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SPRING

2016



ILLINOIS
COURT
REPORTERS
ASSOCIATION

President's Message



Greetings, ILCRA members. Happy spring to you and your families. Hopefully you've adjusted to the time change and are enjoying the mild weather we're experiencing in Illinois.

For those of you who were able to visit a local high school or college near your home during Court Reporting & Captioning Week February 14-20, thank you for promoting our profession. Your ILCRA board members visited MacCormac College and South Suburban College in Chicago, and College of Court Reporting in Hobart, IN. Midstate College was on spring break and will be visited at a later date. The instructors and teachers appreciate having professional court reporters visit.

I encourage each of you to call one of the court reporting schools and offer to mentor a student. Sometimes it makes a difference to receive a push from someone other than an instructor, a fellow student, or a family member. Let's push to get more students out of school and licensed. Another opportunity to provide support to court reporting students is sponsoring a student when you register for NCRA's 2016 convention and ILCRA's 2017 convention.

High school career fair season has arrived. I was at Grayslake North High School on March 30th for the day as part of a panel. Each panelist was asked to give a short description of their career. The last ten minutes of each session was reserved for Q&A. Since it started at 7:55 a.m. and ended at 3:15 p.m., it was a long day. I'd planned ahead and thought of three things I could say to grab their attention. What did I say? Typically it takes 36 months or less to complete a court reporting program, online programs are available, and there's a shortage of court reporters in IL. Read

more about my experience in the article in this issue. If you haven't reached out to a high school near your home to visit and speak with guidance counselors or students about court reporting, please do. If you've been invited to a career day and are uncomfortable going solo, let ILCRA know. Between our members throughout the state and your ILCRA board, we can cover it.

We're honored to have NCRA here in Chicago again for their annual convention. I hope to see you there. Please stop by our table when you arrive to say hello. In the meantime, enjoy your summer. If you're traveling, I wish you safe travel. Thank you for your continued support of ILCRA, your questions, and spirit of volunteerism. Together we make a difference.

—Vernita Allen-Williams

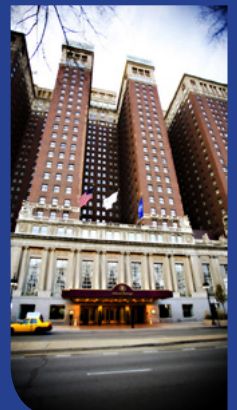
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NCRA
2016 Annual
Convention
&
ILCRA
2016 Annual
Meeting
and Board
Meeting



August 4-7, 2016
The Hilton Chicago | Chicago, Illinois

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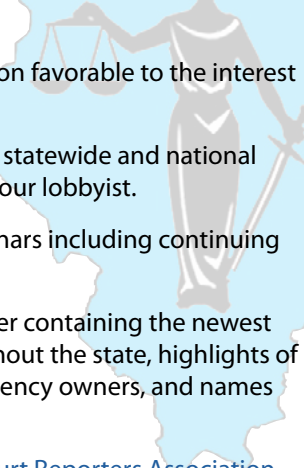
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For a listing of all **committees and current committee members**

[CLICK HERE](#)

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.

2016 ILCRA Business Meeting and Board Meeting

Notice of Annual Meeting

The Illinois Court Reporters Association 2016 Annual Meeting will be held during NCRA's 2016 convention at The Hilton Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, August 4-7. During the annual meeting, awards will be presented and reports will be given. The date and time of the meeting will be announced in the next issue of Ad Infinitum, and the room where the Annual Meeting will be held will be announced once it's known.

The ILCRA Executive Board meeting will be held during NCRA's 2016 convention at The Hilton Chicago in Chicago, Illinois, August 4-7. The date and time of the meeting will be announced in the next issue of Ad Infinitum, and the room number will be announced once it's known.

Student Scholarship Award

Court Reporting Students, Students, you could win \$1,000, plus a complimentary registration to the 2016 NCRA Annual Convention and Exposition in Chicago, Illinois, August 4-7. The prize also includes hotel accommodations for one night, a \$50 mileage stipend, and a one-year Associate Membership in the Illinois Court Reporters Association. The winner will become a member of the ILCRA Student Scholarship Committee for the following year. Second place (\$500) and Third place (\$300) prizes will also be awarded. [CLICK HERE](#) or [VISIT ILCRA WEBSITE](#) for the application form. Applications are due by Friday, June 24, 2016 and the winners will be announced at ILCRA's Annual Meeting to be held during NCRA's Annual Convention.

Distinguished Service Award

ILCRA Members, Nominations are now being accepted for the 2016 ILCRA Distinguished Service Award. [CLICK HERE](#) or [VISIT ILCRA WEBSITE](#) for the form. Nominations are due by Friday, June 10, 2016 and the winner will be announced at ILCRA's Annual Meeting to be held during NCRA's Annual Convention.

Award of Excellence

Court Reporting Students, Do you know an outstanding educator? Nominations are now being accepted for the 2016 ILCRA Award of Excellence. [CLICK HERE](#) or [VISIT ILCRA WEBSITE](#) for the nomination form. Nominations are due by Friday, June 10, 2016 and the winner will be announced at ILCRA's Annual Meeting to be held during NCRA's Annual Convention.

ILCRA Call for Nominations

Nominating Committee Chair Stephanie Rennegarbe is now accepting nominations for the following ILCRA offices for the 2016-2018 two-year term: Region One Representative (Official) and Region Two Representative (Official). Nominations are also being accepted for Region Two Representative (Freelance). This position was not able to be filled during last year's nominations cycle and is for the second year of the 2015-2017 two-year term. Nominations are due by May 30, 2016. [CLICK HERE](#) or [VISIT ILCRA WEBSITE](#) for the nomination form.

We Need Your Help with the Veterans' History Project

Jill Layton
ILCRA VHP Chair

Once again it is time to start gathering volunteers for the Veterans' History Project booth at the Department of Illinois American Legion Convention held in July in Springfield. The booth on Thursday, July 14th will be just to sign veterans up for their interview and to share information about the project. The interviews will take place on Friday, July 15th and Saturday morning, July 16th. Please email VHP Chair Jill Layton at jill.laytoncsr@gmail.com if you would like to volunteer for this amazing project!

Thank you for your support of this important endeavor!



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[https://www.facebook.com/pages/
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147418091950835](https://www.facebook.com/pages/Illinois-Court-Reporters-Association/147418091950835)

National Court Reporting & Captioning Week



Chief judge designates Court Reporter Week

Rick Hayes
Benton Evening News Staff Writer

BENTON — Franklin County's judicial system could not operate effectively without talented court reporters.

And since court is held daily at the Franklin County Courthouse, judges, attorneys, circuit clerk officials and participants of the judicial system are fortunate to have two seasoned professionals — Amy Quint and Leslee Copple — both of Benton.

Chief Judge Thomas J. Tedeschi of the Second Judicial Circuit has announced the week of Feb. 14 through 20 has been designated as National Court Reporting and Captioning Week by Gov. Bruce Rauner.

The Second Circuit currently employs 15 full-time court reporters who cover a 12-county area that covers more geographical territory than any other circuit in the state. The circuit runs from Robinson to the north to Elizabethtown in Southern Illinois...

Read rest of the story at:

<http://www.bentoneveningnews.com/news/20160211/chief-judge-designates-court-reporter-week>



Want to make \$100K without a college degree? One metro job has you covered

Alyson Bruner
41 KSHB Kansas City Staff Writer

OALTHE, Kan. - A job that makes six figures with no college degree - it sounds like a pretty nice gig, but it comes with a big responsibility.

"We are the record," said Cindy Isaacsen, the Kansas Court Reporter Association president. "Everything we write is the record, whether it goes to Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court." Court reporting not only exists, it's in high demand right now. "We have 12 openings in Kansas right now," she explained.

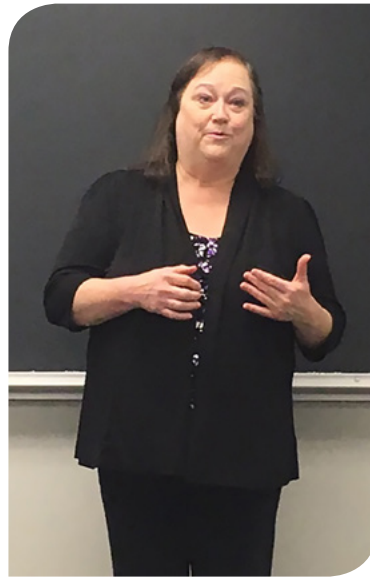
And get this - in the next five years, more than 5,000 court reporters across the U.S. will retire...

Read rest of the story at:

<http://www.kshb.com/thenow/want-to-make-100k-without-a-college-degree-one-metro-job-has-you-covered>



ILCRA President Vernita Allen-Williams and Region One Representative Mary Trezzo visit with students at MacCormac College during National Court Reporting & Captioning Week



National Court Reporting & Captioning Week

South Suburban College students and faculty with visiting ILCRA Education Liaison Bernice Radavich during National Court Reporting & Captioning Week



Q&A with Illinois Court Reporters Association President: Vernita Allen-Williams

MacCormac College



Chicago, IL---When Vernita Allen-Williams was in high school, her plan was to become an actress. As breaking into the big leagues is tough, her mom advised her to develop a skill to avoid becoming a starving actress. As fate would have it, a court reporter visited during a career day in her Gregg Shorthand

class, and that same night she told her mom about her plans to go to court reporting school.

Moving into present day, Allen-Williams has been an Official Court Reporter in the 19th Judicial Circuit since September 1997. She is also the President of the Illinois Court Reporters Association (ILCRA) and started the Veterans History Project hosted at the Waukegan Courthouse annually. Allen-Williams received her education through Madison Business College and Triton College and holds the following licenses: CSR, RPR, RMR and FCRR.

The devoted mother, keen singer and action movie enthusiast, answers our questions about her chosen profession:

Tell us about your current position.

Currently I am assigned to the 19th Judicial Circuit. I carry a pager. All of the officials here float. We receive a schedule for the entire year. Some weeks I am assigned to a specific courtroom, other weeks I wait to be paged to a particular courtroom. We cover juvenile calls, drug court, mental health court, veterans court, family division, civil division, and felony division.

What do you do in your role as the president of the Illinois Court Reporters Association?

As president of ILCRA, I preside at all meetings of the executive board, generally supervise the general affairs of the association, preside at all meetings of the voting members of the association, and perform all duties incident to the office of president and such other duties as may be prescribed from time to time by the executive board.

Why is it important for court reporters and court reporting students to join organizations such as ILCRA and National Court Reporters Association (NCRA)?

There is strength in numbers. As a freelance court reporter, I maintained my ILCRA membership just in case something came up and I needed accurate advice on how to handle it. I have maintained my NCRA credentials not only because I want to know what's going on in my chosen profession, but additionally

because NCRA sets the standard. For example, when ILCRA needs advice on proposed legislative changes in IL, we contact Adam Finkel, director of the government relations at NCRA, to find out if other states have dealt with similar legislation and were they successful in supporting or opposing the legislation. When the Illinois Supreme Court convened their court reporter committee, members of ILCRA were asked to be a part of it. Why? Because ILCRA is the state arm of NCRA. When it comes to matters dealing with court reporters, thankfully the IL Supreme Court gives weight to our opinions and positions on proposed changes.

National Court Reporting & Captioning Week takes place every year. Why are awareness weeks such as these important for the court reporting profession?

National Court Reporting & Captioning Week is a great public awareness opportunity to shine a bright positive spotlight on what we do and job opportunities available. The executive board of ILCRA will be visiting each of the court reporting programs in IL to encourage students, answer questions, and remind them there are jobs waiting for them.

What misconceptions do people often have about your job?

That electronic recording has replaced court reporters. Even though IL is a blended-system state utilizing electronic recording in specific courtrooms, court reporters and court specialists are producing the transcripts. There are instances of "unintelligible" or "inaudible" or "muted" proceedings. When two individuals are speaking at once and the judge does not intercede and require them to speak one at a time, it is the court reporter in the room that speaks up.

What are your average work hours?

My hours are 8:30-4:30. If I am waiting for a jury, my day ends when the judge sends the jury home for the night if they have not reached a verdict.

What's the worst part of the job and how do you deal with it?

In the 19th Judicial Circuit we have to cover numerous divisions. It is not easy switching from a felony call to covering a divorce trial. Some days I am paged to bond court to take a plea, divorce to do a prove-up, then traffic to pick a jury for a felony DUI. I just keep reminding myself to switch gears and smile when I enter the room.

What is your favorite part of being a court reporter?

Variety. There's always something I need to work on when I'm not in court. Being an official is not boring.

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What do people under or over value about what you do?

Our ability to not only do realtime but stream it to litigants. In the past two years we have disappointed some freelance agencies planning to cover three-week trials and provide realtime in divisions litigants are entitled to an official court reporter. We also provide rough drafts of proceedings on trials when asked. Making private civil attorneys aware of this is a constant challenge. I'm fortunate to have a court reporter for my supervisor and talented coworkers willing to work together and cover complex litigation trials in addition to lengthy felony trials.

We find you to be successful. What has led to your success as a court reporter?

Strong work ethic. Respect for the court system. Respect for the litigants. Maintaining a positive attitude.

What attributes make a successful court reporter?

Self-confidence, love of learning, stick-to-it attitude, team player, good organizational skills, ability to compartmentalize to name a few.

For more information about MacCormac's court reporting program and to register for classes, call (312) 922-1884 or e-mail: admissions@maccormac.edu.

Investcorp Completes Sale of Veritext to Pamplona Capital Management

Bahrain - Investcorp, a leading provider and manager of alternative investment products, today announced that it has completed the sale of VText Holdings, Inc. ("Veritext" or the "Company") to private equity firm Pamplona Capital Management.

Founded in 1997, Veritext is the leader in deposition and litigation support services. Veritext provides law firms, Fortune 500 corporations and regulatory agencies with national coverage, state-of-the-art facilities, highly skilled court reporters, advanced technology and unparalleled client service.

During Investcorp's ownership, Veritext doubled its sales force, completed 16 strategic add-on acquisitions, opened two offices in new markets, invested in technology and marketing, and built a robust corporate structure...

Read rest of the story at:

<http://www.zawya.com/story/ZAWYA20160201083842/>



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For nearly 30 years, Jensen Litigation Solutions 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.

Based out of our beautiful office space in the heart of the Chicago Loop, we provide top-of-the-line resources to all of our reporters. At Jensen you can expect to benefit from flexible scheduling, competitive compensation, extensive training/educational opportunities, outstanding amenities, and facilities that are second to none.

Please contact us for more information about joining the Jensen family!



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STARtech16 — Advancing Our Skills, Preserving Our Careers

Debra M. Musielak
CSR, CCR, RDR

On March 10 through 13 the Society for the Technological Advancement of Reporting (STAR) and the Illinois Court Reporters Association (ILCRA) cohosted the STARtech16 Conference at The Drake Hotel in Chicago. STAR is the successor organization to the Baron Users Group (BUG), Stenographic Multi-Users Group (SMUG), and The Association for the Advancement of CAT Technology (TAACT). And, yes, I admit I go back far enough to have been a BUG member, having purchased my first CAT system in 1983. Oh, how the technology has advanced in those 30-some years.

I think inherent in all court reporters is the incessant need to advance our knowledge and improve our skills, to sustain self-growth, to provide higher quality products, and to better promote the professionalism of our business.

So why was this the first STAR conference I've attended in my years of reporting? I have no satisfactory answer. Perhaps for court reporters straddling state lines and belonging to multiple state associations as well as the national association, like myself, you feel the need to tighten the budget. Having attended this conference I can emphatically tell you this is not the place to cut back.

The conference included presentations for both freelancers and officials, beginning with a general session by Nancy Varallo, a Past President of NCRA, and Rob Deziel, Executive Director of The Varallo Group. Their interactive session delved into strategies focusing on client procurement, retention and company messaging. The last general session was given by Joyce Martin, the leader of the team of reporters that realtined the Aurora, Colorado theatre shooting case. Provided with very little prep material her team masterfully handled the job and gave us advice on how to handle similar situations.

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pd PLANET DEPOS
We Make It Happen >> Anywhere™
CHICAGO-AREA REALTIME

>> LED BY COURT REPORTERS

Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag, President, is pleased to announce that Chicago-area Realtime & Court Reporting has been acquired by Planet Depos, LLC, a global court reporting company.
Committed to your success, NCRA-credentialed leadership team with 100+ years in the business. Unlimited opportunities to make as little or as much as you want. Experienced, friendly back-office support.

ARE YOU A CERTIFIED REPORTER DEDICATED TO PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE AND INTERESTED IN WORKING WITH A LIKE-MINDED TEAM?

Contact: kathy.dilorenzo@planetdepos.com

In between those general sessions, numerous Case CATalyst training seminars were led by Pam Szczecinski. She provided not only tips for successful usage of the features in the newest software version, but in-depth training on older features that many of us have, but simply don't feel we have the time to learn. One session was dedicated entirely to Windows tech tips. It only stands to reason; any tip or software feature that can be used to reduce edit time is a skill worth learning.

For those not on Case CATalyst, concurrent seminars included a New Exhibits & Technology Panel, focusing on new technologies in the video and paperless exhibit arenas. Another session entitled Judges, Lawyers, Law Clerks... Oh My! included a panel of high-tech consumers who shared insights into what they're searching for when choosing providers to complement their trial preparation and presentation pathways.

In a session entitled STENOtalks, members of Stenograph's senior team gave us a detailed look into the thought process behind software and writer development. We went on a virtual tour, traveling down the assembly line of their newest writer. Did you know all Stenograph writer keyboards do not have the same configuration? We saw writer keyboards designed at the request of reporters in foreign countries. Some we considered absolutely bizarre. We wondered why would a reporter want or need a keyboard set up in that manner, but they do, and the Stenograph team develops to their specifications. It was an interesting and comprehensive journey into what goes on behind the scenes to put that magic machine at our fingertips.

When not in seminars, networking opportunities abounded in the welcome dinner, cocktail hour and STAR lounge. There were opportunities to rub elbows with reporters from the east coast to the west coast and everywhere in between. It was an occasion to make new friends, new business associates and connect with those that share our interests in growing ourselves and the court reporting profession. No matter how many years we've practiced our skills, any opportunity to hone those skills and grow as professionals is time well spent. This STARtech16 conference definitely delivered.

IN MEMORIAM



Donald Wayne Clark (1951 – 2016)

August 26, 1951 – February 23, 2016, San Diego.
Donald served in the U.S. Army from 1972 – 1974.
He retired in 2003 from the 19th Judicial Circuit,
Lake County, Illinois, as an official court reporter.
He was also a member of ILCRA until 2002.
He will be missed by all who knew him.

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Legislative Boot Camp



Georgia Rollins CSR

I remember hearing about Boot Camp as a student; the quote/unquote horror stories, the almost-literal butt-kicking that took place over a long weekend in our nation's Capitol. The drilling, the sleepless nights, the small group work, the horror! So when it was my name that was called for "The Reaping," as some would have us believe, it's easy to understand why I was nervous, almost hesitant to go as tribute for Illinois.



US Congressman Darin LaHood takes a moment from his busy day for a picture with ILCRA Vice President Georgia Rollins. Rollins spoke to Congressman LaHood's assistant that day about further funding for grants to benefit court reporting schools and the training of Realtime writers.

What I've never heard get mentioned before is what I will try and cover here.

From our first seminar we're taught the basics and work our way up, thanks to Dave Wenhold and Adam Finkel and the other stellar presenters on Sunday and Monday. But it was really when Adam asked us to go around the room and introduce ourselves that I was awe-struck by who was in attendance. Presidents and Vice Presidents from all over the country, directors and leaders at the state and national level were there. I was running with the big dogs! And the crazy part was, thanks to my newly-plated VP title, I kind of felt like I actually belonged. The talent and intelligence and dedication that was housed in that conference room at the Hyatt in Reston -- it almost



ILCRA Vice President Georgia Rollins, US Congressman Rodney Davis, and student Isaiah Roberts. Congressman Davis delivered a heartfelt speech to the attendees of Boot Camp during Tuesday's debrief to thank them for their dedication to the profession and for their lobbying that day.



"Feeling punchy!" NCRA President Steve Zinone takes a break from being "the tough guy" during Monday's role-playing drills and shows off his lighter side with Isaiah Roberts and Georgia Rollins.

audibly resonated off the walls, a low hum underscoring each seminar and small group discussion. I was in the presence of our profession's greats.

Going in, I had a misconception about Boot Camp that I think is logical, but I want to clarify for anyone else who may be under the same impression. Boot Camp is not about politics or learning about the inner workings of our legislative system. And thank goodness for that. The last time I tried to educate myself about politics was my freshman year of college. And 10 minutes into the class, I was already off daydreaming and doodling on my binder.

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2016 Biannual Career Day at Grayslake North High School

by **Vernita Allen-Williams**
ILCRA President

On March 30, 2016, I had the pleasure of serving on a panel of professionals during Grayslake North High School's Biannual Career Day. Each panelist was asked to provide a five-minute overview of their career; i.e., name, how long you've been in your chosen career, school and/or requirements, et cetera. The number of panelists varied from as few as five to as many as eight. The last ten minutes were reserved for Q&A. If the students were ready with questions, one of the GNHS staff would ask the panel to respond. We started the first session at 7:55 a.m. The last session ended at 3:10 p.m. I always forget what a long day it is when I'm filling out my response to the invitation. I'm glad I was invited to participate and thankful my supervisor was able to accommodate my request to be off for the day. Those of you who have presented at a career day or college fair know how rewarding it is.

While the list of questions we were asked to respond to were all relevant to high school students faced with making college/career choices, one in particular stood out to me. What do you like most and least about your job? Without going into the plethora

of answers given by the other panelists, I'd like to share my simple response. I realize as I'm writing this article my answers today are also a couple of the reasons I became a court reporter and encourage career day attendees to consider becoming court reporters. What do I like most about being a court reporter? It's not boring and I have a lot of freedom.

As an official in a pool of reporters, every day is different. I know what my deadlines are and I decide how I will meet them. If I decide I would like to leave IL, I can go to another part of the country and work as a freelancer, CART provider, work from home as a captioner, or apply at the local courthouse as an official court reporter. None of the other panelists could say the same.

What do I like least about my job? I wish the attorneys I work with would slow down. I often wonder where the fire is. What's the hurry? It's not Law & Order. Easy answer.

After 30 years, I'm still challenged and I'm still learning and I do not regret choosing to become a court reporter. If you would like to share our profession with a local high school near your home, please contact the guidance counselor office or the college career center coordinator. Together we can boost the enrollment of new court reporting students.

Legislative Boot Camp

continued from page 10

So after class, my next stop was to my advisor's office to go ahead and drop Poli/Sci 101. But again, Boot Camp is not about politics, it's about lobbying, learning to advocate. And this, folks, if you take these lessons and apply them to your everyday life, this is where it becomes life changing.

I came home from Washington, DC a changed person. It's not something that's visible on the outside, but inside I feel it. Not only am I a better advocate for court reporting and captioning, I'm a better advocate for myself. Boot Camp gives you the tools and the resources and the step-by-step instructions on how to effectively realize your goals and get things accomplished. Of course, it was driven towards promoting the profession, but once I saw the practical application towards my own life, I haven't been the same.

It reminds me of a Steve Jobs quote, which now strikes me in a much more profound way: "Life can be much broader once you discover one simple fact: Everything around you that you call life was made up by people that were no smarter than you, and you can change it. You can influence it. You can build your own things



Tuesday's debriefing. Boot Campers recap their experiences from the day and snag some swag for sharing. Most participated in a well-deserved drink!

that other people can use. Once you learn that, you'll never be the same again."

Yes, Boot Camp is exhausting. Yes, it is a lot of work. Yes, you have to talk to people and not just step but leap out of your comfort zone. And every minute is worth it. In truth, I hope it isn't my last experience out there. I have a lot more changing, influencing, and building to do.

August. Chicago. NCRA.

Kathryn A. Thomas
RDR, CRC, CSR
ILCRA President-Elect

ILCRA will forego having an annual convention this year, because the NCRA Annual Convention will take place at the Hilton Chicago in August 2016. ILCRA will have our annual business meeting on site during this time, and we'll still issue awards and welcome new board members, and in 2017 the ILCRA annual convention will return.

But until then, now's the perfect chance to go to the NCRA Annual Convention if you haven't been before! Meet your NCRA and ILCRA representatives and other reporters from across the country and even around the world.

If it's your first time, here are some tips.

These first three tips are for us nerds, because we like things to be written down and listed.

- Convention can be like going to a grocery store. Look through the convention brochure and make a list--yes, a list--of information you want; take copious notes; and review them after you get home.
- Make a list of books/products you want to buy, because you'll score good deals. Especially if you hit up the booths before they close on Saturday afternoon!
- Make a list of PEOPLE YOU WANT TO MEET. To the shy ones out there: The heroes you look up to are Actual People. Talk to them and pick their brains if you have the opportunity.
- Got your RMR? Come join us in the national Speed and Realtime contests! We're a really nice bunch, I promise.
- Mingle like crazy.
- Thinking about buying a new machine? EVERY major vendor will be there with their machines. Try them ALL. Your machine is like your horse. If you don't feel right in the saddle, you won't have a good journey. You and the machine must be ONE. *Disclaimer: I've never owned a horse, and the only time I've ever ridden one was when a couple of ranchers brought two to the Vacation Bible School I volunteered at, and I got to ride Old Paint to the end of the parking lot and back, with the rancher leading her.*
- Go to all the sessions no matter HOW hungover you are.
- Go to the Saturday night party and hang out with your new friends.
- Try to keep your blood alcohol level in check. We're all Facebook friends now, and pictures have a way of getting uploaded and tagged. It can take a while to live down. No, I'm not going to

name names...but I COULD.

- The Sunday morning sessions will be filled with everyone's luggage. You may bring yours too. It makes for a good footrest.
- Follow up with your new friends a few weeks afterwards.

These next tips are NOT for the person who has no problems in new social situations. If you're naturally gregarious, extroverted, chatty, what have you, this section will seem like a big ol' DUH!! However, for some of us (many more than you'd think), the social aspect of conventions is the most intimidating or exhausting. If you have some tips, let us know in the comments! Here's some things that have helped me:

- When you think, "I don't KNOW anybody!": Let me fill you in on a secret: Nor does anyone else. It SEEMS like everyone's in a little conversation group but you. It SEEMS like everyone's mingling and having a good time, but I guarantee you most of those people have just met. Yes, there are some of us who have gone to every conference event since Benjamin Franklin discovered serial ports (*citation needed*), but those aren't the majority. Give yourself permission to stand to the side during the Thursday evening reception or the Saturday night party and just observe. Look for loosely-knit groups of two or three -- groups where they're not gathered in a tight circle but have a circle that's slightly "open," according to their body language -- and introduce yourself. Heck, just say it. "I'm new to these things, and I don't know anyone. I'm {state your name} and I'm a {profession} from {town}. What do you do?" That works with individuals just as well. Lather, rinse, repeat.
- Where do I sit?: It's lunch time, and you don't have someone to sit with. I like to play Table Roulette. Sit at an EMPTY table that's in the middle of things and see who sits with you. Better yet: join the board and you get a reserved table. Therefore, you don't have to worry. And by the way, if anyone asks you if you want to join them for dinner, you say YES!
- When crowds aren't your thing: I agree. They're not my thing either. Don't room with anyone. I RARELY room with anyone to whom I'm not married. (Good advice.) Not because I don't LIKE my colleagues; I just need some large doses of quiet every day. Do attend the receptions, but let yourself skip out when it feels time.
- When you think, "I'm such a newbie.": We all were students and new reporters at one time. I wish I could've come to all these conventions when I was a new reporter -- and had read this article. But since I don't have a TARDIS, I'll tell it to you students/newbies. Observe and see who seems to be in charge, who seems to have themselves together (looks can be deceiving), who embodies LOVE for this profession. Introduce yourself

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to them in the manner I described a few paragraphs above. If you're feeling pretty bold, ask them to introduce you around if they have time. These are the people who want this profession to succeed and, by extension, want YOU to succeed.

- DON'T hang around anyone who spends more than 50% of their time complaining. If you have to get up and switch seats, do so. I'm serious. Yes, they are loved by God and they are human beings deserving of dignity and compassion, but they are TOXIC. You're here to be pulled up, not dragged down. Needless to say, don't be a complainer yourself. THANK the people in charge of putting the convention or conference together. If you've never been involved in the planning of one of these things, YOU HAVE NO IDEA of the challenges therein. Really. Lift others up, and you find yourself lifted up as well. This is not being a Pollyanna pie-in-the-sky; it's fact. If you have serious problems about something, speak to someone who can do something about it and/or volunteer to do something about it yourself. Sound like I'm on a soapbox? I am.

In conclusion, if you're feeling a bit of social anxiety, or nervousness, it's not just you. Or at least I hope it's not just me. :) See you in Chicago!

This article is an expanded remix of two blog posts I previously published on my site, www.stenoray.com.



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ILCRA 2016 DATES

August 4-7, 2016

NCRA 2016 Annual Convention & Expo
Hilton Chicago

August 13, 2016

CSR Examination
Chicago area and Carbondale

December 12, 2016

CSR Examination
Chicago area and Carbondale

*NOTE: ILCRA will not hold an
Annual Convention in 2016*