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Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar

Newsletter

We are excited to provide you with this newsletter to provide current news and happenings in the paralegal community!



WELCOME:

We are excited to present the Fall Quarter Newsletter. Welcome to everyone within the Paralegal Division for the Utah State Bar. We genuinely appreciate your support and are excited for another year. If you have any questions, concerns, or other feedback, we invite members to provide suggestions, comments, and other feedback. Feel free to reach out to any Board member or the Paralegal Division email at utahparalegaldivision@gmail.com.

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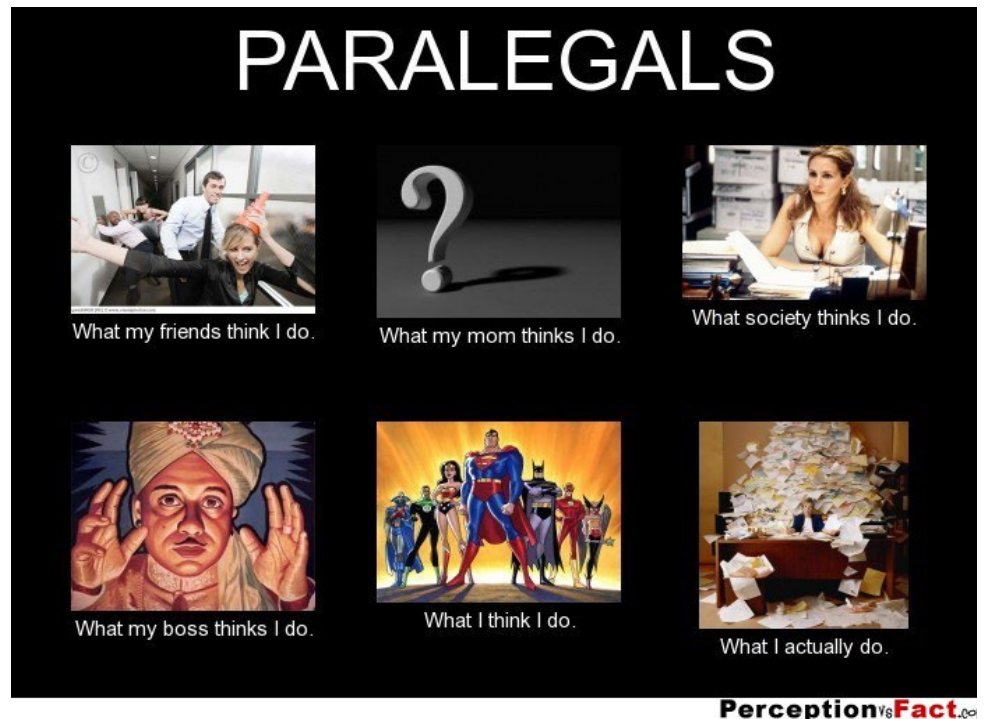
Utah State Bar Paralegal Division Mission Statement:

The Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar was created in 1996 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.

Our profession continues to evolve but the fundamental mission of the Paralegal Division remains the same:

1. To assist the Utah State Bar in increasing access to lower cost, affordable legal services and, at the same time, protect the public from harm from unqualified persons seeking to provide legal assistance to unrepresented persons.
2. To educate attorneys and the legal community about proper and effective utilization of paralegals to reduce the costs of the delivery of legal services.
3. To provide forums for membership discussions of issues and trends affecting the legal profession.
4. Provide information to distribute at Utah State Bar meetings, educational seminars, and other events to help educate attorneys and others about the roles of paralegals and the Paralegal Division.
5. Maintain the Paralegal Division portion of the Utah State Bar website to promote the paralegal profession and the Paralegal Division, as well as the Division's Facebook page to provide current information.
6. To work with professional organizations to promote the paralegal profession and the Paralegal Division.
7. To increase paralegal participation at all Utah State Bar events.
8. To maintain an active role on Utah State Bar Committees.
9. To encourage membership and promote participation on the Paralegal Division Board of Directors and at continuing education seminars. 1
10. To continue member outreach programs in an effort to increase communication with the Paralegal Division members.
11. To work with paralegal schools to mentor and educate their professors and students about the paralegal profession.
12. To monitor paralegal programs with a focus on Paralegal Division membership requirements.
13. To work with the Utah State Bar and the specialized sections to permit affiliate membership for paralegals.

The Mystery of the Paralegal Profession



What is a Paralegal?

When posed with this question, most people draw upon their knowledge from *LA Law*, *Suits*, *Better Call Saul*, or even *Erin Brockovich*; however, none of these shows really demonstrate the realities of working in the paralegal field. Even after working as a paralegal myself for more than two decades, I have some difficulty in providing a concise explanation of what I do for a living. I believe a big reason for this is that paralegals are constantly adapting and evolving depending on the needs of the moment and our job description can be very broad and therefore, is difficult to pigeonhole. In this article, I would like to focus on what makes a good paralegal and how to advocate for yourself so that your attorneys know how to properly utilize your skills.

In the paralegal profession, there are high stakes and people's lives are held in the balance. Because of this, it is paramount for paralegals to be able to handle stressful situations. Having specific personality traits and skills, such as being detail oriented, multi-taskers, even-tempered and demonstrating excellent communication skills, can help to propel you through your career. It is definitely a "must" for paralegals to be computer literate and have a keen understanding of the English language as they will need to be able to spot grammatical and spelling errors, as well as improper cites, and other inaccuracies. Procrastinators are not welcome in the paralegal field, as we are the ones who generally need to keep our attorneys on task and make sure that important deadlines are met.

Undoubtedly, another important skill is to teach those you work with, particularly attorneys, exactly how you can help with the various

tasks at hand. I believe that some attorneys, especially newer attorneys, are not quite sure how to utilize a paralegal. I've had experiences in which I've been told that they didn't realize that I was able to provide support in various matters or areas. Communication tends to go along ways in this profession. Develop the confidence to speak up in a concise and direct manner with your attorneys, so they understand that you are someone they can trust and rely upon as a valued member of their team. You will need to establish yourself as someone who has the knowledge and skill set to proficiently, timely and willingly provide many legal functions.

Another strength that has proven to be valuable to the paralegal profession is to demonstrate a "boots-on-the-ground" approach. Make sure that you are remaining adaptable and demonstrate that you can tackle problems that arise with creativity and ingenuity. Be flexible in your thinking and remember that there are always several ways to tackle any problem.

Paralegals generally know how to draft legal and corporate documents, file documents with the courts and governmental agencies, process discovery and transactional records, and - probably most importantly - have established working relationships with court and governmental staff, which tends to facilitate smoother transitions throughout the legal processes. Some of these relationships can prove to be invaluable. Court clerks can make a trial go smoother. Keep in mind that a kind gesture to a Court Clerk or governmental staff member can grease the wheels for a smooth trial experience and possibly provide you with more information that you might have received otherwise. Despite how stressful the courtroom experience may be, always remember to be kind, courteous and thoughtful of the court staff, constables, and other governmental staff and try to think of ways in which you can make their jobs easier as well. This will, in turn, benefit you in the end.

Paralegals are utilized in different ways depending on the type of industry that they are employed. A paralegal can work in a law firm, government agency or corporation. Since there are many facets of the paralegal profession, take advantage of learning from others. Some of the best advice I've ever received as a paralegal is to never stop learning and growing. Take advantage of opportunities to learn new skills and approaches to this profession and find ways to incorporate them in your practice. I've been in situations where paralegals have been asked to work outside of their comfort zones and in practice areas that they are less familiar and have observed how their reluctance limited their ability to succeed and become trusted advocates for their attorneys. Developing and perfecting a specialty can help a paralegal stand out in ever-growing profession; however, it also helps to remain adaptable and be open-minded to challenging yourself to step outside of the areas you are most familiar. If possible, develop mentor relationships, learn from your colleagues and fellow paralegals. With this ever-evolving profession, paralegals can be a wealth knowledge. As a selfish plug, I would encourage you to become more involved with the Paralegal Division – and possibly even consider serving in a leadership position on the Board. We

are always looking for volunteers to serve on the various committees, including Education, Community Service, and Membership.

Paralegals are an integral part of the legal community. Our profession continues to grow and evolve and with this progress, we are gaining more and more respect from our colleagues including judges, attorneys, and other legal professionals. I am proud of my contributions as a paralegal and hope that when you are asked what you do for a living – you won't say that "I'm *just* a paralegal", because we bring much more value than that and deserve all the recognition in the world.

Member Spotlight

The purpose of this quarterly newsletter spotlight is to honor a Utah paralegal who, over a long and distinguished career, through their ethical and personal conduct, enthusiasm, and fortitude, rendered extraordinary contributions and service to the paralegal profession.

The Paralegal Division is pleased to announce that the Member Spotlight for this Quarter is:

LONNIE DAWSON

Quiet Strength is often described as a strength that has been tested and consistently/skillfully meets and exceeds expectations without the need to tell others of their accomplishments. Lonnie Dawson has been described by others as having this quiet type of strength. To make this point even clearer, Lonnie Dawson was nominated by Supervisors, current and past, as well as colleagues for the 2022 Distinguished Paralegal of the Award without even knowing that she had been nominated. Lonnie seemed genuinely surprised that her coworkers had taken the time to praise her skillful professionalism. Nonetheless, many colleagues did notice her dedication and hard work throughout her tenure and wanted others to know as well.



Lonnie Dawson joined the Summit County Attorney's office in October, 1992 as a Legal Secretary and became a Paralegal in February of 2007. Lonnie graduated from the Salt Lake Community College earning her Associates Degree, and later received her Paralegal Degree from the University of Phoenix.

Current and former supervisors alike have described her as being indispensable and the heart of the office. Lonnie is the most senior member of the County Attorney's office, and all within the office are constantly impressed by her mastery of the history of Summit County,

and her ability to absorb new information and quickly apply it in the practice of law: quietly making all those who work with her more proficient at their roles within the office. An attorney at the Summit County Attorney's office stated that one of Lonnie's most striking qualities is the commitment she shows to Summit County. Lonnie has proven to be the greatest asset for the Summit County Attorney's office. Lonnie is described as kind, sincere and even though she works in a difficult environment, she always exudes an uplifting attitude. One of Lonnie's colleagues, a former County Attorney prosecutor shared that during his time at Summit County, he worked with Lonnie in some capacity every day. Because the office is small, he was able to observe Lonnie interact with other prosecutors, defense counsel, law enforcement officers, and victims. Without exception, Lonnie treated all people with the highest level of respect and professionalism. Apparently, it was a regular occurrence for opposing counsel to inform him that Lonnie could do things faster and better than most paralegals in the far bigger offices in downtown Salt Lake.

In fact, a criminal defense attorney that operates primarily in the Summit/Wasatch County area, indicated that rarely has he had the pleasure of working with such an outstanding paralegal as Lonnie Dawson. He went on to add that Lonnie is more than just knowledgeable and practical, she knows and understands the overall process involved with criminal law and is always ready to assist with all requests in a prompt and pleasant manner. She thinks ahead, is responsive nearly immediately and is the bridge between the prosecution and defense in an environment of over-crowded court dockets and constant emergency requests.

Lonnie Dawson is a staple in the legal community as a paralegal, mentor, and a friend. Lonnie resides in Upton, Utah with her husband, together with their four sons. She is passionate about her family, friends, camping, the outdoors, dogs and country music.

Lonnie was the first recipient in the State of Utah to receive the Paralegal of the Year award in 2006. Lonnie has enjoyed an extensive and illustrious career as a paralegal and has received many accolades from colleagues and contemporaries alike, but it is Lonnie herself that feels that she has been so blessed to be able to work in this profession with some of the most amazing judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, paralegals, legal assistants and staff. Throughout her tenure, Lonnie has watched as the paralegal profession evolved to what it is today. She seems grateful to be able to work in an environment in which she is constantly learning and evolving.

If you know of anyone that you would like to elect to be in the Member Spotlight section of this newsletter, please send me an email at: sdirksen@parrbrown.com.

Exciting CLE Opportunities:

The CLE Committee is in the process of planning additional CLE event for the coming year, please hold the dates for the Paralegal Day CLE Luncheon, as well as the Annual Paralegal CLE Event.

Free Brown Bag CLE Events:

11/09/2022 – “Do you need to retain a third party service as a “professional” in the bankruptcy estate under §327(a), §363(b) or Rule 2014?”

01/23/2023 – Attorney General’s Office- Administrative Law

03/08/2023- 4th District Court – Probate Judges panel

Paralegal Day CLE Luncheon:

05/18/2023

Annual Paralegal CLE Event:

06/16/2023

In addition to the CLE put on by the Paralegal CLE Committee you can also always sign up for a CLE opportunity through the Utah State Bar website: [Utah State Bar Member Practice Portal > Events \(utahbar.org\)](https://utahbar.org)

Your next CLE Reporting Period will be: July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023 – the CLE requirement is 10 hours of accredited CLE, to include 1 hour of legal ethics and 1 hour of professionalism and civility. At least 5 hours must be live, which may include in-person, remote group CLE or verified e-CLE. The remaining hours may include self-study or live CLE.

Community Service Opportunities

Wills for Heroes

Our next Wills for Heroes event is scheduled to take place on **November 12, 2022, from 9:30 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the Fred House Training Academy**, located at 14727 Minuteman Drive, Draper, Utah. Please watch your inbox for announcements on how you can participate and help with this amazing event. We are always in need of volunteers.

Membership update:

The Division now accepts applications throughout the year with a small nominal late fee. A member will no longer need to wait until the June renewal time period to join the Paralegal Division of the Utah State Bar.

Please remember that there is a two-step process for membership: a) Register online through the Utah State Bar website and pay the required dues; and b) Upload the required documents through the portal located on the Paralegal Division website to finish the membership process.

Benefits of Membership

As a member of the Paralegal to the Utah State Bar, you have access to the valuable tools and resources offered through the Practice Portal. These resources include CLE information and requirements, information regarding annual conventions, search tools for attorneys and other colleagues, ethics information, Fastcase research, and subscription to the Utah Bar Journal. You also have access to exclusive savings and discount benefits through the Utah State Bar Group Benefits. The Utah State Bar also has various options to help with your mental well-being, including free EAP services through Blomquist Hale. For a full list of benefits, please visit utahbar.org/member-services/

A myriad of opportunities awaits you as a member of the Paralegal Division. If you are interested in participating on a committee or perhaps assisting on a specific project, please submit a committee volunteer form or contact a member of the Board of Directors. We welcome and encourage your participation.
