: NEW PAYMENT OPTION

Over the years our members have asked for alternatives for paying their membership dues and annual meeting registration instead of by check...the time has come for that change. The Board is happy to announce that through Wild Apricot and AffiniPay the VPO can now accept all major credit cards for payments!

When you receive your membership renewal invoice, all you need to do is click “View invoice online” and then “PAY ONLINE” and enter your credit card information.

We will also be able to accept online registration and payments for the Annual Meeting and Continuing Education events. When you register for an event, you will have the option to Pay Online when you confirm your registration directly through the website.

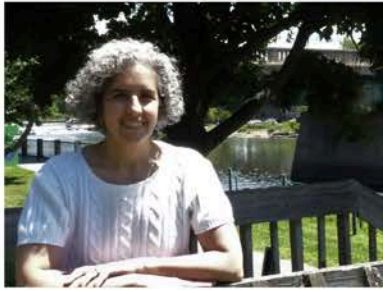
If you have any questions or concerns, please contact our Membership Chair Melinda Siel at membership@vtparalegal.org.

ANNOUNCEMENT: OPEN COMMITTEE POSITIONS

The VPO needs your help! We have two open committee positions on the VPO Board, and we are hoping that one of you has the will, the talent, and the drive to serve the paralegal community by becoming a committee chair.

First, we have an opening for a Finance Committee Chair. The Finance Committee Chair assists the VPO treasurer in tracking and identifying expenses, preparing reports, and updating the VPO Board with respect to the financial position of the Organization. The Finance Committee Chair is open to any voting member of the VPO and is a standing committee with a right to vote on the Board. Anyone interested in this position should reach out to the VPO’s Treasurer, Elsie Goodrich, at egoodrich@dunkielsaunders.com to learn more about the role and its requirements.

Second, we need someone to take over the role of Website Committee Chair. The Website Committee Chair can be any member of the VPO who has an interest in social media and website maintenance. Duties include maintaining the Organization's website to ensure that current and accurate information is available to its members, such as Board of Directors current contact information, membership information, employment opportunities announcements, newsletters, meeting and seminar announcements, NFPA affiliation and Paralegal Certification announcements, news and information; and to periodically verify links and forms provided for informational purposes on the Organization’s website to ensure correct functionality and accuracy. If you would like to learn more about the position, please reach out to the VPO’s Vice President, Melinda Siel, at msiel@dunkielsaunders.com.



Q&A

Lucia White, CP Member Spotlight

How old are you?	53
Describe your family?	I've been married to my husband, Ken, for 29 years. He definitely keeps me laughing. My adult daughter (Cathy) and her boyfriend (Joey) just moved to Vermont this year, and I am thrilled to have them close. We have a lot of fun together.
Town in which you live?	Winooski
What is your favorite food?	Ice cream
Do have any pets? If so, what are they, and what are their names?	We have a cat named Catawampus Ploppicus or "Cat" for short. My husband named him, which gives you a lot of insight into his level of goofiness.
What kind of hobbies do you have?	I love to read and to play games. I also make and sell hand stamped greeting cards.
How do you unwind at the end of a long work week?	I often play games with my husband and friends online, or with my family in person. Or I make new cards and learn new paper crafting techniques.
What is your educational background?	I have a Bachelors and a Masters in Psychology, a paralegal certificate, and just this year, I completed the divorce mediation series at Champlain College.

Where do you work?	I am the sole proprietor of Another Way Mediation, LLC, a family mediation and freelance paralegal business.
When did you first become a paralegal?	2011
What area of law do you work in?	I work mostly in family law, although I am currently freelancing in municipal law.
What do you enjoy about working in that area of law?	I enjoy helping people going through challenging times.
If you could work in any other area of law, what would it be?	Restorative justice and/or civil rights law
What is the one thing about being a paralegal you would change if you could?	I would like the ability to operate more independently in certain areas of the law. Working as a mediator helps me do this to some extent.
How or why did you first enter the paralegal field?	I was a guardian ad litem in child welfare cases for many years, and I became more intrigued by the details of the legal process.
Did you hold other positions, or have a different career, prior to becoming a paralegal, and if so, what was it?	I worked for many years in the child welfare system - first as a foster care case manager and team leader, then as a guardian ad litem.
What do you love about the paralegal profession?	It is never boring! I am constantly learning new things.
What things about the profession do you dislike?	Before starting my business, one thing I did not enjoy was the lack of flexibility in my schedule.

How long have you been a member of the VPO?

I've been a member since 2013 - shortly before moving to Vermont!

Tell me about the skills or traits you possess that you find most useful in your position?

My most important family law skill is my ability to listen without being shocked or judging. I am also very detail-oriented and can organize thoughts well.

What character oddities or personality traits do you find at odds with your career?

I can be bossy, which is exactly the opposite of what a mediator should be.

What brief advice or friendly tip would you offer to someone just entering the paralegal field?

Take advantage of learning opportunities. You never know when and how they will enhance your career!





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NFPA News

NFPA 2022 JOINT CONFERENCE

*By Kristine Cadieux, RP®
NFPA Primary Delegate*

I virtually attended the annual NFPA Joint Conference in May, specifically, the Certification Conference and the Leadership Conference. Any VPO member is welcome to attend future Joint Conferences. I have outlined some of the topics that were covered as well as some of my “take-aways”:

Certification

- Certification Ambassador Boot Camp (training on how to be a successful ambassador)
- A few reasons to become a certified paralegal:
 - ♦ Shows commitment to your profession.
 - ♦ Reflection of your achievement and builds professional credibility.
 - ♦ Boosts self-confidence.
 - ♦ Can lead to a higher salary, career opportunities, and greater job responsibilities.
 - ♦ Exam process improves paralegal skills and knowledge.
- Overcoming Test Anxiety: The 2021 passing rate for both exams is 75% - high likelihood of passing!
- Exam preparation tips and test strategies
- Exam Content
 - ♦ The Paralegal CORE Competency Exam™ (PCCE™) and the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam® (PACE®) cover 7 specific areas of law, within 4 main areas of practice (“domains”).
 - ♦ The PCCE™ is scored in 2 categories: Paralegal Practice (52%) + Substantive Areas of Law (48%).
- Study resources: NFPA Study Manuals, API Review Courses, practice exams, textbooks, CLEs, etc.
- See NFPA’s website (or VPO’s!) for eligibility requirements. [NFPA is working to correct them to add as an option: A bachelor's degree in any course of study obtained from an institutionally accredited school and three (3) years of substantive paralegal experience.]
- Marketing your credential: Update your email signature, LinkedIn profile, etc. and hang your framed certificate on your office wall!

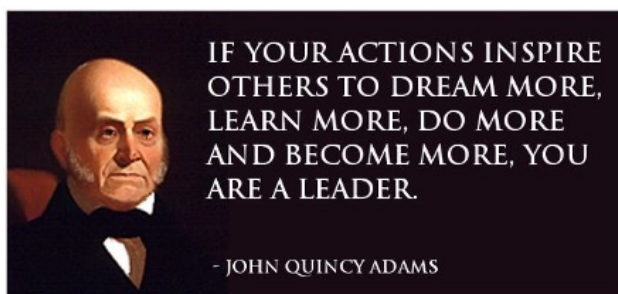
- Maintaining your credential: Submit proof of CLEs attended (with a fee) every 2 years.
- How to get your employer's support for certification: Prepare positive arguments and anticipate areas of resistance to prepare counterpoints.
- The difference between having a Paralegal Certificate and being a Certified Paralegal:
 - ♦ **Certificated**: Obtained a paralegal certificate from a higher education institute (e.g., a college Paralegal Certificate program/course).
 - ♦ **Certified**: A private or public credential offered to professionals who meet minimum standards for the profession (e.g., passing NFPA's PACE® exam to achieve the RP® credential).
- 18± states now have voluntary certification programs (e.g., New York State Certificated Paralegal).
- Regulation/Licensing: A regulatory structure making licensure mandatory (California is the only "regulated" paralegal state, so far).

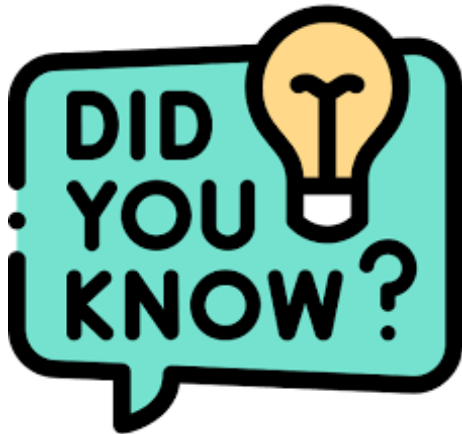
We recently updated the Certification pages on the VPO website. Check them out for helpful information and links to NFPA's Certification pages regarding eligibility, renewals, testing information, etc. Feel free to reach out to me for assistance!



Leadership

- Leadership Qualities
 - ♦ 25 Leadership Qualities, including Integrity, Communication, Listening, Emotional Intelligence, Vision, Delegation, and Empowerment.
- Psychological Safety
 - ♦ A climate where people are comfortable expressing and being themselves
 - ♦ Sharing concerns and mistakes without fear of embarrassment or retribution
 - ♦ Confidence to speak up and ask questions
- Inclusive Leadership
 - ♦ Define culture of an organization
 - ♦ Invite diverse perspectives and create atmosphere where all opinions and contributions matter
 - ♦ Authenticity and well-being of an organization encourages active engagement and participation
- Cognizance of Bias
 - ♦ Implicit Bias – When a person consciously rejects stereotypes and supports anti-discrimination efforts, but also unconsciously holds negative associations.
- Resilient Leadership
 - ♦ Ability to face setbacks with positive attitude and ability to move forward while inspiring others
 - ♦ Generally optimistic and able to see big picture and opportunities
 - ♦ Adaptability, planning, tenacity, empathy, emotional intelligence, and willingness to learn
- Successful leaders put the greater good and health of their organization first instead of personal agendas or personality differences.
- Recruiting, Engaging and Retaining New Board Members
 - ♦ Consider methods of recruitment (e.g., networking, word of mouth)
 - ♦ Create an inclusive membership and cultivate relationships





It recently came to my attention that V.R.C.P. 4(b) was amended back in February of this year to now require a blank Answer form be included in the usual service package of Summons, Complaint, and pro se Appearance form. I don't recall seeing this in any of the Memos to the Bar from the Court Administrator, and as of the date I prepared this blurb, the Court had not updated its Summons form to mention the Answer form, but it does mention it in the instructions. It also includes a blank Answer form in the forms section of www.vermontjudiciary.com. Many thanks to Carie Tarte for bringing this to my attention.

As of May 3, 2023, a regular driver's license will no longer be acceptable identification for boarding a domestic flight. Travelers will need either a Real ID, an enhanced driver's license, or a passport to board a plane in the U.S.

MEMO TO THE BAR – August 17, 2022

a. *Proposed Order Amending Rule 66 of the Vermont Rules of Probate Procedure*

The proposed amendments to Rule 66 reflect and clarify current practice regarding inventories and accounts.

Proposed Rule 66(b) is new. Rule 66(b)(1) contains a general requirement that, unless waived by the court for good cause, an estate inventory must contain a description and value of the decedent's assets. The rule sets forth specific requirements for the content of inventories in the areas of real property, mobile homes, motor vehicles, high value items, and financial institution accounts. Former Rules 66(b) and (c) are redesignated (c) and (d) without change. New Rule 66(e) provides accounting standards consistent with 14 V.S.A. §§ 1055, 1057. Former Rules 66(d)-(f) are redesignated (f)-(h) without change.

Proposed Rule 66(i) is new. It spells out a process that enables a judge to deal with an inadequately prepared or presented inventory or account or other failure to comply with the provisions of Rule 66(a)-(h) by providing for their preparation "by a licensed professional with experience in fiduciary accounting."

Comments on these proposed amendments should be sent by October 17, 2022, to Hon. Jeffrey Kilgore, Chair of the Advisory Committee on the Rules of Probate Procedure, at the following address:

Hon. Jeffrey Kilgore
Jeffrey.Kilgore@vermont.gov



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