

Congratulations Deb Calegory: Recipient of Utah's 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award

Congratulations Deb Calegory: Recipient of Utah's 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award

by Sharon M. Andersen

On May 15, 2008, we celebrated Paralegal's Day at Little America in Salt Lake City, Utah. As many of you know, Paralegal's Day is a yearly event co-sponsored by the Paralegal Division and the Legal Assistants Association of Utah (LAAU). This year we were especially privileged to have Chief Justice Christine Durham of the Utah Supreme Court as our keynote speaker who spoke to us on the topic of *The Role of the Supreme Court, the Judicial Council, the Many Committees and the Ways We Administer the Court System*.

Brief Summary of Paralegal's Day History

Governor Norman H. Bangerter signed the first Declaration, declaring June 15, 1989 as Legal Assistants' Day in recognition of all Utah paralegals and their valuable contributions to the legal profession by assisting attorneys and making it possible to offer high quality legal services at the lowest possible cost. Not quite five years later, on May 19, 1994, with a few minor revisions to the original Declaration, Governor Michael O. Leavitt signed the second Declaration, declaring each third Thursday of May from that day forward to be designated as Legal Assistants' Day. Both governors encouraged the citizens of our state to participate in the declaration.

Exactly ten years later, on May 19, 2004, Governor Olene S. Walker signed our current Declaration, once again declaring the third Thursday of May – this time as “Paralegal's Day.” The year prior, the National Association of Legal Assistants (NALA) officially changed their designation to include Paralegal/ Certified Paralegal as well as Legal Assistant/ Certified Legal Assistant. The Chair of the Division at that time, Sanda Flint, CP, saw it as the perfect opportunity to make a definitive distinction between the terms “legal assistant” and “paralegal” and, consequently, moved forward on two counts – first, to have the Legal Assistants' Division officially known as the Paralegal Division, and second, to have Legal Assistants' Day officially recognized as Paralegal's Day. Additional language added to the 2004 Declaration included the Utah Supreme Court's definition of a paralegal as well as the Utah State Bar's official recognition of the valuable contributions of paralegals in 1996 by creating a Paralegal Division.

Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award

While Paralegal's Day has been around since 1989, this is only the third year for the

Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award. Danielle Price, CP, the 2005/ 2006 Chair of the Paralegal Division along with her Board of Directors and LAAU agreed that the time had come to expand the Paralegal's Day celebration to include a yearly award honoring a Utah 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 work, the epitome of professionalism; who has also rendered extraordinary contributions that coincide with the purposes of the Paralegal Division and/or the purposes of LAAU as set forth in the Bylaws of each organization."

Deb Calegory, 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year

Thank you to this year's Nomination Selection Committee members – Judge Eric A. Ludlow, Billy Walker, N. Adam Caldwell, Paralegal Division Representative Suzanne Potts, and LAAU Representative Lorraine Wardle who, from an exceptional pool of exemplary candidates, selected fifth-generation St. George native, Deb Calegory.

On May 15, 2008, Kathryn Shelton, Immediate Past Chair of the Division presented Deb Calegory with the 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year Award. It was an exciting day for Deb who had learned of her selection only a few days earlier. Without hesitation, Durham Jones & Pinegar, Deb's current employer arranged to fly her from St. George to Salt Lake City to receive the award. Present at the luncheon to honor Deb was Magistrate Judge David Nuffer. Deb had worked for Judge Nuffer for a number of years before he became a judge.

It is not surprising that a current and a past employer nominated Deb for this award. The comments in each of the nomination letters openly and honestly convey genuine respect, admiration, and appreciation for Deb's skills, talents, and contributions to the legal profession, their respective law practices, and the community. It is my honor and privilege to share the following excerpts from the nomination letters received in support of Deb's nomination as Utah's 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year.

Nomination letter submitted by R. Daren Barney, Barney McKenna & Olmstead, P.C.

I have observed Ms. Calegory as a professional paralegal from the time that I originally moved to St. George and started practicing law in 1994....She initially worked for Snow Nuffer (now known as Durham Jones & Pinegar) from 1982 – 2004. In June 2004, we were fortunate to hire Deborah as a paralegal for the law firm of Barney McKenna & Olmstead, and she was a wonderful asset to our organization from her first day of work. Her reputation as a professional and highly qualified paralegal is well deserved.

...Deborah engenders confidence and trust in all that she does. Perhaps one of her greatest strengths is her confidence and willingness to eagerly accept and learn new

responsibilities and skills. As an attorney who relies on competent and qualified employees on a daily basis, I can say without hesitation that Deborah has the qualities that I look for in a paralegal. These are the undocumented elements found within a person's work ethic and their ability to grasp new concepts. These are some of the unique qualities that Deborah brings with her on a day-to-day basis to the workplace. In summary, Deborah Category is the definition of "Paralegal of the Year."

As a compliment to her skills as a paralegal, Deborah is committed to community service. She has served as the past Chairman of the Paralegal Division for the Utah State Bar and currently serves on the Board of Directors for Leadership Dixie. Her professional skills and community service have made her one of the most well-known and highly respected paralegals in Southern Utah.

I consider it a privilege to have worked with Deborah Category from June 2004 through October 2007, and offer this recommendation with great pleasure and without reservation. I believe that Deborah is uniquely qualified to be a recipient as Utah's 2008 Distinguished Paralegal of the Year.

Nomination letter submitted by Chris L. Engstrom, Durham Jones & Pinegar

...She is a highly trained, ethical professional and exemplifies the best of her profession. Deb is currently in her 26th year of service as a Paralegal. She began her career in 1982 for Snow Nuffer (which became Durham Jones & Pinegar) in St. George, Utah, where her main focus was in real property ... and litigation. In addition to legal work at the firm, she supervised and trained other legal staff, passing along her work ethic and knowledge. She has fostered professional competence and excellence in her profession – both in her office setting, and also through community service.

...She was recognized for her work and community service as a Business and Professional Women's Young Careerist. Additionally, Deb helped "grow" the profession by presenting Paralegal workshops for Dixie College Career Days (1988, 1989, 2001)) and has prepared the curriculum and taught the Paralegal "Short Term Intensive Training Course" at Dixie State College (2002 – 2003).

Deb has served as a leader and worked to create opportunities for continuing legal education within her profession by serving as the Education Chairman, Southern Region, for the Legal Assistant Association of Utah (1995 – 1996). ... she then served as the Director of the Southern Region Legal Assistant Association of Utah (1996 – 1997). She...continued her tireless leadership by serving for three years as the Director of the Region IV Utah State Bar Paralegal Division (1998 – 2001), followed in 2001 – 2002 as Chairperson of the...Division. Deb's focus during these years of

leadership was to support her members' needs for education and the advancement of their skills. She channeled her boundless enthusiasm into building relationships in the legal community to advance the Paralegal career, provided forums for discussion of issues affecting the legal profession, and worked to establish unity with the State Bar.

Deb moved to Barney, McKenna & Olmstead in 2004, where she worked mainly in the areas of business structure and formation, transactional matters, and real property matters. By this time, she was helping residents in several states, having been trained in, and becoming familiar with laws and procedures in the States of Arizona, Nevada, and Utah. She was able to help reduce clients' costs by maintaining an independent caseload under the supervision of a licensed attorney. ...In 2007, Deb returned to Durham Jones & Pinegar, P.C. ...She inspires us with her happy attitude of service, commitment to professional excellence, civility, ethics, and respect for and understanding of the law. We present her without reservation as a person who thoroughly meets the purposes of the by-laws of the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar, and ask that you promote justice by honoring her as the Distinguished Paralegal of the Year.

Congratulations, Deb for your outstanding service and dedication to the legal profession and the community. Your example of excellence, professionalism, character, and leadership has distinguished you as one of the most highly esteemed professionals and mentors in our profession for the entire state of Utah.