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**FALL**

**2018**

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ad infinitum

**ILLINOIS  
COURT  
REPORTERS  
ASSOCIATION**

## President's Message



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Happy New Year, ILCRA!

With the completion of this year's convention, we begin another new ILCRA year and welcome our new board members. Kim Cottrell joins us as Region 2 Representative, representing Region 2 members who are official reporters. Donna Banks has stepped in to fill the office of Treasurer, following the appointment of Deborah Cohen-Rojas to Vice President when that office became vacant.

We do have a vacancy now in the Region 2 - Freelance position. According to the bylaws, the board may appoint someone to fill this vacancy until next year's annual business meeting during our annual convention. If you live in Region 2\* and are a freelance reporter or a captioner, talk to one of us on the board. Board members are required to be at two in-person meetings a year, attend our annual convention and our biennial Marathon seminar session, and participate in board discussions via email as well as help out with other ILCRA tasks as necessary.

But the board cannot do it all alone -- we all are busy with our steno jobs as well as our ILCRA duties, not to mention our family lives. So

we have committees to work on specific aspects of the stenographic profession. When we asked through the convention evaluation for committee volunteers, several of you raised your hands (virtually speaking). Thank you so much. If you haven't yet volunteered for a committee, please consider doing so. A list of ILCRA committees who could use your help is published in this issue.

I hope you all had a great time at this year's stellar convention, and that it's pumped you up to learn new things, try new things, and develop new ideas about what you could do next with your profession. It certainly did for me. One of the wonderful things about convention isn't just the educational and networking opportunities -- it's seeing friends we've made over the years and bonding with others who know what working in steno is like.

So what's on tap for this year? Our biennial Marathon seminar will be held March 23, where one could earn all the required Illinois CEUs in one very long day.

It's called a Marathon on purpose

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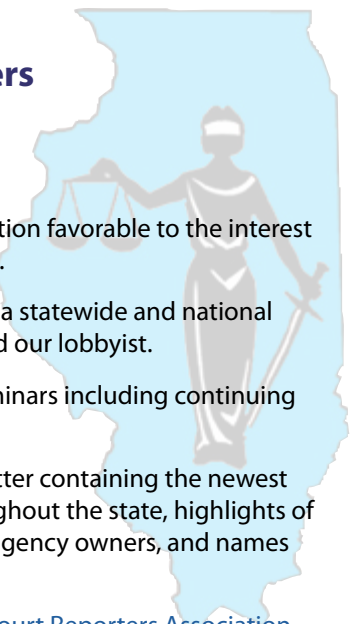
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For a listing of all **committees and current committee members**

[CLICK HERE](#)

## What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
- **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation 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

-- we start early and finish late. It's not a convention with exhibitors and fabulous parties, but rather another opportunity for those who need their points fulfilled to get them accomplished in one fell swoop.

Certainly we will watch to see whether or not a bill will be reintroduced to add voice writing as a testable, certifiable record-making skill under the Illinois CSR. As we talked about during convention, the membership is very divided on this matter -- 46% say yes, do add it; 32% say no, do not add it; and

22% are unsure. So what this means is that ILCRA as a whole is neither for nor against the addition of this skill; therefore, whether we take affirmative or negative action for the bill would be against a large portion of ILCRA's membership.

So what CAN we do? We educated ourselves this year with Tori Pittman's wonderful, informative presentation and demonstration. Also, Jessica Nardulli from Brown, Hay, and Stephens, our wonderful lobbyist, discussed the goings-on in Springfield, and members had a chance to ask questions about issues critical to our profession. She's been an amazing help throughout last year's session, keeping us up

to date on this bill (and others). We look forward to continuing our communication over the next session and beyond.

And of course we are looking ahead to next year's annual convention in Springfield, continuing our tradition of alternating convention locations between Region 1 and Region 2.

Thank you to all of you who have stepped up and helped ILCRA during this past year, and we look forward to another year of activism, education, and support together -- some of us are court reporters, some of us are captioners, and some of us are students, but we are all stenographers.

*continued on page 4*

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# Convention Excitement

By Georgia Long

My commute home from seminars has usually been at least two hours. Over the last couple of years, I've made the journey to and from convention alone. My fellow introverts will understand how much I appreciate this time; to either prepare myself for all of the upcoming socializing, or to decompress from the last 72 hours.

Even though I always come away exhausted and drained, there is also this renewed sense of motivation and drive I only find after attending ILCRA conventions. I look forward to implementing the couple valuable pieces of information I can remember into my everyday life, amongst the thousands of bits offered. I will hold on to all of the warm fuzzies floating around in my core from seeing old friends and making new ones.

This rehabilitated desire to be my best, to keep in touch, to do more, is actually nothing new. And it took me 16 years to realize what a wonderful and unique group of individuals we are to instill and encourage this kind of reaction in our fellow court reporters after a weekend together.

And it's incredibly gratifying to hear the overall feedback was that it was such a good experience for you as well. We create this for each other, and it's something that gave me pause this time; that year after year, we all keep coming together to share in this weekend to further ourselves, our profession, and each other.

The surveys we send out and the feedback we get from you are so important. I would encourage you to continue letting us know how we can best serve you. I have been determined since I came on the board to deliver relevant and meaningful seminars to our membership; the stuff you can actually use in your daily lives as court reporters.

So on the heels of another fantastic convention, I encourage you to reach out! You can find my personal e-mail on our website if you wish to contact me directly. There's also the general e-mail address for questions or comments, or you can reach out to us via Facebook Messenger through our ILCRA page.

Thanks to all who attended! I hope to see you all back next year, and don't hesitate to bring along a colleague, a coworker, or a student! Remember, we have sponsorships available for students to ease the cost of attending!

## President's Message

Continued from page 3

*\*Region 2 consists of the following counties: Adams, Alexander, Bond, Brown, Calhoun, Cass, Champaign, Christian, Clark, Clay, Clinton, Coles, Crawford, Cumberland, DeWitt, Douglas, Edgar, Edwards, Effingham, Fayette, Ford, Franklin, Fulton, Gallatin, Greene, Hamilton, Hancock, Hardin, Henderson, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jersey, Johnson, Knox, Lawrence, Livingston, Logan, Macon, Macoupin, Madison, Marion, Marshall, Mason, Massac, McDonough, McLean, Menard, Monroe, Montgomery, Morgan, Moultrie, Peoria, Perry, Platt, Pike, Pope, Pulaski, Putnam, Randolph, Richland, Saline, Sangamon, Schuyler, Scott, Shelby, Stark, St. Clair, Tazewell, Union, Vermilion, Wabash, Warren, Washington, Wayne, White, Williamson, Woodford.*

### ILCRA committees:

Contest Committee:

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Freelance Committee:

Chair Pamela Taylor

Officials Committee:

Chair Etta Jones

CART/Captioning Committee:

Chair LeAnn Hibler

Membership Committee:

Chair Deborah Cohen-Rojas

Public Relations Committee:

Chair Georgia Long

Student Membership Committee:

Chair Bernice Radavich

~ Kathryn Thomas, RDR, CRC, CSR

# 2018 ILCRA Realtime and Speed Contests Update

**By Rita Corson, CSR, RPR, RMR, CRR (Retired) Chairman of the ILCRA Realtime and Speed Contests**

The 2018 ILCRA Realtime and Speed Contests were well attended. We had a couple of new faces, which is good, and we even had some spectators!

We had nine contestants who participated in the Realtime Contest and seven contestants who participated in the Speed contest. I think I have to say that each one who signed up for these contests came out a better writer. Practicing

to prepare for the contest improves your speed and concentration.

You will have your socks blown off when you see some of these results! First of all, I want to thank Donna Urlaub of Urlaub, Bowen & Associates for sponsoring the Realtime Contest. And thank you to Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag and Planet Depos for sponsoring the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest.

A big thank you to my committee and dictators, Margaret "Peg" Sokalski, Judy Lehman, and Teresa Ozuna; and for all of you who stepped up to be on my committee, volunteered to grade, or be a monitor! I had a great group of ladies who helped out this year.

Well, my biggest thank you goes to the contestants who make these contests so much fun and exciting.

Here are the results:

## **Realtime Contest:**

There were two parts to this test – 180 wpm Literary and 200 wpm Testimony. It takes 95% accuracy to qualify. That's only 45 errors on the 180 Lit and 50 errors on the Testimony. For any of you who have taken the CRC test, what used to be known as the CRR test, you will appreciate what these reporters have accomplished with their test results. You will be amazed when you hear some of these percentages. These reporters blow me away!



*Qualifiers 2018 Realtime*



*Laura Kooy 2018 Realtime Champ and Judith Walsh Second Place Realtime*

In the 180 Literary we heard about how being a princess isn't all that it's cracked up to be. The contestants heard some of the rules that Meghan Markle and Kate Middleton have to follow in order to fit in with the Royal Family. To qualify you had to have 45 errors or less.

In the 180 Literary, the qualifiers were:

180 Literary:

1. Laura L. Kooy, 98.33% - 15 errors
2. Judith Walsh, 97.56%

The 200 wpm Testimony was about a semi-tractor trailer accident on an interstate. To qualify you had to have 50 errors or less. Those contestants who qualified and received certificates were:

200 wpm Testimony:

1. Judith Walsh, 99.4% - 6 errors
2. Donna Urlaub, 99.2%
3. Laura L. Kooy, 98.8%
4. Greg Weiland, 98.7% (This was Greg's first contest)
5. Stephanie Battaglia, 98.1%

6. Bernie Radavich, 98%
7. Paula Campbell, 97.5%
8. LeAnn Hibler, 96.8%
9. Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag, 95.6%

I could not award a third place medal because we only had two that qualified for the 180 literary portion of the contest. I averaged both of the scores from the 180 Literary and the 200 Testimony, to come with up a first and second place. Both contestants received medals.

Second place with a score of 98.48% was Judith Walsh. First-place and taking home the Bonni Shuttleworth Traveling Trophy was Laura L. Kooy with a score of 98.57%.

### **Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest:**

We had seven contestants participating in the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest. They worked very hard to be able to take home the Sally Cochran traveling



trophy. They are such dedicated competitors! They take this honor very seriously, and they should! I really admire their hard work and dedication!

The Speed Contest consisted of three takes - 220 wpm Literary, 230 wpm Legal Opinion, and 270 wpm Testimony.

The 220 Literary was a commencement speech given by Admiral William McRaven to the graduates of the University of Texas in 2014. To qualify, our contestants had to have 55 errors or less.

Those contestants who qualified and received certificates were:

220 wpm Literary:

1. Bernie Radavich, 99.55% - 5 errors
2. Donna Urlaub, 99.45%



*Donna Urlaub 2018 Speed Champ*



*Donna Urlaub Speed Champ and Laura Kooy Realtime Champ*



*Laura Kooy 2018 Realtime Champ*

3. Paula Campbell, 98.55%
4. Lorie Kennedy, 98.45% (tie)
5. Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag, 98.45% (tie)
6. Greg Weiland, 96.09%

The 230 Legal Opinion was an argument before the Appellate Court of an appeal by a gentleman wanting to get his FOID card reinstated after his felony conviction for mail fraud! Legal Opinions are always so hard you can't even imagine, but we did have four qualifiers. They could only have 58 errors:

230 wpm Legal Opinion:

1. Donna Urlaub, 99.22% - 9 errors
2. Lorie Kennedy, 97.74% (tie)



*Donna Urlaub 2018 Speed Champ and Lorie Kennedy 2nd place*

3. Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag, 97.74% (tie)

4. Paula Campbell, 96.52%

The 270 Testimony was testimony about an incident that happened along a country road where a deputy sheriff had a gun pulled on him. We only had two qualifiers who had fewer than 68 errors:

270 wpm Testimony:

1. Lorie Kennedy, 96.74% - 44 errors
2. Donna Urlaub, 96.44%

Since we only had two qualifiers in the 270 Testimony, we did not have a third place in the Speed Contest. In order to win a medal you have to qualify in all three areas. So I averaged the scores of those two contestants in order to pick the winner.





*Qualifiers 2018 Speed*

Second place with a score of 97.64% was Lorie Kennedy. This was Lorie's first time in the contest.

First place winner of the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest and receiving the Sally Cochran Traveling Trophy with a score of 98.37% was Donna Urlaub.

Congratulations to all our winners!

I am so in awe of all of these contestants. Just sitting for

these contests makes them winners in my book. They made me proud to be a part of this contest experience.

If you have never attempted a speed contest, why don't you sign up next year? It's exhilarating! And practicing for this contest can only improve your skills as a court reporter, plus you earn continuing education credits when you qualify.

## The 2018 Annual ILCRA Convention Recap



Well if you missed coming to Oak Brook for the 2018 Annual Convention then you truly missed an amazing conference. The seminars got great reviews, the learning opportunities were fabulous, and getting to reconnect with fellow colleagues made this year's convention "the very best in recent years," according to one attendee's evaluation! Also, the Board of Directors also wanted to make the convention extra special, so we asked our colleagues if they would help sponsor an "Out of this World Convention." The generosity of our members and our firms never ceases to amaze us.

*continued on page 9*



## Convention Recap

Continued from page 8

Here are some great pics of the convention in case you missed it.

Also, thanks to our great sponsors who made the reception possible.

### Universal Level



The Letter of the Law. The Spirit of Service.

### Star Level

Depo International  
Bridges Court Reporting  
Sarah Paszkiewicz Reporting  
Magna Legal Services

### Lunar Level

Esquire Deposition Solutions  
Urlaub Bowen & Associates  
Vernita Allen-Williams  
Mary Trezzo  
LeAnn Hibbler

A special thank you to Kathie Grove, from Grove & Associates, for sponsoring the fabulous breakfast at convention.



# YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE!

## *Spread the word!*

Encourage someone you know to explore court reporting, captioning, and CART as a career. Ensuring that qualified reporters are in the field is the only way to protect the profession and to fight digital technologies from taking over our industry.

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# Meet the new ILCRA Board Members

ILCRA is grateful for the newest Board members to join us. At the 2018 Annual Conference Donna Banks (ILCRA Treasurer) and Kim Cottrell (Region 2) were officially sworn in during the conference. Below are their biographies.



**Donna Banks** has been a court reporter for 28 years. After passing her Certified Shorthand Reporter test on her first attempt in the early 1990s, she began her career as a freelance court reporter for Advantage Reporting Service in Peoria. She was busy freelancing and being a single mother of two children for 20 years. She also worked part-time as a kickboxing instructor and as a spin instructor. In 2007 she worked for the Tenth Judicial Circuit in Peoria County as an official court reporter.

After Donna's children were grown and moved out of the house, she decided to make a change. She moved to Bloomington, Illinois, and took a position as an official court reporter in the Eleventh Judicial Circuit in McLean County. She has passed both the computer-proficiency test and the realtime test offered by the state. She has been at the McLean County Courthouse as an official court reporter for over eight years.

Now that she has more free time, she is excited to join the board of the Illinois Court Reporters Association and become more involved in the court reporting community.



**Kim Cottrell**, a native of Texarkana, Texas, completed court reporting school in the mid-1990s in Little Rock, Arkansas, and began her court reporting career in 2016 as an official court reporter in the Eighth Judicial District of Illinois in Adams County.

During the time between completing court reporting school and beginning her court reporting career, she worked as a legal assistant in a wide range of practice areas in Arkansas and Texas and then began scoping in 2012. After attending the NCRA convention in New York City in 2015, she was inspired to again pursue her dream of becoming a court reporter and began speed building in earnest while continuing as a scopist.

In the fall of 2016, Kim moved to Quincy, Illinois, passed the Part A exam to obtain her Restricted Shorthand Reporter license, and began working for the Eighth although her husband, James, a teacher and coach, remained in Texas to complete the 2016/2017 school year. He now teaches computer and media technology at Quincy Junior High School and continues to coach.

Kim then passed the Illinois CSR exam in the fall of 2017, obtaining her Certified Shorthand Reporter license.

# Who is Responsible for the Future of Court Reporting?

By Kim Cottrell

I love my job. I truly do. There are few people in this world who get up in the morning and enjoy going to work. I'm fortunate to be one of them. However, I came oh-so-close to never realizing my dream of becoming a court reporter.

35 years ago, I was in high school taking general business classes – typing, shorthand, and the like, while participating in a work-while-in-school program. My guidance counselor never once mentioned that I might find court reporting interesting, if she mentioned any kind of career path at all to me.

For years, I've been frustrated with that lack of help. I kept thinking, "How could she not help point me in the right direction?" I was also angry with myself for wasting years as a legal secretary before getting into the groove with my calling. It took my husband, a 30-year veteran teacher, to put it into perspective for me. He told me that with the emphasis on preparing college-bound students, scholarship applications, and dealing with the growing need to deal with personal disasters, counselors are so overwhelmed that they don't have time to breathe, much less research career paths for students who either aren't interested or qualified for universities.

What I've discovered is that we have to become our own advocates for our profession when it comes to encouraging young people to pursue court reporting. Yes, there is a national court reporter shortage. And in my base, Adams County, we have been short two to three court reporters since I arrived. The question becomes, what are we going to do about it?

Here's my answer, and I challenge others to try the same as well. We, as an organization and as individuals, need to become involved in career and job fairs across the state to expose students to what we do and the possibility of a career with a multitude of branches and with opportunities across the United States and all over the world. Additionally, we need to speak

to the counselors and ensure they are aware and knowledgeable enough to be able to point students in the direction of court reporting.

Recently, I participated in my first job fair in Pike County. I wasn't quite sure what to do or how to do things. The supervisor for the district asked for volunteers, so a fellow court reporter from another county in my district, Nicole Kopec, and I stepped up. I'm not a public speaker by any means, but with some basic advice from my husband and some other court reporters on what to expect, I gathered my equipment, prepared a brochure, used information provided by ILCRA, NCRA, Court Reporting Services, and anywhere else I could gather it – as well as candy – and off I went.

What I discovered was that there were students who had an interest once they understood what it was we do. Nicole and I talked to three or four who had a genuine interest. That doesn't sound like many students, but in a rural county it's impressive. Now, imagine what would happen if we did this across the state in an organized, consistent effort.

The one thing I discovered is that we need to be reaching students in the junior high/middle school level. This is where keyboarding is now being taught. This is where exposure to career choices first occur.

One or two days a year is not much to spend to help stem the tide of electronic recording. We all know that ER cannot replace the court reporter, but when jobs go unfilled, when court systems can't fill their positions, what choice do they have?

We have to ensure the future of court reporting, and the only way to do that is to get out from behind our machines and promote our profession. No one else is going to do it for us. Will it benefit me or anyone else monetarily? No, it won't. But what I did get from my first experience at a job fair was a profound sense of accomplishment, self-worth, and pride in what I do for a living.

We sit silently behind our steno machines working. Whether it's court reporting, captioning, or CART, it's time for us to make some noise about who and what we are.

# Taking Time to Get Students Off on the Right Foot

By Vernita Allen-Williams

Back in June I had the opportunity to visit students, faculty, and family members of court reporting students at South Suburban College. I was impressed by the support the students have from their families. It was an exciting visit.

My presentation was originally done during MacCormac's 100th anniversary in a panel format years ago. Bonni Shuttleworth, Kathie Grove, Mary Trezzo, and I took turns sharing with the students. However, the outline can be followed in a presentation given by a freelancer, CART provider, or captioner.

I hope you seize the opportunity to visit one of the three brick and mortar court reporting schools we have in Illinois or visit a high school near you to share our profession in the near future. Maybe my outline will help.

## **NUTS & BOLTS OF COURT REPORTING (Officials):**

I. Business Cards. First impressions are lasting. You want to be remembered as a professional. Remember to have business cards at the ready.

II. Introduce yourself to the court staff; clerk, court officer, attorneys. If you're allowed in chambers, introduce yourself to the judge. This is an opportunity for you to find out what to expect for the day or even the week; sentencings, hearings with witnesses, bench trials. Forewarned is forearmed. Now you can make personal

## Save the Date

**March 23, 2019 for the ILCRA Marathon Seminar**

which will be held at the

**EMBASSY SUITES CHICAGO-LOMBARD \ OAK BROOK**  
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*Registration opens January 15, 2019*

*This is your opportunity to get 10.0 CSR hours (or 1.0 CEUs)  
all in ONE DAY!*

## Taking time to get students off on the right foot

Continued from page 14

schedule adjustments because you have a forecast for the day.

### Dress Code:

I. If there is a dress code enforced at the courthouse you are assigned to, do yourself a favor and comply with it. Remember you may be seated for hours. Dress comfortably, hydrate, and don't be afraid to ask for a break when you need one.

### Practice Never Ends:

I. Another good habit to get into is M-F practice. People speak rapidly. You will do yourself a huge favor by making practice a part of your professional life. Regular practice also keeps you test ready. I encourage you to

test for advanced licensure ASAP. You never know what position may come up and your credentials may factor into whether you can submit your application OR NOT.

### Healthy Lifestyle:

I. Fatigue plays a huge part in our ability to concentrate. As you progress in your studies and eventually join the world of professional court reporting, make a point of getting restful sleep. After 30-plus years of reporting, trust me, it makes a difference.

### Medical Issues Happen:

I. I hope none of you experience carpal tunnel, rotator cuff injuries, fractured wrists, fingers, vision problems, or hearing loss to name a few. However, if you do, it doesn't mean your career is over. One of the best reasons to become a court reporter is you can choose to freelance, caption, CART, or be an official. Choice is good.

# Join ILCRA

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# ILCRA Awards 2018 Student Scholarships

**By Bernice Radavich,  
Student Scholarship  
Committee Chair**

I had the privilege of announcing the 2018 ILCRA Student Scholarship winners at the awards ceremony at our annual convention in Oak Brook. We were able to honor those who will be the future of our profession and encourage them to persevere until they cross the finish line.

Thank you to the Student Scholarship Committee members for all their hard work. The committee members this year were Lori Eder, Colleen Eitermann, and Shannon Dovgin.

The topic for this year's essay was **"Pick an experience during your court reporting education and explain how it has influenced your development."**

The essays were very well written, and the committee had a difficult time choosing one essay over another. On behalf of the Board and the Scholarship Selection Committee, I would like to thank each and every one of the students for applying for the scholarship this year. I would also like to thank all of the contributors to the Diane Dorwart Memorial Student Scholarship Fund and our student fund.

ILCRA awarded three scholarships in this competition:

In first place was Court Petros from MacCormac College. Court received a \$1,000 scholarship and a complimentary registration to the ILCRA annual convention in Oak Brook. The prize included hotel accommodations for one night and a one-year associate membership in ILCRA. He will also become a member of the Student Scholarship Committee for next year.

In second place and receiving a \$500 scholarship was Jennifer Rives from MacCormac College.

In third place and receiving a \$300 scholarship was Enrique Torres III from MacCormac College.

Congratulations to the 2018 ILCRA Student Scholarship Award winners!

## 2018 Winning Scholarship Essay — by Court Petros

### Remaining Calm in Court Reporting School

*When I decided to embark on the journey of court reporting school, I was unaware of the vast spectrum of emotions I would feel throughout my schooling experience. There are many highs and lows that a court reporting student feels. It is near impossible to explain the joy that you feel when you finally pass that 160 words per minute literary test that catapults you into a new speed. On the contrary, it is completely defeating when you miss passing a test by just one or two small errors. I realized early on that in order for me to succeed in school, it would not only require the coordination of my hands and mind, but also a strong relationship between my emotional responses and my ability to keep my mind clear.*

*I received a bachelor's degree in psychology from North Park University in 2013. At the time, I did not realize my psychology degree would become an invaluable asset to me during court reporting school. During my psychology education, I studied the use of anxiety as a motivator, rather than viewing it as a debilitating emotion. When my hands started shaking uncontrollably during my first 80 words per minute*



## Winning Scholarship Essay

Continued from page 16

timed speed test, my mind wandered back to my research on anxiety. I understood very quickly that if I wanted to be successful in court reporting school I would need to restructure how I correspond with the anxiety that I feel while taking tests.

A study by Hardy and Hutchinson portrayed the effects that heightened levels of anxiety can have on overall performance. In their study, they had participants climb a rock climbing wall at varying levels of difficulty. The subjects climbed difficult and easy climbing routes and reported their anxiety. The researchers found that when the participants were climbing the hardest routes, they reported very high levels of anxiety; however, they invested more effort in the task which actually enhanced their performance while climbing (Hardy & Hutchinson, 2007). Hardy and Hutchinson's study directly relates to how I decided to view anxiety while test taking. If my hands suddenly begin to shake during a test, I remind myself that it is natural for my body to experience anxiety when I am under high-pressure conditions. When I am able to rationally view anxiety as a bodily response to a stressful situation, I am able to calm my nerves and remain clear headed.

Another way that I have monitored my emotions while in school is through mindfulness and meditation. Pema Chodron is a Buddhist nun who encourages meditating with your eyes open and staring at a spot on the floor about four to six feet in front of you, "indicating an attitude of remaining awake and relaxed with all that occurs." It was humorous to me that during the first week of school, I was told to keep my eyes open and find a spot on the floor to look at about six feet in front of me. Having already practiced this posture during meditation, it allowed me to instinctually clear my mind of distracting thoughts while typing at high speeds and maintain a heightened focus.

I had no idea that court reporting school would challenge me so much mentally and emotionally. I did not realize how many tactics I would need to employ in order to keep my head clear and my attention focused. Currently, I am working on passing my 180 words per minute tests. I am hopeful that continuing to practice meditation and using my anxiety in a constructive way to enhance my performance will allow me to succeed in passing the Registered Professional Reporter test within the next six months. I am excited to use the strategies that I have learned in court reporting school when I become a professional court reporter.

ad infinitum

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