



## *Paralegal of the Year*

The Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar and the Utah Paralegal Association presented their 8th Annual Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award to Paula Christensen, CP, on May 16, 2013 at this year's Paralegal Day Celebration. The Selection Committee consisted of the committee Chair from the Paralegal Division, Danielle Davis, CP; the Utah Paralegal Association representative, Ramona Gray; Justice Michael Zimmerman; Judge Todd Shaughnessy; and Katherine Fox, General Counsel for the Utah State Bar.

Paula was nominated by William Hansen, Karra Porter, and Nathan Alder. Paula has worked at Christensen & Jensen for thirty-four years and has been a certified paralegal since 2010. Following are some excerpts from the nomination submitted by the attorneys with whom she works:

We are honored to nominate Paula Christensen for the Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award. We firmly believe that there is no more deserving candidate than Ms. Christensen. Paula exemplifies the qualities this prestigious award is intended to promote.

It is difficult to describe in writing the reasons that make Paula so deserving of this award. Everyone – clients, co-workers, opposing counsel – who has dealings with Paula comes away with a positive experience, impressed with her compassion, her willingness to help, her upbeat attitude, her sense of humor, her dedication to the job, and her intelligence. In a world where many people are overwhelmed with their own problems and often unable to be of assistance, it is refreshing to work with someone like Paula who is willing to put forth the effort to do a job right, and who never fails to rise to the occasion. She is calm and centered and she imparts a steady confidence in her interactions with others.

Paula has worked in the legal profession virtually all of her adult life. She started as a secretary at Christensen & Jensen thirty-four years ago. She has worked as a secretary, office manager and paralegal, taking some time off when her children

were born. In 2002, Paula became a full-time paralegal. We all knew that she had the skills to be an excellent paralegal. However, we have been pleased at just how exceptional she would be. Since beginning her work as a paralegal, Paula has distinguished herself as the “go to” paralegal for everyone in the firm, including other paralegals, secretaries, and even attorneys. She provides invaluable assistance on a wide variety of cases, from routine personal injury cases to complex, document-intensive commercial litigation cases. Her attention to detail is so remarkable that she is the designated cite- and fact-checker for our appellate division. She has also taken the time to become proficient on a number of different software programs, including Summation, Concordance, Sanctions, and PerfectLaw.

Paula's dedication to her job is unsurpassed. For example, earlier this year she stayed late to help meet a deadline for an appellate brief when she had planned to be at a family birthday party. As an additional example, Paula recently organized a complex, document intensive case with hundreds of thousands of documents. She prepared a spreadsheet that listed all the work done by our firm's client, correlated that with the documented-related work done by other co-defendants, included a data field that showed the specific claims made by plaintiffs for each entry, and referenced each data point to the source document, literally distilling the evidence from thousands of documents. Her efforts in that one case alone have reduced an overwhelming case to a manageable one, rendering invaluable service to our client and our firm.

She studied after work and on the weekends to prepare for the National Association of Legal Assistants examination, and became a “Certified Paralegal.” These examples are typical of Paula's desire to excel.

Clients absolutely love Paula and rave about her work. Here is a portion of a letter from a client:

Paula was one of the most impactful people around me

while I was recovering physically, emotionally, and financially from a car accident I was in. I feel that she went far and above what anybody's responsibility toward a client would be under any circumstance. She aided me in navigating me through a complex healthcare billing system and eventually took over the filing and organization of those bills. She talked me through how to deal with the various insurance companies I was in communication with. She was always prompt in calling me back and walking me through the smallest problems. Every time I spoke with her on the phone, which was multiple times per week, I felt that she was truly worried about me and was genuinely concerned about my well-being. She made me feel completely comfortable with sharing my feelings and my health status with her.

I felt that Paula was wholeheartedly my advocate and that she made herself completely available to me. It was an emotional period for me and I, honestly, feel that Paula's help and caring was a big part of my recovery and return to normalcy.

These comments reflect how virtually all of our clients who work with Paula feel about her.

Paula is also well-qualified to receive this award because of her public service and her organizational involvement, as set forth below:

- **Organizational Involvement** – Paula has been an active member of both the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar and the Utah Paralegal Association. She faithfully attends their monthly meetings and the annual Paralegal Day Luncheon. She also attends various continuing education seminars to improve her skills.
- **Service to Community** – Among her activities, Paula has recently been involved in the Utah State Bar's Wills for Heroes program. On her personal time, she has spent substantial effort helping those who could not afford a will. Paula is always anxious to be of service in the community in other ways. Recently, she attended a race in California to support her daughter-in-law to help raise money for cancer victims. Also, she has shared her home with others who did not have a place to stay.
- **Pro Bono Work** – Paula has performed substantial pro bono work under the direction of attorneys for numerous people who could not afford it. This has included doing paralegal work in areas outside her field of expertise, such as doing probate work and helping with criminal matters.

It is an honor for the Paralegal Division to recognize Paula and add her to the ranks of the past recipients of this award. We are already looking forward to next year and the opportunity to introduce another outstanding paralegal at the annual Paralegal Day Celebration.



Even minds we don't understand grow beautiful things.  
Let's rethink mental illness.

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## *Message from the Chair*

by Thora Searle

As the 2012-2013 year comes to a close, I want to thank the Board of Directors for the Paralegal Division for all of their support and hard work this year. We have enjoyed assisting the Young Lawyers Division with their Wills for Heroes, Serving our Seniors, and the Cinderella project. It is an awesome feeling to know that we have been of service to others who put their lives on the line for us on a daily basis. If you haven't participated in the "Wills for Heroes," you should consider volunteering when the opportunity presents itself. It's a great opportunity to "pay it forward."

The highlight of our year's activities is our Paralegal Day Luncheon. This year we had somewhere near to 190 participants at this event. It is a time when we honor a paralegal for her accomplishments and efforts as a paralegal. These recipients are always worthy of the honor.

Another change is that the renewals/new membership period will run from June 1, 2013, through July 31, 2013. This is the same time as the attorney renewals, and we hope the change will be beneficial to our members. Remember that your CLE has to be completed by June 30, 2013, and your new membership year will be July 1, 2013, through June 30, 2014.

We would really like to see more members willing to work on the various committees and for service on the Board of Directors. We want your input, suggestions, and participation as we move

forward with various projects, especially with our CLE and Community Service Committees. Please, as you complete your application for renewal, don't forget to fill out and forward the page asking for volunteers to Carma Harper at [charper@Strongandhanni.com](mailto:charper@Strongandhanni.com) along with your Affidavit of Supervising Attorney and CLE Certification. You can send them via the postal service to Carma at: 9350 South 150 East, Suite 820, Sandy, UT 84070.

The Scholarship that was created in honor of Heather Johnson Finch is very close to our goal of \$30,000. We appreciate very much the efforts of Nate Alder and Julie Eriksson in working to make this a success. We are hoping to be able to begin awarding scholarships for the fall or at least by the winter semester. We are very excited about being able to help a potential paralegal with her education and look forward to the very first award.

As the year wraps up, Danielle Price of Strong & Hanni will take over as Chair of the Paralegal Division. I have great admiration and respect for Danielle's leadership qualities and have enjoyed working with her on the Board. It has truly been a great experience and I have appreciated again all the hard work and efforts of our current Board. Without them, our Division would not be successful.