

Letter from the Chair

by Danielle Davis

One of the highlights of the year as Chair of the Paralegal Division is the Annual Paralegal Day Luncheon and CLE which was held on May 17, 2012. Paralegal Day provides an opportunity to recognize everyone that has achieved their National Certification through NALA. This year there were sixteen paralegals added to the ranks of Certified Paralegals in Utah.

Paralegal Day is also the day to recognize a paralegal who, over a long and distinguished career, has by their ethical and personal conduct, commitment and activities, exemplified for their fellow paralegals and attorneys with whom they have worked, a high standard of professionalism and who has rendered extraordinary contributions that coincide with the purposes of the Bylaws of the Paralegal Division and of the Utah Paralegal Association. This year, the Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award was presented to Bonnie Hamp, CP.

Bonnie was nominated by her supervising attorneys, Catherine L. Brabson and Lisa R. Petersen, who provided the following information about Bonnie in their nomination submission:

Bonnie began her career in the legal profession in 1978 as a paralegal for Utah Legal Services in Ogden working with low income clients and referring pro bono cases to private counsel. In 1985 she began working in a private practice handling domestic,

corporate and administrative transportation issues before the Public Service Commission. From 1989-1993, Bonnie worked as a legal assistant with Suitter Axland Armstrong & Hanson. In 2000, Bonnie passed the National Association of Legal Assistant's Certified Paralegal exam. From 2003-2007, she worked for

Holme Roberts & Owen as a litigation paralegal.

Since 2007, Bonnie has worked for Parsons Kinghorn Harris, P.C. She initiated the conversion of an archaic conflict database where she worked with independent IT vendors to create and formulate a more efficient search mechanism for attorneys and staff to search for

potential conflicts of interest. She has assisted her attorneys with preparation for and attended numerous trials and arbitrations, including a two-week arbitration at which she organized and electronically presented and organized numerous complex financial documents and spreadsheets, resulting in a victory for the firm's client, including an award of all the firm's attorneys' fees and costs.

In 2009, Bonnie obtained her Advanced Paralegal Certification from the University of California, taking six substantive legal courses in Divorce Probate



Paralegal of the Year, Bonnie Hamp (center), with Catherine L. Brabson (left) and Lisa R. Petersen (right), who nominated her for the award.

and Estates, Bankruptcy, Water, Legal Research, and Victim Advocacy.

From 2000-2010, Bonnie served on the Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee. She has also served several years as a Director on the Paralegal Division Board including a position on the Executive Committee and elected positions for Secretary and Finance Officer. Bonnie has also been a member of the Utah Paralegal Association (fka LAAU) and served on its Board as the NALA Liaison.

Bonnie, as evidenced by all of her achievements described above, is truly an exceptional person as well as professional. She is highly motivated, talented, smart, hardworking, thoughtful, and resourceful. She has excellent people skills and works incredibly well with all attorneys, staff, clients, court personnel, and opposing counsel. She is a great writer and organizer. There is no task that Bonnie cannot undertake and she approaches every project with a

smile. Indeed, she is truly a pleasure to work with. There are few paralegals in this profession with whom either of us has ever worked who has such a broad catholicity of skills, deep integrity, genuine responsiveness, and kind temperament. We believe that she unquestionably deserves to be awarded the Distinguished Paralegal of 2012.

I have personally known Bonnie for many years and am pleased that the nomination committee felt her deserving of this year's award.

This issue of the *Bar Journal* marks the end of my term as Chair of the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar. Thora Searle will be taking over as Chair for the 2012-2013 year beginning in July. It has been an honor to serve on the Division's Board of Directors and on the Board of Bar Commissioners of the Utah State Bar as the Paralegal Division ex-officio member.

I look forward to working with Thora as she leads the Paralegal Division in the coming year.

Update to the Memorial Scholarship Created for Paralegal Heather Johnson Finch



Heather Finch was tragically killed in a late August 2010 airplane crash while traveling from Katmandu, Nepal to the Lukla Airport at the base of Mount Everest.

Ms. Finch, a paralegal with over twenty years of experience in the legal profession, took over as Chair of the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar just two months before her tragic death. Heather was excited to be the Chair of the Division and had many exciting plans for her year of service. Heather dedicated her life to serving the legal community with countless hours of volunteering in the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division. In 2009, Finch was awarded Utah's highest honor for paralegals, the Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award.

The Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar, in coordination with the Finch and Johnson families and Utah Valley University, established the **Heather Johnson Finch Memorial Endowed**

Scholarship to recognize her legacy, honor her dedication to the legal profession, and ensure that her leadership efforts continued. This scholarship was designed to achieve the goals that Heather had aimed to accomplish as a leader of the paralegal community, including promoting higher education and advanced training for paralegals.

The Scholarship must raise \$30,000 to be fully funded and ensure Heather's lasting legacy. The Scholarship to date has raised \$14,134 through private donations, and through the First Annual Civility, Ethics, professionalism CLE held last June. The Division held its Second Annual Civility, Ethics and Professionalism CLE on June 26th at the Law & Justice Center. All proceeds going to the Heather Johnson Finch Memorial Endowed Scholarship. It is hoped that this scholarship will inspire generations of students as they learn about Heather's remarkable qualities. For more information about how to contribute to the Heather Johnson Finch Memorial Endowed Fund, go online to <http://www.utahparalegals.org/> or contact Nancy Smith at UVU, (801) 863-8896.