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## **NFPA 2008 Annual Convention Report**

*“Runnin’ Wild Arkansas ‘08™!”* That was the theme for the 2008 Annual NFPA Convention held in Rogers Arkansas and hosted by the Arkansas Paralegal Association. PACO Executive Board Members Trina Hayes and Karen Pierson represented our organization as Primary and Secondary voting delegates, respectively. PACO has not had voting delegate representation since 2005.

The convention was well attended with forty-six (46) credentialed associations of the fifty-two (52) associations that are members of NFPA. There are 86 new Registered Paralegals (RP’s) since the 2007 Annual Convention. There are also nine (9) RP’s on the NFPA Board of Directors.

The room was set up like the presidential conventions for the two (2) delegates from each Paralegal association designated by state, and then there were the “observers” designated tables. The head table had the NFPA president, parliamentarian, secretary, time keeper, etc. Here is a brief breakdown of our attendance:

### **Friday, October 10, 2008.**

- Region III (PACO falls under) meeting hosted by Director Mary J. McKay, RP, CLA of the Tampa Bay Paralegal Association;
  - South Florida is a the newest association added to Region III, which now has twelve (12) associations;
  - Region III was the only region with 100% attendance of its associations at the convention; Region III Rocks!
  - The associations discussed their monthly GM meetings; seems we all have the same problems: lack of attendance, membership falling, getting volunteers for sub-committees, etc. We all agreed that the economy is a MAJOR factor and is having an impact on our associations.
  - Georgette Lovelace, NFPA Treasurer was in attendance and discussed the 2007 Tech Conference held in July. There was better attendance in 2007 and NFPA lost money; the downturn in the economy was a major factor in attendance (expected 125 attendees, less than ½ were in attendance).
    - There will not be a Tech Conference in 2009 but 2010. It was suggested that the conference be every other year.
    - Cleveland NFPA Primary was in attendance at the tech conference and she felt the tech vendors should have tagged team with an actual paralegal who uses the software so the paralegals in attendance could better relate.
  - *National Paralegal Reporter* editor was in attendance:
    - Starting with the October/November issue, the magazine will now be in all color!

- The magazine is always looking for good articles to publish (see publishing guidelines in the magazine);
  - It does not cost an association any money to publish their events.
- Some association newsletters were distributed: *Para-Phrases* by Greater Lexington Paralegal Association; *The Paralegal Press* by Northeast Indiana Paralegal Association; *Footnotes* by Michiana Paralegal Association; *The Precedent* by Indiana Paralegal Association,; *In Brief* by Palmetto Paralegal Association; *The Reporter* by Tampa Bay Paralegal Association, Trina had shipped PACO's 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Program (in lieu of *The Cimator*) for distribution but it did not reach the hotel until after the convention was over, therefore it was e-mailed to Region III.
  - New Member benefit – Comprehensive Health Insurance for Legal Professionals – call 866.611.8466 for more details.

Engaging all Generations Workshop facilitated by Susan Ippoliti, NFPA VP & Director of Professional Development, attended by Trina Hayes

- What do we mean
- Communications w/o e-mail
- Staying current
- Bridging the gap
- Mentor/Mentee
- Paralegal schools – getting the students early

This workshop was about the younger generation paralegals and how to get them involved in the associations, as the younger generation does not know life without technology! Here are a few of the various ways the younger generation stays in the loop:

- Websites (have links on your association's web page to the membership application; don't have "too much" info cluttering your home page; home page should not have the sponsors listed; newsletters, renewal of dues; etc.
- Social networking sites (linkedin.com – someone must manage the "group.")
- Blogs (if you don't post 1-3 times per week – your blog is dead; must have someone monitor what people post)
- POD cast (must have an administrator, instant download of information; members subscribe; this is a money-maker for associations thru subscription – get a sponsor.
- E-mail is expected to become obsolete 3-4 years and replaced with text messaging.

Marketing and Fund-Raising Workshop was attended by Karen Pierson. The primary topic of conversation were fundraising activities that can be done by paralegal associations, and using marketing tools to keep members interested and engaged in their association activities. One association raffled off a plasma screen TV at a membership drive social and they gained 10 new members. Another association raffled off an iPod

loaded with legal podcasts and donated by a sustaining member, which generated a lot of buzz to their members! It was suggested that gift iPods be used for businesses purposes, separate from the winner's personal collection, as iPods are a great tool to keep track of paralegal materials, and a great way to download cutting edge training tools such as podcasts, many of which are available free to subscribers on various legal websites.

The National Capital Paralegal Association (NCPA) in Washington D.C. initiated a whole week of activities for their paralegal "day." They had a bowling party, a cocktail reception at the Smithsonian Institute, and a catered lunch at a large law firm in Washington D.C. Everything was free to the members. NCPA wanted to have different events at different times in hopes that their members could attend at least one of the functions. NCPA said it was a successful week and most of the cost was paid for by sustaining members or supporting law firms.

A big topic of discussion was utilizing the association's website for marketing opportunities and ways to raise money for the association. Some suggestions were given by NCPA and Karen Pierson feels that PACO needs to research these issues further and upgrade the PACO website utilizing tools that would benefit our membership and enhance the website. Karen wants to meet with the PACO website committee to discuss this further and to discuss NCPA's website strategies to assist PACO with upgrading theirs.

The Friday night social event was "Arkansas Railroad Tour and Dinner." The attendees from all regions enjoyed the sights and sounds of how America once traveled. We traveled on a 1940-era diesel locomotive and had dinner in a 1920s Eureka Dining Car.

### **Saturday & Sunday, October 11-12, 2008.**

- Policy meeting. The official roll call was forty-six credentialed associations in attendance. There were thirteen (13) + 1 agenda topics (NFPA President Anita Hayworth remarked there had not been that many agenda topics since 2003!) to be discussed. Two (2) agenda topics were removed and two (2) new topics were introduced.
- The convention was opened with the *Star Spangled Banner* and the flag ceremony by the Navy.
- We also observed silence in memoriam of Phyllis Dunton – Illinois Paralegal Association who passed away May 9, 2008; and Koann Lawrence – Rocky Mountain Paralegal Association who passed away May 31, 2008.
- Voting results of the Agenda Topics (a more detailed report was e-mailed to PACO):
  - #1 – Recommendations of Ad Hoc Committee on Practicing Paralegals; passed.
  - #2 – Conflict of interest; passed.
  - #3 – Revision to NFPA's bylaws to incorporate diversity language; passed.

- #4 – Committee to devise plan for Entry Level Exam; passed after going into Caucus.
- #5 – Amendment (addition) to bylaws Article III, Section 3.3(E)(1) sustaining membership to include individual U.S. military paralegals; passed.
- #6 – Model for Paralegal Licensure; passed.
- #7 – Modify grandparenting eligibility requirements of PACE; failed.
- #8 – Amendment to Resolution 06-02 regarding NFPA’s support to Associations in states contemplating a regulatory proposal; passed.
- #9 – Changing the due date for Agenda Topics to 15 days earlier; passed.
- #10 – Non-staggered two-year terms of office; topic removed by sponsors.
- #11 – Recommendation of Board of Directors to adopt a Conflict of Interest Policy; topic removed by sponsors.
- #13 – Ratification of NFPA Strategic Plan; passed
- #13 – To add a VP, Director of Marketing to the NFPA Board of Directors elected positions, effective 2010; passed.
- #14 – Access to Legal Services Coordinator; failed.
- #15 – Change VP Pace to VP Credentialing; failed.
- #16 – Documents needed to respond to IRS Form 990; passed.

There was an award luncheon for NFPA to pay tribute to those outstanding paralegals for their achievements and lasting contributions to the association and the paralegal profession. Region III’s dinner was held at Mimi’s Café.

The NFPA 2009 Annual Convention will be hosted by the Oregon Paralegal Association in Portland, Oregon, October 29 – November 1, 2009.