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ad infinitum

ILLINOIS COURT REPORTERS ASSOCIATION

SPRING

2024

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## President's Message



I cannot remember any time in my 35-year career as a court reporter when there were so many important issues facing stenographers. We have alternate methods of capturing the record creeping into our space. Add in the explosive advancements in artificial intelligence. Add in the struggle we have encountered in securing a simple five-year extension of the CSR Act.

Stenographers have enjoyed the privilege of existing for many years in a maintenance-free industry. I'm sad to report those carefree days are in the rearview mirror. For years, I went about covering jobs and enjoying the copious fruits a career in court reporting had to offer, but when it came to nurturing this profession, advocating for this profession, supporting this profession, I backed away and let others carry the weight of these important tasks. I am as guilty of this as anyone.

Well, times have changed, and we no longer have this privilege of living maintenance-free in our world.

Outside forces are pushing into our bubble, and these forces cannot be ignored. We all need to be involved in maintaining and nurturing this cherished profession.

Here are some simple things stenographers can do to nurture this industry.

1. **GET INVOLVED!**  
Not everybody is cut out for board service, but there are many different levels of involvement. If board service sounds interesting to you, we have two open positions right now: Region 1 (Chicago) Official representative and Region 2 (basically the rest of the state) Official representative.

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For over 35 years, **Lexitas** has been providing the very best in court reporting services to our clients. To meet ever-increasing demand, we are always looking to add talented, professional, and highly motivated reporters to our team.

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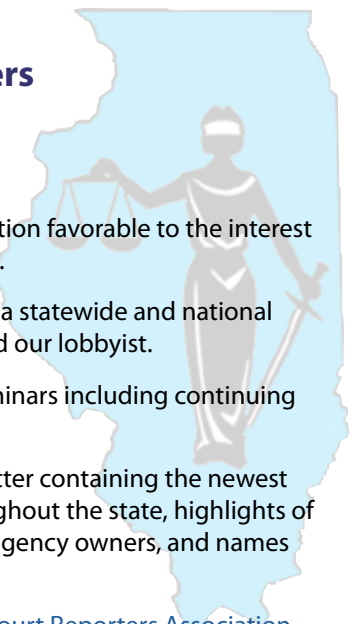
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## What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
- **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
- **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
- **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
- **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
- **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
- **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
- **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
- **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
- **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
- **Promotes** student recruitment.
- **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
- **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
- **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
- **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
- **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
- **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
- **Provides** an association management company to assist members.



## ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

*To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.*

## President's Message

*continued from front page*

If board service is not your thing, at the very least join NCRA and ILCRA. You might not agree with every policy of NCRA or ILCRA, but there is strength in numbers, and even with disputes over policies, the common goal of both NCRA and ILCRA is to promote and advocate for stenographers, which benefits us all. Encourage your friends who are not members to join. Sitting out on these memberships only hurts the rest of us, and even if you do not plan to participate, your membership dues will help advance the overall mission. In ILCRA, most importantly, your dues help to engage our lobbyist.

2. Get your advanced certifications! Go for that RMR or CRR! Start a small practice group with some friends and practice together and support each other along the certification journey. You already have the certs? Let your clients know what you do to stay on top of your game. Mention to them that you tested at 260 wpm and passed. Most people have no idea about our advanced certs, and when they hear 260 wpm, you usually get a "wow" response.

3. Keep up with continuing education. Meeting continuing ed requirements validates our industry as a professional industry. Come to ILCRA conventions, not only for the continuing education but also to enjoy the camaraderie of your peers!

ILCRA has just announced the dates for its fall convention – September 19-21 – and this year's convention will again be in the Chicagoland area. I hope you all will be joining us.

4. Spread the word about stenography. Any time I tell a new friend about what I do, the typical response is, "That's so cool! I've never met a court reporter!" Let people know we are out here. Do a career fair at your local high school. Tell them about the A to Z program and the great opportunities our profession offers.

5. Pay attention to legislative developments. ILCRA monitors legislation affecting our profession. Right now, we have House Bill 4426 in the hopper. This bill will extend the Certified Shorthand Reporters Act through 2030. We DO NOT want Illinois to become a non-licensed CSR state on our watch. This is a vital piece of legislation for our profession, and we need to ensure its adoption. Contact your representatives to ask them to co-sponsor the bill. ILCRA has developed a short and to-the-point script you can use when contacting your rep. This script was distributed to our email distribution list. If you haven't received it, contact a board member. And please be on the lookout for updates about HB 4426 from the ILCRA board.

I know there are many of you out there of my "vintage." You might be approaching the end of your career and are wondering why you should get involved. Here's my response to that: Consider what this profession has given to you – a comfortable income, off-the-chart job satisfaction levels for most of us. The list goes on. You have an obligation and responsibility to nurture this profession and maintain it. Not only for current and future stenographers but also for future litigants and hard-of-hearing citizens. There is no question that we do important work. Whether in the courtroom, in depositions or arbitrations, or providing equal access to hard-of-hearing citizens in the litigation and educational settings, our role in preserving the integrity of the spoken word and ensuring that the spoken word is accessible to all citizens is vital to the pursuit of justice and the maintaining of a fair and just society. Do your part in preserving our cherished profession.

# If You Don't, Who Will?

By Dayna Urlaub Trotta

This year, for the very first time, I went to Glenbard South High School's College and Career Fair. When I was doing the 8th grade tour of the school my daughter was to attend, I noticed that they had a bulletin board in the hallway which showcased a career. I grabbed the email address of the teacher who was in charge of the board and later emailed her about putting court reporting up there. I told her I could help her with stats, schooling, and salary information. I also volunteered Donna and myself to come and talk to students about the career as well.

She let me know that in February they were having a College and Career Fair, and that I was more than welcome to come if I was interested. Of course I said yes. While I am not a reporter, I am always trying to promote the profession, partly due to my own selfish reasons as an owner and a scheduler. In all honesty, I do think this is a wonderful career that many people don't know about and I think would love.

Originally, I had planned for Donna and me to go. I envisioned myself speaking really fast to show off Donna's skills. However, as luck would have it, we were crazy busy that day, and I needed to send Donna out on an assignment, but I got the next best thing. Cindy Sobolewski from my office came with me. She set up her machine and laptop, and I spoke while she wrote.

At first, it was slow going, but because I'm smart and know how teens are, I brought candy to lure the students in. I also had an iPad set up with a video of someone writing on the machine.

The first person to stop by was my daughter's friend, and while she had been to my house many times, and I've known her since she was in first grade, she had no idea what I did for a living. We were able to show her and enlighten her on what court reporting is and everything that a court reporter does.

As time went on, more people came by our table to see what we were all about. They really enjoyed watching the realtime feed as I was speaking. They even enjoyed when Cindy would let them type on the machine as well.



While I think some students felt obligated to act interested in order to get some of the candy I was serving, I feel confident in saying that there were several students that truly were interested in the profession. I talked up the A to Z program that NCRA offers and told them that Illinois has two schools in the Chicago area that offer court reporting in person and several schools that are online as well.

We talked to Glenbard South students ranging from Freshman to Seniors, plus more students from the other Glenbard schools were there as well. I met two school counselors who were very interested in court reporting as well, and I have emailed them both some basic information to better promote this profession.

While normally I am not the person who likes to put themselves out there, I'm glad I did. As I get older, gulp, I realize that I need to be part of the solution in promoting this profession and keeping it going because if I don't, who will?

# Sparking Your Interest with Patti

By Patti White

ILCRA has been partnering with Lake Land College in Charleston, IL, in quarterly Zoom meetings to talk with students about careers in stenography. We provide guest speakers to talk about our field. We support students in all areas where they may have questions: certifications, how long to practice, extracurricular activities, etc.

Thinking back to when you began your current job as a reporter, all those experiences are important for students to learn about, as each profession leads to different work flows: Freelancers transcribe their jobs immediately, officials have a

long waiting period before trials are transcribed for appeal, and captioners have no expectation of a transcript, and CART writers are somewhere in between with transcription requests.

“The easiest test you’ll ever fail” is a description that our ILCRA president Greg Weiland, CRR, used to describe his experience taking the CRR exam. For students who’ve been taking tests on a regular basis, once they finish their schooling, it’s imperative for them to understand all the different tests administered by both state and federal agencies and which are needed for each potential career track. Our guest speakers talk about that, and more!

The students have asked how we

remain focused in our jobs, and we agree there are different ways to maintain focus: Since some testimony is like a tennis match with “popcorn” back and forth, you’re just banging out short answers. Other testimony drags on and on and you get into the “zone.” Also, the difference between listening and hearing was described in detail by our guest speaker Mindy Meseke, which was insightful.

So writing this article has brought to mind a new topic for discussion: What games or leisure activities do you enjoy in your spare time that help you relax? If you’d like to be a guest at our next June 11 Zoom meeting, let me know, and you could be the next participant on “Sparking Your Interest with Patti.”



# Two PSAs to Illinois Court Reporters:

By Catherine A. Rajcan,  
CSR, RDR, CRR, CRC

As Illinois Certified Shorthand Reporters, a/k/a licensed court reporters, it is important for us to be familiar with the rules and laws (i.e. statutes) which affect our professional duties and responsibilities, and the distinctions between the knowledge, skills, and abilities of CSRs not only as they are delineated in the CSR Act, but also within some Illinois Supreme Court Rules. The CSR Act is of course the preeminent statute under which all Illinois CSRs are licensed and all CSRs must work in compliance with and adhere to every day in our profession. The CSR Act is an excellent piece of legislation in its current form, and it is currently before the Illinois general assembly for the 5-year sunset renewal under HB4426. \*All\* Illinois CSRs should contact their State Representatives and Senators immediately and ask these legislators to co-sponsor this Bill as well as support the passage of the "clean" bill in its current form as submitted by IDFPFR.

With respect to Supreme Court Rules, two Illinois Supreme Court Rules affecting court reporting and the litigation transcripts we prepare -- i.e. 207 and 208 -- have particular relevance in light of the October 2022 Supreme Court

Rules Committee meeting with respect to CSRs charging for deposition transcript copies when signature is reserved, and then who is responsible for paying the court reporter for the deposition appearance fee and the transcript fee generally.

## PSA # 1

Illinois CSRs may remember that a handful of our colleagues and I testified before the Illinois Supreme Court Rules Committee in October of 2022 regarding a proposed change to Rule 207 which, if implemented, would have significantly adversely affected CSRs' ability to receive payment for copies of depositions vis-a-vis reserved signatures and witness review of their testimony. We had a phenomenal showing and presentation, in aggregate, at the October 2022 Zoom Rules Committee meeting for why the rule should not be changed to provide a free copy to any witness.

The rule has recently been amended effective January 2024 with clarifying language the committee gathered from our testimony, leaving intact our ability to charge for witness signature copies, continuing to arrange reading and signing without releasing a free copy, and utilizing some of our intelligent, fair practices we have self-implemented to assist the

witness in having access to read and sign without the necessity of purchasing a transcript.

(As amended through January 31, 2024)

**"207(a) Submission to Deponent; Changes; Signing.** *Unless signature is waived by the deponent, the officer shall instruct the deponent that if the testimony is transcribed the deponent will be afforded an opportunity to review (but not copy or disseminate) the deposition, without charge for the review...at any of the following":*

**(1)** *the location where the deponent was present when the deposition was taken;*

**(2)** *any other convenient location within the county where the deponent resides or is employed or transacts business in person, or in the case of a plaintiff-deponent, in the county in which the action is pending, including the offices of the officer or another court reporter located in that county; or*

**(3)** *via videoconference or other remote electronic means, provided the deponent has the ability to examine or review the deposition in this manner.*

All three of the \*new\* subsections under section (a) draw their language directly from the testimony provided by Robin Chimniak, Dyann L. Berndt, Anna Leonard, Laura Czarneski, April Metzler, and myself, and the

written comments submitted by approximately 25 additional Illinois CSRs!

Way to go, IL CSRs!

Now let's bring that same strength, logic, reason, and duty to the People of the State of Illinois to the 5-year extension of the CSR Act, HB 4426, by each and every one of us reading this message, (and passing on to all your colleagues), contacting our Illinois State Representatives to ask them to co-sponsor the CSR Act 5-year extension as proposed by the IDFPR. Contact me or any one of our ILCRA Board Members for a suggested script to send your State elected legislators now!

## PSA #2

In addition to **225 ILCS 415/28** of the CSR Act which states: "*Payment for services. A person certified under this Act may hold an attorney, firm, or any other entity personally responsible for payment of shorthand reporting services rendered at the request of that attorney, firm, or entity,*" Supreme Court Rule 208 also addresses the court reporter being paid for their services.

The current text of this Illinois Supreme Court Rule states as follows:

(As amended through January 31, 2024)

**208(a) Who Shall Pay.** *"...the party at whose instance the deposition is taken shall pay the fees of the witness and of the officer and the charges of the recorder or stenographer for attending. The party at whose request a deposition is transcribed shall pay the charges for transcription."*

**(b)Amount.** *The officer taking and certifying a deposition is entitled to any fees provided by statute, together with the reasonable and necessary charges for a recorder or stenographer for attending and transcribing the deposition."*

**(c)Copies.** *Upon payment of reasonable charges therefor, the officer shall furnish a copy of the deposition transcript to any party or to the deponent."*

Notice that both subsections (a) and (b) distinguish between "a recorder or stenographer." A button-pushing audio recorder operator is being referred to a "recorder," not a "reporter," "digital reporter," or "deposition reporter," or any other "[ ] reporter." We CSRs need to continue to drive home with attorneys and the courts this very important distinction that an audio recorder operator, or video recorder operator ("recorder") is *\*not\** a "reporter." Audio recorder operators are not "reporting" testimony simultaneously with the proceedings like court reporters do. And importantly, the CSR Act, **225**

**ILCS 415/5 Title**, reserves the "title" of "court reporter" only to be used by persons who are Illinois CSRs.

It would be fantastic if Illinois law (e.g. statute or rule) could include the reservation of the word "reporter" alone or with any other modifier in a litigation setting solely for CSRs, like California recently did, because for any non-CSR person to use the word "reporter" with respect to preparing a litigation transcript would be misleading and deceptive to the public, counsel, and the courts as identified in **225 ILCS 415/19 Advertising.**

We are the "Guardians of the Record" and the "Gold Standard"; the proven best method for accurately capturing the complete Transcript of Proceedings, while simultaneously securing the confidential, private, and proprietary information of individuals and corporations who rely on our well-established, trusted reputations. We can be proud to identify ourselves as CSRs and Stenographers: Add your title and license number in the Zoom chat box; announce yourself as being the Certified Shorthand Reporter or licensed court reporter for the day's proceeding; wear your "Stenographer" lanyard at onsite and virtual proceedings.

Stand tall and be proud. We are Illinois CSRs!



**THE DATE FOR ILCRA's FALL  
CONVENTION HAS BEEN SET!**



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# You Just Had To Be There



**By Brad Benjamin, CSR, RPR  
Vice President, ILCRA**

One out of every six people you meet in life, approximately, will know what a court reporter does – assuming the subject of what you do for a living happens to come up in conversation. The statement that follows, though, is almost always the same, “Oh. You must hear a bunch of juicy details in court!” They always use that word, “juicy,” as if you work at the National Enquirer in 1986. And God help you if you politely choose to nod your head in agreement. Then the truly fascinated will ask you to regale them with a story about something crazy or bizarre that came up in court while on the record.

But if you happen to have a few stories in your head at the ready, as I always do, you’ll notice that the person who so eagerly inquired about your job a

few seconds ago is now quickly losing interest. Their eyes begin to wander as they frantically look for a way out of the conversation.

Why does this happen? Why does the incredibility of your story not translate? Because as competently as you might communicate it, they were not there with you. They did not witness it happen in real time. And no matter how good of a storyteller you think you are, you just had to be there.

True story: I’ve taken first place in a few professional poker tournaments in my time. I’m not exactly talking about the World Series of Poker. I’m talking about a tournament with some 50 entrants, and at the end I happened to be the last man standing.

But one night, right before collecting my winnings, the dealer took me aside to advise me that next time I should consider wearing sunglasses or a mask over my face. This was years before masks were all too familiar. The dealer

was just suggesting I might not be the best at disguising how good or bad my hand is and that my luck would run out in the long run. In other words, apparently, I do not have the best poker face.

I took this advice to heart not only at poker tournaments, but I kept it in mind at my day job as well. I obviously need to appear completely impartial while on the record. This was easy my first few years of reporting. I was so very focused on keeping up with the words and creating an accurate record that I rarely, if ever, reacted to anything happening around me. However, more recently I’ve noticed my poker face, or, as some say, “resting face,” is slipping.

The first time I found myself struggling to keep my composure was during the trial of a man suing his ex-girlfriend over custody of a dog. The defense attorney came to court with only one exhibit in his hand, a printout of texts. The texts not only contained proof that the dog was, in fact, a gift, but they were riddled with emojis between sentences.

The judge instructed the attorney to read the texts into the record with the emojis for completeness. It was hard enough to keep a straight face as I took down “smiley face, sad face, eyeroll, winky face, kissy face, wings (for some reason), and eggplant.” That was followed by the witness’ testimony on the stand explaining what they meant by 😊 😞 😏 😘 🙄 🍆. After about three minutes of this, I was trying so hard not to laugh that tears were streaming down my face.

I recently ran into that attorney and was able to say his dog custody case had been supplanted by a recent deposition. This happened to be a



very intense job. The deposition had been rescheduled and was now taking place in the court jury room due to an extremely hostile witness and the somewhat combative attorneys. The judge was close by to make rulings in real time should there be an unresolved objection, and the chief deputy was close as well if the witness started to be noncooperative. The attorney who had hired me explained he was expecting an important phone call and needed to keep his phone on.

With the deposition in full swing, the questions and answers were suddenly interrupted with a familiar sound, “dun-dun.” What the attorney failed to mention was all his phone alerts were set to sound effects from the television show *Law & Order*. When someone tried to call him and the phone blasted the entire *Law & Order* theme, I barely managed to hold it together.

When I met with the attorney for another job a few weeks later, I told him that if he didn’t turn his phone off, sorry, but I was going to lose it. He apologized and obliged.

I found the emoji trial and the deposition with the *Law & Order* soundtrack hilarious, bizarre, and practically surreal. I had fought to keep a straight face through both and thought surely other reporters would have similar stories. What happened to them in court and how did they maintain a straight face? In fact, “Maintaining your Best Poker/Resting Face” was the title of the article I initially pitched to the ILCRA board for this issue.

I went to my two closest court reporting confidants, Jeanette Rutz of Ferrandino Reporting and Marlo Rodriguez of Greenscripts,

International, for additional material for this piece. I gave them both a week to think of their best poker face courtroom stories from their decades of experience. Neither could come up with one single funny courtroom story.

Jeanette did offer a really sad story. That wasn’t quite what I was looking for. Marlo offered to come up with something fictitious. She seriously didn’t have one experience on the record where she had to stifle a laugh? She explained that while many funny things happened in court, they were usually moments of levity where the judge, attorneys, the jury, and she all laughed out loud.

Frustrated, I turned to a good ole’ standby: social media. I posted on Facebook that I was looking for reporters who have struggled maintaining a straight face on the record. Facebook did not disappoint.

One reporter told of a medical malpractice case in which the plaintiff pulled down his pants while on the stand to show the jury laparoscopic scars. He stood there for what seemed like forever testifying in tights-whities with his pants around his ankles.

Another reporter was on a domestic relations case where the judge allowed testimony about the couple’s sex life because the child walked in “while mommy was tied up.” As the witness’s testimony delved further into detail, the reporter realized she was listening so intently that she had stopped writing and had to embarrassingly ask the witness to repeat herself.

I found these stories extremely amusing, and had I been in these reporters’ shoes, it would have elicited a very similar reaction from me.

But my only real outward reaction while reading these stories was maybe a light chuckle. I even went back and located my dog custody case from 2018 and reread the parts of the transcript listing each emoji. While I remember barely being able to contain laughter at the time, now I have a similar reaction that I do to the stories from the reporters on Facebook. It was amusing but far from gutbusting.

So what we do on a day-to-day basis might be special, sacred, and at times funny, but in my opinion, it rarely translates well off the record. That’s why, if someone says “You want to hear a funny story?” and proceeds to tell it while cracking up after every few words, you will stand there and occasionally politely smile and maybe even force yourself to chuckle once or twice... because you just had to be there. Tune in for my next article on just shutting the video off and muting yourself while on Zoom and my best poker face on the record and at a “high stakes” cash game at the Bellagio casino in Las Vegas.



# It's Never Too Late

By Laurie K.

It's never too late. It's time - I decided almost a year ago. My kids are growing up into their teen years and getting into their own interests and not needing me as much anymore.

It began when I was in high school. My typing teacher told me about stenography. She suggested that I become one because I loved to type, and I was good at it. It came easy to me.

After a few years of working as a payroll clerk and going to community college, I realized I didn't really have a huge plan for my future. So, I thought I needed to take a chance and try out this stenography. I transferred to SIU Carbondale. I chose SIU because I could also tack on a bachelor's degree with my stenography.

Being at SIU with the wonderful Mrs. Sheets and Dr. Morse gave me an awesome education. I cannot say enough about these two brilliant women who helped me, encouraged me, and wanted me to genuinely succeed. I was delighted that they even trusted me to be their second voice in other classes. I was dabbling in real-time writing taking down students' lectures and producing a transcript. I would be cheating myself if I didn't say that I resisted them at times. Stenography school was hard and grueling. It was tough to see my friends who had other majors out having fun while I needed to get in my steno practice. They would ask me, "When are you going to be done?" Nobody understands the study of stenography and the time spent like a stenographer.

I graduated with stenography and a Bachelor of Science degree. Then moved to Lexington, KY with a fellow graduate and immediately started working as a freelancer. It was an exciting time with depositions, OSHA meetings, and lots of court work, including trials (the county didn't have a permanent court reporter, so we helped a lot).

However, a piece of my heart was in Chicago. I traveled there almost every weekend to be with my friends who moved there after college. We were and still are a close-knit group. I was torn between two places, and after giving Lexington

a chance, I felt like I needed to decide. I had to make a decision: Leave my love of stenography with my job in Lexington, where I didn't really feel like I fit in. I also was not certified in Illinois, which was required to be a stenographer.

I decided to take a leap of faith. I tearfully went to my boss and told her that I needed to go. Off I went to Chicago on a new adventure. It was exciting!! The hustle and bustle of downtown was amazing to me. I felt SO ALIVE! I interviewed and got a job at a prestigious law firm. I settled in nicely with my legal secretary career. Stenography was still there beckoning me to practice and get certified.

Stenography requires structure, so I went to the great Career Colleges of Chicago and started practicing to build up my speed and pass the CSR. I met the wonderful Peg Sokolski. Interestingly, they were looking for an evening teacher of steno. After multiple interviews, I became a steno teacher for their program for many years, and I loved every minute of it. I was on top of the world teaching my love of steno and being in the legal field during the day.

During these years, I met my wonderful husband. Life became pretty quick at this point. We got married, moved to the suburbs, and started having a family. With us having our family, I quit working to raise our three children. Quickly, two children under the age of two and then three children under the age of three. My husband traveled a lot for his job, and it was only logical to stay home with them. The time I had with them was wonderful; I would never replace it.

Through the years, I would pull out my steno machine and plunk down some practice just to see if I could still do it. It was a great feeling to see I could still conquer 140-160 wpm.

And now we fast forward to today. I'm ready and getting back to it. I signed up for simply steno and got myself the best mentor to push me and hold me accountable. I practice every day even if it's just ten minutes.

This story is to tell you that YOU can also start right where you are!! It's never too late to start, get back to where you want to be, have a break and go again. Life unfolds for us. We move through it and we conquer. If you have that whisper to get back into steno, do it! Reach out for encouragement; I've got you. You can do anything you put your mind to!

# You're a Steno Warrior!

## Using Physical Activity as a Form of Stress Relief

By **Andrea Jent**

During my Steno Warrior! presentations this last year, one of the topics I have focused on is using physical activity as a means to reduce some of the stress that we endure as court reporters. Exercise reduces levels of adrenaline and cortisol, which are the body's stress hormones. It also increases levels of endorphins, which are the body's natural painkillers and mood elevators. Endorphins are responsible for feelings of optimism and relaxation that accompany many hard workouts, also known as a "runner's high." But don't worry - you don't have to run; any exercise will do.

Finding the right exercise for you is really a matter of trial and error. If you don't like to dance, then Zumba probably isn't going to be the best exercise for you. If you're like me, even if you're being chased by a bear, running isn't something I'm eager to do, so that one is out for me. It doesn't matter if your only choice of exercise is just walking; that counts!!!

Some of my favorite forms of activity are weightlifting, Barre, and hot power yoga. It has taken many years for me to narrow down what I like to do and weed out what I don't like to do. I'm also known to bust out in yoga in my office at the courthouse.

Once you've found an exercise that's right for you, your best chance for staying consistent is having an exercise

buddy. Grab a friend and hold each other accountable! Remind each other every day that you GET to work out, not that you HAVE to work out. It's a blessing to be able to move our bodies, and so many of us take that for granted.

After 10-plus years in the fitness industry, I've heard every excuse in the book for why people can't exercise. Here are the top three excuses I hear on a regular basis:

### **I Don't Have Time!**

Be honest. How many hours a day do you spend endlessly and mindlessly scrolling your phone? Check your screen time if you're not sure. How many television series do you keep up with? How many Netflix true crime documentaries do you watch? (I'm guilty of this one!) How many loads of laundry do you insist on folding because you're the only one who can "do it right?" Type A's, y'all should be raising your hands with that one. Create new habits and delegate authority to free up time in your schedule and make exercise a priority.

### **I Don't Have Energy!**

Are you low on energy because you're consuming too much sugar, coffee, soda, or energy drinks and crashing afterwards? If you're eating too many of the bad carbs (white bread, cookies, soda, pizza dough, white rice), that can cause your blood glucose to spike, which leads to a crash. Stick to eating good carbs (whole grains, brown rice, potatoes, oatmeal beans) and drink lots of water and see how much your energy increases.

The honest truth is YOU'RE NOT TOO TIRED TO EXERCISE...YOU'RE TOO TIRED NOT TO EXERCISE! In fact, according to a 2008 University of Georgia study, "People who regularly complained of fatigue increased energy levels by 20% with regular, low-intensity exercise." Exercising gives you energy!

### **I Don't Have Motivation!**

Let's face it, are we really motivated to go to work, do the laundry, or to go get a mammogram or a colonoscopy? Heck no! But we go because we have to, and we make appointments and we stick to them. Our time for physical activity should be put on our schedules just like any other appointment, and we should stick to those appointments.

My favorite time to exercise is at 5:00 a.m. Do I love getting up that early? Nope. But I do it because I know my evenings are always pure chaos with commitments, and I never know what court is going to bring during the day to possibly impact my evenings. So, I get up and do it. Every day. I am disciplined, even when I'm not motivated. Exercising early makes me feel great and gives me so much energy to get through my day.

Motivation comes and goes but discipline is forever. JUST DO IT!

Adding any form of physical activity is a great way to relieve stress and counteract the constant sitting that we do all day at work. Give it a shot and let me know how you feel!

# Plan To Plan

By Lorie Kennedy

I read an article the other day in the New York Times, 31 Things To Do For The Big Eclipse This April. My initial response, of course, involved a small eye roll, a slight shake of the head, but it worked. The title lured me in. In full disclosure, I have been reading what I do see here and there about the eclipse. I'm not sure whether it's due to some of the adjectives being used describing the event as majestic and exquisite, life-changing, the listing of places around North America for viewing in the Path of Totality, even Delta Air Lines is running Path-of-Totality flights, or I'm trying not to be left in the dark, no pun intended.

The list of 31 things to do highlighted a lot of the different modalities and festivals around the viewing of the eclipse, but it also brought attention to lots of things we take for granted, such as preparing for traffic and crowds, even the possibility that ATMs will go out and to carry cash. We all know this, but life moves fast, and a lot of these things fall off the radar. But solid plans start with strong foundations, and this article was a great reminder.

We all know if you want to do something or attain or achieve something, we have to make a plan, but let's not forget the small stuff in our plans. Make a list of how to achieve your plan or your goals and include the small stuff so they don't get forgotten

and derail your efforts. As you cross things off your list, you'll be motivated to do more. Research has even shown this simple act of scratching things off our to-do list releases dopamine.

Here, ladies and gentlemen, is your reminder not to sweat the small stuff, but to remember it. I've used lists and plans before, and it's always worked. I've attained the goals I've set out to do, and you can, too. Memories of these achievements seem to have faded to effortless endeavors, and that is the beauty of a plan, and that is what ultimately leads to the next goal.

As you start to tackle that plan, be open to modifications. As they say, one good thing leads to another, maybe add a few things here and there, even take some things away, but a plan will keep you focused. Do you want to pass the CSR or RPR? Do you want to organize your office or even the linen closet?

I've found that having my plan also identifies obstacles I need to contend with.

Obstacles can be anything from large to small; obstacles are personal, but after they are identified, you can develop a strategy to deal with them. Each time I test, I make a new plan when I'm gearing up. Yes, the obvious things are on my plan's list, practice, run errands on my lunch to make time for that practice in the afternoon, but I also include things that I need to do to even get to my list. Sort of a plan to get to my plan.

One such obstacle I have always faced when it comes to extra practice is that I hate constantly setting up my writer; like I said, obstacles are personal. There's days when just taking my machine out of the case at night feels like climbing a mountain, so during my test prep plan, I pull out my old writer just to have something set up and ready to go. All I need to do is sit in front of it. At the starting line, we are all worthy competitors, but getting there is always one's own journey, so the old writer stays set up.

Now, just because you're reading this in a court-reporting newsletter means your plan has to be court-reporting related. In any field or endeavor, there are concepts and techniques that form the backbone of success; but in my experience, everything is related, so just because your plan may be to organize the linen closet doesn't mean there won't be overlap into other areas of your life.

We've all had those moments where we've stuffed things into closets in attempts to dial down the chaos that surrounds us. You might find some cool swag from a conference in that closet. Neat find! But, ultimately, a tree can only grow as tall as its roots run deep, so let's all dig down and be the best versions of ourselves.

Make a plan and include the basics. Rejoice in the little things and celebrate the achievements.

# Briefs I Learned in March During Expert Medical Testimony:

By Georgia Northway  
RPR, CSR-IL, CSR-MO

zopiclone:	STKHROEPB
zolpidem:	STKHROEPL
zaleplon:	STKHRAOPB
phenobarbital:	TPROEBL
metabolite(s):	PWHROEUT(S)
ketamine:	KPHAOEPB
lorazepam:	LOFRPL
diazepam:	TKAEUFPL
alprazolam	PHRAPLZ
Xanax:	STKA*PBGS
isomer:	AOEUFRL
GHB:	TWPWAO*EB
gamma-hydroxybutyrate:	TKPWAOEB
benzodiazepine:	PW*EPBZ
GBL:	TKPW*BL
gamma-butyrolactone:	TWPW-BL
flunitrazepam:	TPHRAPLZ
chloride	KHRO*EUD
enzyme:	*EPBZ
amino:	PHOEU
amino acid:	PHOEUBGD
date rape drug(s)	TK*RD(Z)

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# Boot Camp Recap

By **Andrea Jent and Kirstie Anderson**

In March of this year, Illinois Court Reporters Association Treasurer, Andrea Jent, Official Court Reporter for the 2nd Judicial Circuit, and Illinois Court Reporters Association Secretary, Kirstie Anderson, Official Court Reporter for 26th and California, joined nearly 80 other reporters from state affiliates around the country at the 2024 National Court Reporter Association's (NCRA's) Leadership & Legislative Boot Camp, held in Washington, D.C.

They received two days of leadership and advocacy training before heading to Capitol Hill to meet with Scott Jorgenson from Senator Dick Durbin's Office, Lacey Bowersox from Representative Mike Post's office, and Lucy Schmitz from Representative Sean Casten's office on March 12.

NCRA's Leadership & Legislative Boot Camp is a unique opportunity offered annually by the Association. Attendees learn how to advocate for the court reporting, captioning, legal videography, scopist, and associated legal professions. This training is invaluable when it comes to ensuring the efforts of NCRA members at the grassroots, state, or national level are successful, and it prepares them to be skillful in the promotion and protection of the value stenographic court reporters and captioners bring to accurately capturing the record.

NCRA Boot Camp attendees have the opportunity to participate in concentrated sessions and training that teaches them the skills and strategies necessary to effectively advocate for their profession in their state legislatures and in Congress, as well as participate in real-life scenarios where they can put their newly learned advocacy skills into practice and network with other NCRA members who are passionate about their profession.

While meeting with Jorgenson, Bowersox, and Schmitz, Jent and Anderson advocated for them to support the value of the stenographic profession by sponsoring and supporting a proposed bill that would establish a task force to address the emerging legal and ethical issues related to the potential usage of AI in the U. S. judicial system.

In November 2023, NCRA published "Emerging Ethical and Legal Issues Related to the Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI), Automatic Speech Recognition (ASR), Voice Cloning, and Digital Audio Recording of Legal Proceedings," its first white paper highlighting the emerging ethical issues related to the implementation of artificial intelligence in the U.S. judicial system. The paper was shared with legislators, those in the legal arena, and the media. It was written to serve as a crucial reminder to courts, lawyers, and justice advocacy groups of the importance of ensuring the integrity of the nation's court records.

"Boot Camp was a very empowering experience," Andrea Jent said. "When meeting with my local lawmakers, I was able to convey the legal and ethical issues that artificial intelligence could create as it relates to official court records, and I feel that they understood my concerns and that my



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voice was heard. Being part of the legislative process was a new experience for me, and I can't thank NCRA enough for providing this opportunity to court reporters around the country."

"I can sum up my Boot Camp experience in three words: intense, fear, and rewarding," Kirstie Anderson said. "It was so intense because you are immersed into a two-day seminar and in active training to prep you for your day at the Hill. I say the word fear because you didn't know what you are facing ahead of time. You don't know the topic nor who you will be placed with in your groups. You are also scared and nervous because you have to find the strength and courage to be able to eloquently present to the staffers, congressmen, etc."

"Despite it being intense and fearful, I do not regret stepping out of my comfort zone and attending. It was one of the

most rewarding experiences of my life. I met people who I hope will be in my life for years to come. We all grew as a group and as individuals, learning and leaning on each other, throughout that time. I learned my weaknesses and cultivated new skills to help me become a better leader, board member representative, court reporter, and individual."

"For anyone contemplating if they should attend Boot camp, please go. You will learn so much not only about leadership, legislative processes, and what NCRA does for us; but most importantly, you will learn so much about yourself, and you won't regret it."

Andrea and Kirstie would both like to thank ILCRA President Greg Weiland for encouraging them to attend and to the rest of the ILCRA board for their support.

## A Special Thanks

The ILCRA Executive Board thanks all who sent in their memories and tributes to Bernie for the special edition of the Ad Infitum done in her memory. In reading through the issue, you can feel the deep love and admiration for her from the steno community, and you can appreciate the lasting legacy she leaves for stenographers in Illinois and nationally. The Board felt it would be appropriate to have this Ad Infitum issue converted to a keepsake book for her husband John and their children Becky and Tim to let them know how deeply we share in their loss and as a lasting testament that our love for Bernie will never end.

*"What we have once enjoyed we can never lose.  
All that we love deeply becomes a part of us."  
— Helen Keller*



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ad infinitum

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