GAP The Paragraph
Georgia Association of Paralegals Quarterly Newsletter
Charter Member of the
National Federation of Paralegal Associations

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April 2006

THREE PARALEGALS OF THE YEAR RECOGNIZED

By: Maureen Collett, Member

On April 27, 2006 the awards for the 2006 Paralegals of the Year, sponsored by Kelly Law Registry and The Daily Report, were presented at a luncheon held at the Westin Buckhead Hotel. The nominees for the award were:

Tammy Ardister-Thornto
Bobbie Brooks
Tricia Brooks
Dolly Burnett
Befaithful "Bea" Coker
Sharon Garner
Shirley Green
Lisa Greiner
Teresa Harrison
Keisha Jackson
Marcus Li
Debbie Lowe
Jodi McCleer
Pat Murphy
Tanya Reed
Thanousinh Soulinthong
Maria Turner
Karen Wayman
Charles Mingle
Jonathan Woods
Connie White

Winners were selected from three categories: law firm, government and corporate.

The winner in the law firm category was Tanya Reed of Bondurant, Mixson & Elmore, LLP. She was nominated by all the partners of the firm. She has been employed as a paralegal with that firm for the past fourteen years and has earned recognition with the title "Litigation Specialist." The partners' lengthy description of her dedication, hard work and participation as a "team player" identified her as a person clearly worthy of this award. She was recognized by a judge at trial involving over 200 boxes of documents as being "amazing" and has shown an exceptional level of professionalism. She is also an active member of GAP ("Georgia Association of Paralegals") and has been a speaker at many seminars over the years.

In the government category, the winner was Shirley Green, a paralegal specialist with the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development ("HUD"). She has played an essential role in the training and mentoring of paralegals within the HUD organization, along with substantively assisting her division in handling over 350 cases. In addition to the superb handling of her job duties, she has volunteered in many organizations including The American Red Cross, The Salvation Army, AIDs Atlanta, Cobb County Juvenile Diversion Program, Cobb County Hunger Walk, Peachtree Road Race and Habitat for Humanity.

continued on page 10

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By: Gina S. Farley, CP, President



"The Pessimist complains about the wind, the Optimist expects it to change, and the REALIST adjusts his sails."
Author unknown

As we are fast approaching the halfway mark of this year, I've been evaluating what we have accomplished and where we are heading. In order for GAP to continue to be relevant, we must examine our course and make adjustments to stay in line with the needs of our members. Sometimes it may seem that things have stalled, but it is just a temporary necessity as we look for the direction we need to take and prepare for the next change.

We have made progress, putting many new ideas into play. Just to name a few…we have added a Benefits Coordinator, Paezlé Harris, who is working to increase our member benefits. We have arranged for members to obtain CLE credit for attending dinner meetings. Our Vice President, Christina Weeks, has developed innovative methods to streamline the way the Board conducts business and also developed a web-based survey to poll members on NFPA agenda topics. We have two new RP's already this year, Andrea Hart and Ann Jackson (GAP Treasurer), both of whom received a PACE Scholarship from Paramount Staffing. We have assembled a committee to oversee the Legalmen Project, preparing care packages for paralegals currently serving in Iraq.

We are also putting some things in place to help us achieve our goals for the latter half of this year. Our Student Growth Coordinator, Libby Martinez, is taking the first steps toward developing a Mentor Program in response to a need expressed by many members. Our Director of CLE, Beth Magee, and her strong committee are planning several CLE programs to be offered in the coming months. Our Bar Liaison, Kevin Fogle, has requested a "Paralegal Day" proclamation from the State of Georgia and will be working with Lakeila Meadows, Director of Membership in planning activities for members to acknowledge their day. Our Pro Bono and Community Service programs have new leadership (Michael Misenheimer and Adam Dean) and will be very active soon. Finally, the Board of Directors is developing a more timely system for communicating to the membership (*ad hoc* committee includes Ann Jackson, Alice Chow and Karen Prouty).

I hope that you will continue to help determine the direction of your association by sharing your ideas with the Board of Directors and other members. If you haven't yet found the appropriate outlet for getting involved in GAP, I hope that you will consider the changes that are taking place and find an area where you can contribute.

February Dinner Meeting Report

By: Alice Chow, Director of Communications

At the February GAP Dinner Meeting, Scott Ferrell of Whole Person Concepts (formerly known as the Mental Illness Awareness Foundation), spoke to GAP members and guests regarding mental illness in the workplace. A staggering statistic he mentioned was that one in four people have some sort of mental illness! From families to work environments, there is a good chance each of us may come in contact with a person suffering from a mental illness. One tip he gave for positive interaction with a mentally ill person is to set boundaries for that person and enforce those boundaries with certain consequences for overstepping them.

Mr. Ferrell is starting a holistic clinic in Gwinnett County to treat those with various mental disorders. He said that nutrition (especially the B vitamin niacin) and exercise, which releases endorphins into one's bloodstream, are beneficial to all of us, but can be particularly helpful for treating the mentally ill. An informative interactive question and answer session followed his presentation.

In addition to Mr. Ferrell's presentation, GAP sponsors awarded several door prizes to the attendees. Dotty Pritchett of Andrew Grace Associates, which sponsored the New Member Mixer, presented a Valentine-themed gift basket to a GAP member. Dinner sponsor Premier Reporting's representative Kelly Emory gave away a $100 Buckhead Life Restaurant Group gift card to attendee Latonia Dixon of McCalla, Raymer, Padrick, Cobb, Nichols & Clark, LLC. Amy Hockefer of Robert Half Legal, who also sponsored the dinner, made GAP member Julie Ancel of Hendrick, Phillips, Salzman & Flatt, PC the lucky winner of a $100 Tiffany gift card.

Finally, longtime GAP member Charles Mingle was presented with the 2005 GAP Pro Bono Award along with a one-year subscription to Legal Assistant Today for volunteering over 120 hours to assist the disabled, churches, and low income homeowners with legal services.

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APRIL DINNER MEETING REPORT

By: Alice Chow, Director of Communications



Mark J. Newman, Esq., a partner at Troutman Sanders, LLP, who practices in the International and Labor and Employment groups, addressed GAP members on the currently hot topics of state paralegal registration and immigration law reform during the April 2006 GAP Dinner Meeting at Anthony's Restaurant in Buckhead. Mr. Newman echoed GAP's pro-registration stance by stating his opinion that paralegals should be registered and licensed where they practice. He noted an article in the Florida Bar News which suggested that the state of Florida mandate a paralegal registration requirement program.

Mr. Newman provided some background for the immigration law reform issue recently discussed in Congress, as well as the new Georgia immigration reform bill (Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act[1]) recently signed into law by Georgia Governor Sonny Purdue.

Mr. Newman then briefly outlined immigration law at the federal level. In 1979, a bill regarding immigration law reform was introduced in Congress. Seven years later, in 1986, this "amnesty" for illegal immigrants bill finally passed. Newman noted that in 2000, then-candidate for President George W. Bush promulgated an endorsement of a guest worker program. Now six years later in 2006, another similar bill has been introduced into the U.S. Congress, which Newman predicts will pass in 2007.



Mr. Newman also explored the history of immigration law reform in the state of Georgia. According to Mr. Newman, over the past 20 years, some specific groups have been working to implement anti-illegal immigration policy. These groups seek to take away driver's licenses, access to automobile insurance, basic healthcare, and education for children from illegal immigrants, making it very difficult for illegal immigrants to live, and thereby decrease and ultimately eliminate their existence. One example he gave was that a two-tiered driver's license bill, whereby citizens and legal residents would continue to be eligible for normal driver's licenses, and illegal immigrants would be eligible for a certificate for driving (such as in Tennessee and Utah), was proposed in Georgia, but later defeated.

Mr. Newman stated his belief that the recently passed Georgia Security and Immigration Compliance Act, which will take effect July 1, 2007, is the strongest and most "anti-immigrant" legislation in the entire U.S. According to Mr. Newman, the restrictions to be imposed on illegal immigrants in Georgia will only force them to move to other, less restrictive neighboring states, thus creating a negative effect on the Georgia economy. He also contended that the federal government, not state governments, should decide and implement immigration policy and law.

On a practical note, Mr. Newman then described the type of immigration law work performed by the paralegals in his group. The bulk of their work involves obtaining temporary (i.e., non-"green card" or non-permanent resident) work status for citizens of other countries to work in the U.S.

A lively question and answer session with the audience then followed. Regardless of one's stance on illegal immigration, the presentation was thought-provoking and was enjoyed by those in attendance.



As customary, several door prizes were awarded during the dinner. Shelia Carroll of Document Resources presented wine to three lucky members in attendance. Felicity Watkins of Kelly Law Registry awarded a GAP member a $100 American Express gift card. Finally, GAP member Ann Jackson, RP, was the winner of a Spa Sydell gift certificate from Tracey Kennedy of Legal Video Services. All GAP members in attendance were winners, as well, in that a certificate for .75 credits of NFPA CLE was available to attendees.

(Footnotes)

[1] http://www.legis.state.ga.us/legis/2005_06/fulltext/sb529.htm

GAP TO BE HONORED AT NFPA ANNUAL MEETING

By: Karen Prouty, RP, PACE Ambassador



The Georgia Association of Paralegals is proud to have two members pass the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam ("PACE") so far this year. Andrea Hart, RP and Ann Jackson, RP received the 2005 PACE Scholarships which were sponsored by Paramount Staffing. They both took and passed PACE early this year. Congratulations to Andrea and Ann and thank you for doing your part to further our profession! Thanks to Andrea, Ann and Paramount Staffing, GAP is being recognized at this year's National Federation of Paralegal Association's Annual meeting for having two new RP's. I want to encourage all of GAP's members to sit for the exam.

When thinking about how to approach the task of being GAP's PACE Ambassador this year, I thought a good place to begin would be to address the reasons why paralegals do not take the exam. I think one of those reasons is that paralegals do not believe that the exam will benefit them. Here is how passing PACE will further your career and your profession.

The paralegal profession is relatively young. It started to take shape in the 1960's and GAP was formed in 1973. Because our profession is so young, we are in the unique position of being able to shape the profession. We can go about this in a way that benefits not only paralegals, but also the legal community, the public, and ourselves as individuals.

By becoming regulated, the paralegal profession will be recognized as having achieved a minimum prescribed level of education and skill. Presently, the spectrum of who is called a paralegal includes uncertified paralegals, who in reality are performing secretarial work on one end, and certified paralegals who perform highly substantive paralegal work on the other end. Regulation would prevent employees who really are not performing paralegal work from lumping the rest of us in their boat.

Regulation will force schools offering paralegal certificates to offer a curriculum that provides a quality education and produces quality paralegals. Some paralegal programs are six weeks long, some programs are four years long. The six-week-long programs are in a way promising their students the same career path as the Bachelor's in Paralegal Studies, yet there is no regulation to say that this is wrong. Paralegals with the shorter program certificates often find that they have a difficult time obtaining a paralegal position when they are ready to enter the work force.

If the paralegal profession were regulated, the legal community would place a higher value on paralegal work. The legal community would recognize paralegals as capable of performing substantive tasks and would give paralegals the respect and benefits befitting this recognition.

Through regulation, the public would be protected and would trust the work product of paralegals. Clients could be confident that a paralegal working on their case had achieved a certain level of knowledge and skill.

As a result of regulation of the paralegal profession, you as an individual would have a tangible confirmation of your competency and skill. Others will know this about you by the designation at the end of your name. It will be seen at both the opposing counsel's office and government offices, as well as those reviewing your resume when you are making a career move.

We paralegals must take responsibility for the direction in which the paralegal profession is heading. We are the key to advancing regulation and no one is going to do this for us. By taking PACE we are demanding regulation and making it happen.

Imagine what would happen if just 25 % of us were Registered Paralegals. This would challenge the remaining paralegals in the profession to want to take that step if they want to be considered among the best. The number of Registered Paralegals would be too large to ignore. The higher knowledge and skill of the Registered Paralegal would become known in the legal community and those who want to hire top tier paralegals would look for the designation.

Do you consider yourself an excellent paralegal? Do you care about advancing your profession and are you proud of your work? Be one of the 25%. Take a stand, set the bar, take the exam.

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Janet Guy
Victor Hall
Kimberly Jenrette
Barbara Meadows
Lisa Newcombe-Swann
Randall Kyle Rogers
Natalie R. Smith
Sandra C. Spears
Ainsley Twomey
Tanisha Webster

AIG
Bobbie A. Bair

Atlanta Housing Authority
Rhonda G. Hudson

Auburn University
Laura A. Beasley

Bank of America
Jennipher A. Borey
Pamela Moran

Banta Immigration Law
Sabrina D. Henry

BellSouth Corporation
Delores McCarty

BellSouth, Inc.
Judith Druener

Christopher Farmer
Naomi Morton

Coleman, Talley, Newbern, Kurrie, Preston & Holland, LLP
Jessica Davis
Sarah V. Howard

Cox Communications, Inc.
Portia L. Branttey
Georgina Harris
K. Paezlé Harris
Heather D. Housen
Denise Johnson-Davis

Cozen O'Connor
Susan Hulsey-Pennington

DS Waters
Lesley Gaspar-Dennery

DeKalb County Schools
Beruir K. Sheppard

DeKalb County Superior Court
Wanda Wright

Department of Veterans Affairs
Christopher Pendleton

DocuTEAM
Kimberlie Gooch

Dow, Lohnes & Albertson, PLLC
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Beth Wade

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Cassandra Edmond

Emory Healthcare
Nicole Sanders

Epstein, Becker & Green, P.C.
Sheila Jon Howell

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Kim O'Connor

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Denise M. Marshall

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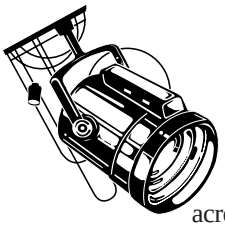
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MEMBER SPOTLIGHT - PATRICIA DOUGHTIE

By: Charles Cromwell, Member



Patricia Doughtie specializes in real estate.

In the paralegal arena, she knows all about title defects, searches, closing documents and the acres of other necessities involved in the transfer of land. She has plied her trade for law firms and the telecommunications industry. She has worked Georgia, neighboring states and even had a brief foray into Michigan. She has been a worker bee, owned her own title company and now manages title operations for the Buckhead office of Epstein, Becker & Green.

Even Doughtie's outside interests involve real estate. The Caribbean, France and Spain are recent destinations for someone who "loves to travel" as much, if not more, than title work.

"Title work is spatial reasoning," says Doughtie, known to friends and co-workers as Tricia. "It's space and maps. It's very logical. Geometry was always really easy for me."

A native Atlantan, Doughtie stayed close to home in earning a degree from Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. She majored in education, an interest she nurtures by volunteering to help students in special education. Doughtie delayed her entry into the job market while starting a family. She has three children, and the older of two daughters recently became engaged.

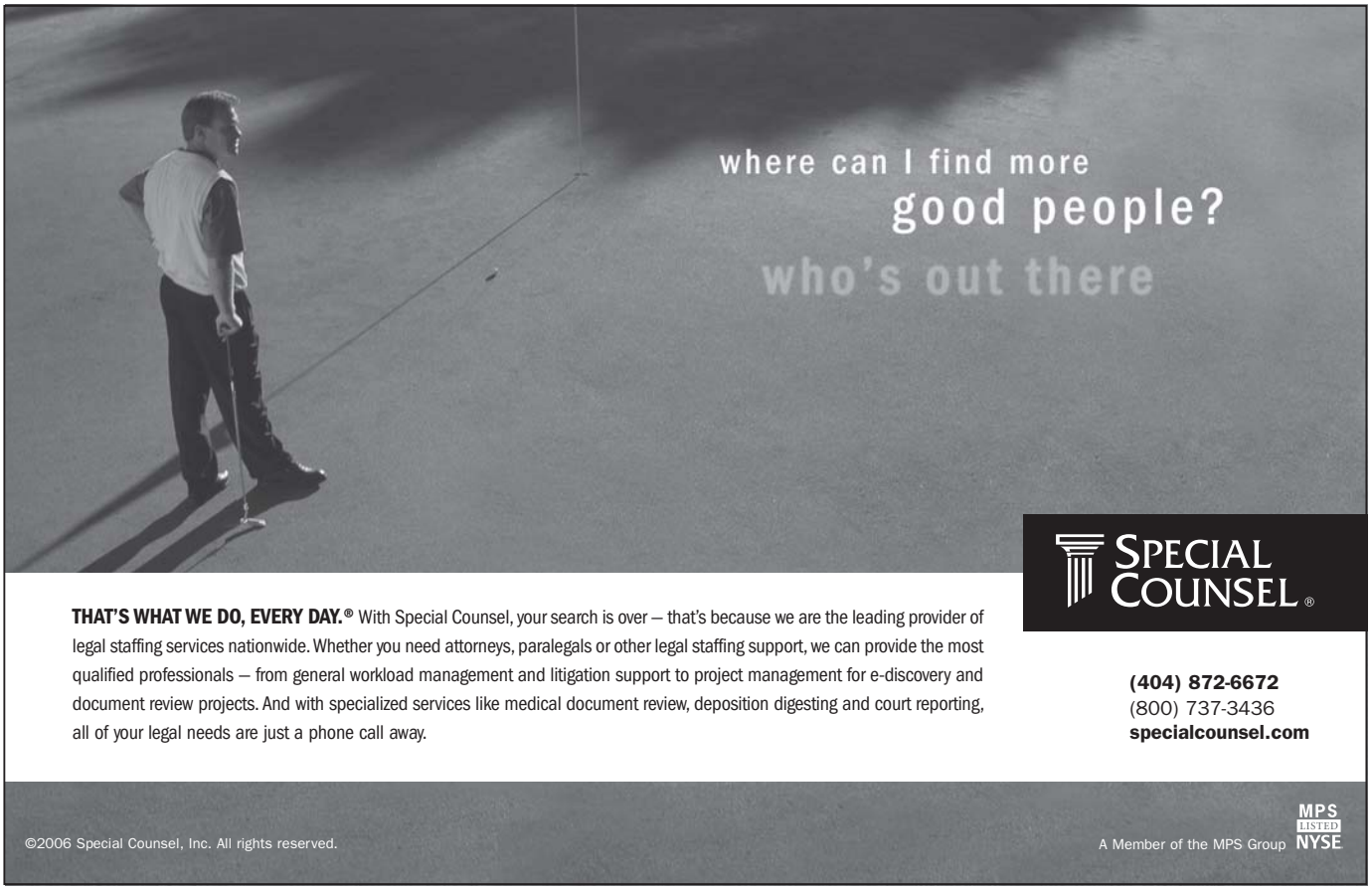
Perhaps influenced by her father, who was both an accountant and an attorney, Doughtie obtained a paralegal certificate from the National Center for Paralegal Training in Atlanta. Though now out of business, NCPT once "had dorms and drew students from as far away as Texas," said Doughtie. She didn't specialize in real estate, "but all my job offers were in real estate. I started working titles, and I was really good at it."

"I enjoyed it. I enjoy all the different facets of real estate," said Doughtie, who, with her by then retired father as a "huge asset," opened her own title company before the red-hot telecommunications boom swept her away as a legal manager. There were sites to be acquired, towers to be built, titles and surveys. "It was fast-paced and a lot of fun." Until it crashed. While many were left foundering, Doughtie made her way back to the legal profession.

She worked a couple of jobs and joined Epstein, Becker & Green about five weeks ago. "It's the nicest place I've ever worked," said Doughtie. "I've enjoyed it from the very first day. They expect the most out of you. If you're capable of doing a high level of work, they allow you to do that. We work hard, but it's a pleasant place to work hard."

Doughtie's association with GAP spans a number of years and some changes. "It seems more energetic, more fun than in the past," said Doughtie. "It's very social. You get to see people you might not see on a day-to-day basis, but you have a lot in common. I also like the association with the vendors. I'll seem them at work occasionally. It's great for both sides."

With neighboring states – North Carolina recently; Florida currently – moving toward some form of credentialing of paralegals, Doughtie appreciates such efforts. "A lot of companies require paralegals to have at least come from an accredited school," she said. "This just takes it a step further. I think that's great."



MAKING THE RIGHT MOVE: TRANSITIONING INTO YOUR FIRST PARALEGAL POSITION

By: Tiffany B. Smith, Member

"Change your thoughts and your change your world." Norman Vincent Peale

Lately I have been thinking of the time when I first decided to transition into the legal field. Like many of you who might be experiencing or contemplating a career change, I am a career transitioner, with a varied background including stints in the accounting, banking, network and software engineering and now the legal field, who is striving to make that transition as a paralegal.

Where do you begin when you have to start all over and transition into another area that not only requires further education, but also solid experience to land even an entry-level position as a paralegal? The road to becoming a paralegal has been challenging and long, and I've learned many lessons along the way. In an effort to make another person's journey down this path a bit easier, I will share some of them with you.

As a career transitioner, do not dwell upon your previous occupation or last job. See yourself as others will see you, you are now a paralegal.

Develop an action plan on how you wish to achieve your first job as a paralegal. For example, keep a notebook, binder or journal with dates that you meet people, contact information obtained from the people you have met (e.g. names, email addresses and phone numbers) along with any other information you deem necessary.

If you are not in a position to volunteer or work as an intern for a sole practioner or other small law firm, do your best to get yourself exposed to the legal community. This is where networking comes into play. Networking is vital in this industry. The more you make contacts, the more referrals you get, the more your name gets circulated, the greater your chance of finding that first job. Joining the Georgia Association of Paralegals (GAP) is a great start!

Remember to have a business card on hand and tell everyone you meet who you are, how to reach you, what skills you bring to the table and that you are looking for a certain type of paralegal position. You should be able to do this within 30 seconds or less. Many of you probably refer to this as the "elevator speech". Do not be ashamed or afraid to share with someone that you are looking for a position and that you are a career transitioner. You will be surprised at the number of transitioners you will meet.

Surf various job websites. There are some job websites that cater to entry-level paralegals. Some sites I have found to be helpful include: monster.com, careerbuilder.com and ajcjobs.com. In addition, there are various career websites you can subscribe to for a fee. These sites generally charge about $19.95 per month, and you can use Google's search engine to locate them on the internet.

Register with several local legal staffing agencies. This may be very challenging, due to the fact that you have little to no experience. Most legal staffing agencies are willing to at least speak with you. However, be prepared to receive the speech that because you have little to no experience, they are unable to place you. Do not give up hope when a representative from the agency advises you of this. A suggestion would be to ask the staffing agency personnel if they would mind providing you with some advice on the best way to break into the legal field. There are some staffing agents who are willing to share some friendly advice to help you along this journey. Many of them have traveled the same road and can give you detailed information.

Finally, but most importantly, keep a positive attitude, stay motivated and maintain a determined mindset. It is very easy to become discouraged because of the job hunt, salary expectations and other life changes you may be experiencing with changing careers or starting over. Remember, everything you do, every person you meet, and the positive words you speak will bring you closer to securing your first job as a paralegal.

PARALEGALS RECOGNIZED

continued from cover

Befaithful ("Bea") Coker received the award in the corporate category. According to the submission on her behalf, she holds all the attributes giving her name appropriate meaning. She has outstanding skills combined with an excellent work ethic and attitude, allowing her to be considered an invaluable member of the Georgia-Pacific Corporation's packaging division team. The estimated annual sales of this division of Georgia-Pacific are over 3 billion dollars and Coker is the sole paralegal support. Her accomplishments include maintaining relationships with personnel at all levels of the company, delivering service related to the 800 active open matters, and management of all associated relevant deadlines. All in all, this makes her an exceptional paralegal! She was able to perform with such excellence in addition to managing a busy personal life that included, in 2005, earning a Bachelor's degree in business by attending evening classes and giving birth to a daughter, her third child. Coker is very active in local charitable activities within her church community and in her children's schools, in addition to activities in other organizations. She also still found time to be an active member in GAP.

These three recipients are true winners in the paralegal profession with a commitment to excellence in their careers while at the same time giving back to the community. These individuals are to be commended on their achievements and clearly are deserving of this recognition!

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Announcement

LEGALMEN PROJECT

GAP members are asked to support this project by providing a monetary donation so that care packages can be assembled and mailed throughout the year to Navy Legalmen (paralegals) who are currently serving in Iraq. Please send your donations to the GAP office, payable to GAP, with a note designating "Legalmen Project". We will also be sending correspondence, so if you have a moment to prepare a card or letter please mail it in as well.

GAP's Legalmen Committee

Anne Hogan Keegan (UPS Corporate Legal)
Anne Rollings Clauson (EDAW, Inc.)
Angela V. Skeete (Gaslowitz Frankel LLC)
Linda Bryans (BellSouth Intellectual Property Mgmt Corp.)
Cristal Nader (A Quick Delivery)
Adam Dean, Community Service Coordinator (Sicay-Perrow, Knighten, Bohan & Iqal, PC)

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2006 GAP CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Anthony's Restaurant ** 3109 Piedmont Road NE ** 5:00 PM Cocktails - 6:00 PM Dinner

June 13, 2006
(5:00 – 6:00)

GAP Free Networking Dinner at Anthony's
"Member Appreciation Night"– What's on Your Mind?
FREE Dinner and Cash Bar
New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates
SIX Sponsors make this free event possible!
(1) **Legal Eagle** (2) **Merrill Corporation**
(3) **The Norcross Group** (4) **Courtroom Visuals**
(5) **Special Counsel** (6) **Smith & Carson**
(7) **Anthony's**

Aug. 8, 2006

GAP Membership Dinner at Anthony's
Speaker: **Jim Wanserski, Corporate Fraud and Whistle Blowers**
Sponsor: **Discovery Support Services**
Sponsor: **BG Search** Sponsor: OPEN

Oct. 10, 2006
(5:00 – 6:00)

GAP Membership Dinner Meeting at Anthony's
New Member Mixer Sponsor: Andrew Grace Associates
Speaker: **Robin Sangston, Cox Communications**
Sponsor: **The Lawstaff Group**
Sponsor: **Brown Reporting** Sponsor: OPEN

Dec. 5, 2006

9th Annual GAP Holiday Party at Anthony's / Installation of the 2007 Board of Directors
Sponsor: **Alexander Gallo & Associates**
Sponsor: **Paramount Staffing Services**
Sponsor: **The Norcross Group**
Sponsor: **Document Technologies, Inc. (DTI)**

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FROM THE EDITOR

By: Alice Chow, Director of Communications

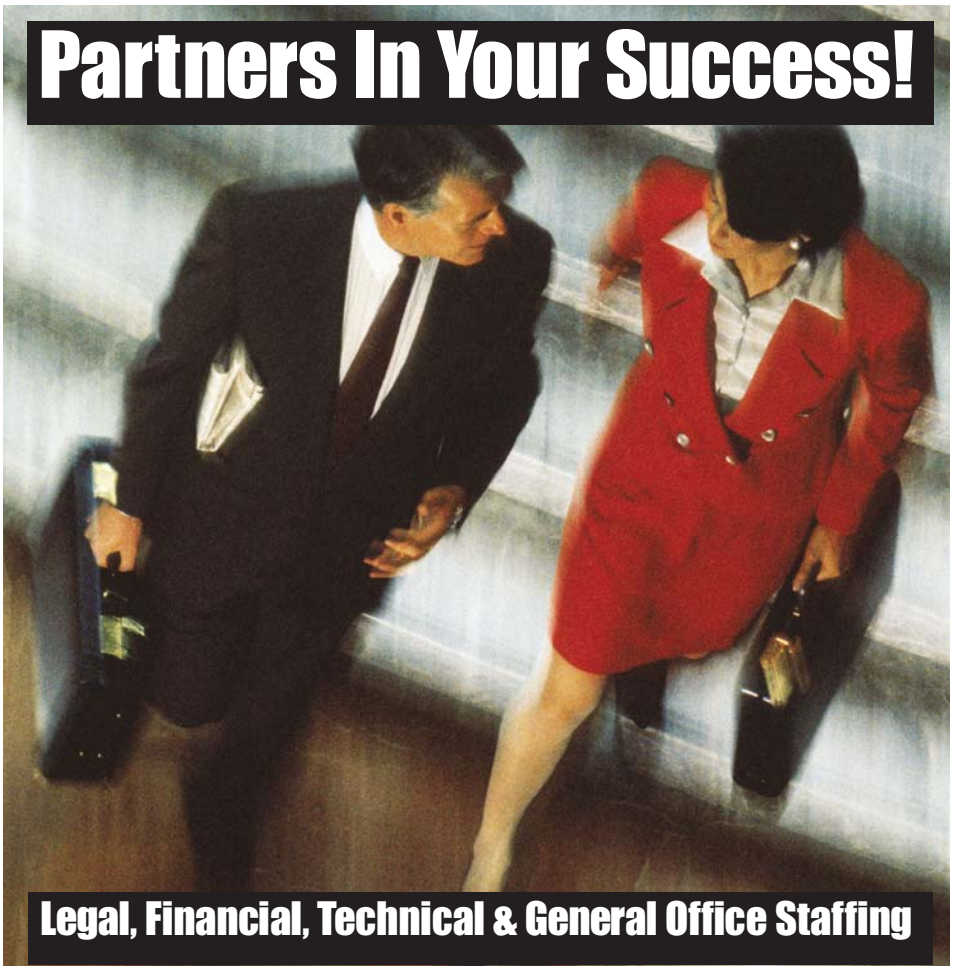


These are exciting times to be a member of GAP! First, let's congratulate and welcome the three newest members of the Board of Directors: Paezlé Harris – Benefits Coordinator, Michael Misenheimer - Director of Pro Bono, and Adam Dean – Community Service Coordinator. All three are already working hard to fill the duties of their posts.

Second, come to the June Member Appreciation Dinner at Anthony's. A buffet dinner will be free for the first 500 people to register. At this event, we will be sponsoring the Genesis Shelter as our annual community service project. Please bring donations for their "Diaper Drive". Look for more details as the dinner approaches.

Finally, a committee is exploring the possibility of an e-newsletter for all members. Wouldn't it be nice to get timely, convenient electronic reminders of GAP events? With all of the improvements and activities planned in the upcoming months, is truly is a thrilling time to be a member of GAP.

Should you have any comments, suggestions, or questions regarding *The Paragraph*, please contact me at gap_editor@yahoo.com.



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