



What's Good for the Goose May Be Good for the Gander: Why Your Paralegal Should Be a Member of the Utah State Bar Paralegal Division

by Heather J. Allen

Most attorneys are not aware that there is a division of the Utah State Bar that is specifically put into place for their paralegals. The Paralegal Division was created in April 1996 by the Utah Supreme Court and has been a source of great continuing legal education, networking opportunities, and community involvement for paralegals. Paralegals who are not members of this division and, perhaps some who are, don't always know the benefit of membership.

Why did I become a member of this organization? I was encouraged to join by an attorney when I was in my first year working as a paralegal. My attorney told me that it was a great way to network with other paralegals in town. He made my joining the organization one of my goals for the year. You may wonder why that was such a big deal – I know at the time I wondered just that. So here is one reason why it is a big deal: **IT MAKES YOUR LIFE EASIER!** That's right, paralegals who have the opportunity to network with other paralegals, whether it be at CLE, annual meetings, or community service events, will be able to build rapport with those they work opposite. In high-stress cases, it's important to have a paralegal who can get along with the other side. What better way to develop rapport than by being a member of an organization and getting to know other paralegals in a different setting other than a contentious lawsuit. I know for myself that having these relationships has worked in my favor going into a case. When the opposing paralegal and I know one another, we have common respect and we are able to be more efficient when dealing with the issues for our clients. As a result, membership in the Paralegal Division could be a great cost saver for clients. My attorney understood that value.

As with attorneys, the Paralegal Division collects dues every year to allow our members the same benefits that are afforded to the attorneys through the Bar. The cost is small, and the benefits are boundless.

I want to highlight a few of our great benefits that you, the attorney or current member of the Paralegal Division, can use in encouraging your paralegal or fellow paralegal to be part of our Division.

Continuing Legal Education

As you are aware, CLE is an opportunity to keep current on legal topics and practices you use every day and an excellent opportunity to see what others are doing in different areas of law. Paralegals work in a diverse range of settings, from in-house corporate environments to government and criminal law offices, to the traditional big law firms. Even the range of activities one might do as a paralegal in a small firm as opposed to a big firm can be quite varied. By attending continuing legal education classes or CLEs, your paralegal will have an opportunity to broaden his or her perspective and keep skills sharp. The Paralegal Division hosts free monthly Brown Bag CLEs at the Utah Law & Justice Center. We co-host with the Utah Paralegal Association the Paralegal Day Luncheon, which is a celebration of paralegals and includes a great ethics CLE. Finally, we host an all-day CLE in June, which also includes our annual meeting.

Networking

As I mentioned before, this is priceless. Giving your paralegal the opportunity to get out of your office and meet other paralegals

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here in Utah is a great way to help your paralegal feel value. Most paralegals are cool under pressure and seem to know a vast amount of information. Many times it is because of networking with other paralegals that they have that knowledge. Some paralegals who work at small firms, for example, may not have readily available peers to get help on best practices or a perspective that will change how they view a task. Oftentimes, your paralegal will gain long-term friendships based on mutual respect are made.

Blomquist Hale

This is a full-service, confidential, outside counseling service available to all members of the Utah State Bar and their immediate households. They provide counseling for issues such as stress, depression, anxiety, family problems, personal finance issues, elder care challenges, and assessment of drug/alcohol dependence. There are no co-pays and no deductibles. <http://www.utahbar.org/members/lhl-blomquist-hale/>.

Community-Wide Discounts with Beneplace

This is a new service available through the Utah State Bar's website, for all members, which offers community-wide discounts on everything from insurance, automotive services, and car-buying. <http://www.utahbar.org/members/>

Job Announcements

Frequently the Paralegal Division send emails to active members notifying them of job openings. The Paralegal Division also strives to make the community aware of these opportunities by also posting them on the Division's Facebook page. <https://www.facebook.com/paralegaldivisionoftheutahstatebar?ref=hl>.

Community Service Opportunities

The Paralegal Division looks for opportunities to provide service to the community. In the past, the Paralegal Division has been involved in community outreach programs such as Wills for Heroes, Serving Our Seniors, Christmas food and clothing drives, and legal aid clinics. Members of the Division are encouraged to get involved.

Discounted Registration to Bar Events

As you know, the Utah State Bar holds conventions throughout the year. All or almost all Bar functions are available to members of the Paralegal Division at a discounted rate (from what attorneys pay). This includes the popular event of the Summer

Convention, which has traditionally been held in Sun Valley, Idaho, and most recently, in Snowmass, Colorado; also the Spring Convention held in St. George; and the Fall Forum held in Salt Lake.

Salary Survey

Beginning in 2008 and following up in 2012, the Paralegal Division, with the help of the Utah State Bar, sought and published findings from the Utah paralegal community about salaries, benefits, and the environments in which paralegals are being utilized in Utah. The surveys have helped set the standard for what kinds of salaries and benefits students and professionals should expect. We anticipate conducting another salary survey in the near future.

Community Recognition

The Paralegal Division provides opportunities for you to recognize the good work and outstanding qualities of your paralegals or peers. Every year, the Paralegal Division recognizes an individual as the "Distinguished Paralegal of the Year." Past honorees have been paralegals who have not only shown a high level of professionalism and skill but also given back to the community.

Promoting the Profession

Ultimately, being a member of the Paralegal Division gives your paralegal or colleague an opportunity to help promote the profession! The goals of the Paralegal Division specifically are: To assist the Utah State Bar with its mission to serve the public and the legal profession by promoting justice, professional excellence, civility, ethics, respect for and understanding of the law and to assist the Bar in increasing access to justice through affordable legal services by better utilization of paralegals by the Bar.

For more information on how to become a member, please visit <http://paralegals.utahbar.org> or contact any of the board of directors.

The Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar would like to invite all paralegals in the State of Utah to submit articles for publication in the Bar Journal. Please submit all articles to Greg Wayment via email to wayment@mgpclaw.com.