

PERSPECTIVE

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Fall 2021 Edition

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Kerry A. Mackey, CP

Hello my fellow paralegals! **Happy Fall!** **PANJ** had its first webinar for the new term on September 23, 2021 and it was of great interest to our members. **PANJ** was thankful to have William P. Lopriore, Jr. from the First American Exchange Company, LLC to discuss 1031 exchanges.



I am very excited to share that the articles in this newsletter focus on mental health and networking. We are all hard workers and need to remember to take care of ourselves! I hope you enjoy these articles and remember to take some time out of your day/week to have some fun and unwind!

As previously indicated in our prior newsletter, we are going to continue with our monthly webinars versus in-person dinner meetings.

We have included a Save the Date notice with all the dates for our future webinars along with the topics and guest speakers. As always, please email us to let us know if there is a certain topic that you would like to learn more about and we will look into it! We are currently only holding one webinar per month during our term but are open to having more than one webinar a month. The website will be updated with more information regarding the future webinars.

PANJ will be celebrating their 40th anniversary in 2022. We are hoping to have an anniversary party in-person in June. I am thrilled to be a part of **PANJ's** history and am looking forward to celebrating our history of the Association with all of you. Please stay tuned for more details.

Just as a little reminder – Please see our instructions below on how to join our webinars. Please note that you **do not** need a Webex account to join any of our webinars. After you have registered you will be sent an email with a link to join the meeting. That email will also include a phone number to call in for the webinar if you wish to take part over the phone.

If you would like to run a test run on how to join a Webex meeting, please visit <https://help.webex.com/en-us/nti2f6w/Webex-Meetings-Join-a-Test-Meeting>

Instructions on how to join Cisco Webex Meeting:

1. Open your email invite, and click Join Meeting
2. If this is the first time you are joining a Webex meeting, the Webex app will automatically download.
 - a. If you don't want to install anything on your computer or phone, click Join from your browser.
 - b. Click the installer file to install the app. If the app did not automatically download then click Download the app again.
3. Enter your name and email address, and click Next.
4. Enter the meeting password from your email invitation and click Next.
5. There will be a preview window where you can make sure that your audio and video are working before you join the meeting. Choose how you want to hear:
 - a. Using your computer audio (headset or speakers)
 - b. Call In- You can use your phone for audio. Dial the phone number in the email invitation when the meeting starts.
6. Choose whether or not you want to have your video and microphone turned on before you join the meeting.
7. Click Join Meeting.

For further instructions on joining a Cisco Webex meeting, please check out the link below:

https://help.webex.com/en-us/nrbgeodb/Join-a-Webex-Meeting#id_135011

Finally, the Association is open to suggestions for improvement. **PANJ** seeks to promote regulated high-level educational standards and uniform practice guidelines for paralegals throughout New Jersey. **PANJ** also provides helpful resources to new and experienced paralegals and promotes the education of the public for the advancement and improvement of the profession.

What are ways the Association can further serve its members and the paralegal profession? All suggestions are welcome! Send ideas and comments to Info@NJPara.org.

If you wish to contribute to upcoming editions of Perspective, please submit your pieces for review to Info@NJPara.org.

If you know a vendor who may be interested in advertising their product/service in the Perspective or at an upcoming webinar meeting, have the vendor contact Info@NJPara.org.

DISCLAIMER: The *Perspective* is a newsletter designed to report news and/or opinions of interest to PANJ members. The opinions expressed herein are solely those of the author, not the *Perspective* Editor nor the PANJ Executive Board. Publication herein does not imply endorsement in any manner. No information contained herein is intended nor should it be construed as legal advice. All articles presented herein are with permission of the author. Inclusion and editing of material is at the sole discretion of the Editor.



SAVE THE DATES! UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL WEBINAR MEETINGS

[Wednesday, November 10, 2021](#)

Guest Speaker: Patricia Greer from Berkeley College
Topic: Current Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Considerations

[Wednesday, January 19, 2022](#)

Guest Speaker: Jackie Daspit from The Becton Dickinson Intellectual Property Group
Topic: Intellectual Property Laws

[Thursday, February 17, 2022](#)

Guest Speaker: Nicola Jackson from the National Notary Association
Topic: Notary Laws

[Wednesday, March 16, 2022](#)

Guest Speaker: Jen Spencer from PRAISE Training LLC
Topic: Ethics

[Tuesday, April 12, 2022](#)

Guest Speaker: TBD
Topic: TBD

[Wednesday, May 11, 2022](#)

Guest Speaker: TBD
Topic: TBD

[Wednesday, June 8, 2022](#)

40th Anniversary Party & Installation of Officers

www.NJPara.org

Relax and Read this Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader:

Have you taken a deep breath today? Pause. Inhale *then* exhale after several seconds. You have almost made it to the end of 2021! This quarterly newsletter from the Paralegal Association of New Jersey (“PANJ”) will include helpful tools in the areas of relaxation and networking. We have a great feature on the benefits of joining PANJ. I will add that, thanks to PANJ, my LinkedIn network has doubled. Most of us (I’m sure it’s not just me) appreciate the value of having as many connections as possible to assist with a recruiter’s determination of our notability. I was fortunate enough to partake in career networking to find a real estate paralegal position this previous spring during a difficult economy. From there, I connected with a recruiter on LinkedIn who was impressed with my involvement in PANJ and here I am in a fantastic law firm!



Don’t forget to digest the short article on mental well-being, which I’m sure all of us could use during these unparalleled times. Remember to check in with yourself every once and awhile too. Enjoy an article by PANJ’s own certified yoga instructor on how paralegals can address anxiety and ease the tired mind. I hope that you will learn some new tips on managing stress and master a relaxation method that works for you.



I realize that a handful of us (or a hundred handfuls) are yearning for a vacation. Maybe there were some of us who were lucky enough to enjoy a quick getaway this past summer. Settle down with a good book if you’re not able to take time off. There are many ways to fit in relaxation that don’t necessarily require a vacation (although a vacation is mandatory every once and awhile). Try exercise or meditation or enjoy a freshly prepared meal. As a paralegal myself, I often forget that there is life outside of the office! Every hour or so, I stand up and walk around or go up and down stairs for a bit of exercise. Now that I’m working from home, I sit outside on my deck for a quick break but anyone can go outside during lunch if one is in the office. I’ve learned and adapted to scheduling exercise just like a business meeting. Literally, I must pull out my planner and pencil in the activity.

Remember that there is always a way to find time for yourself. You must find a way, or you’ll feel burned out for three hundred sixty five days a year. Being a paralegal is a challenging and gratifying career, but that doesn’t mean you have an excuse to *not* use your vacation days. Have you depleted your vacation days for the year, need a resume boost, or encouraged by this letter (if you pick the latter, I’d love for you to reach out and let me know)? Here’s an idea: join PANJ to add a volunteer position to your resume and highlight your expansion of interest in the paralegal profession at the same time.

Yours truly,
Jessica E. Resnick
Newsletter Editor for *Perspective*
<https://www.linkedin.com/in/jessicaeresnick/>



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
EXECUTIVE DEPARTMENT

Proclamation

WHEREAS, the State of New Jersey recognizes the many contributions of paralegals to the legal profession in the Garden State; and

WHEREAS, it is known that paralegals possess important legal skills and perform substantive legal tasks; and

WHEREAS, paralegals provide critical legal services to large and small companies, individuals and public entities throughout New Jersey;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Philip D. Murphy, Governor of the State of New Jersey, do hereby proclaim:

OCTOBER 15, 2021
AS
PARALEGAL DAY

in New Jersey.

GIVEN, under my hand and the Great Seal of the State of New Jersey, this twenty-second day of September in the year two thousand twenty-one, the two hundred forty-sixth year of the Independence of the United States.




Lt. GOVERNOR


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The Reasons Why You Should Join the Paralegal Association of New Jersey

By: Samantha Vitone

You are probably questioning yourself as to why you should join the Paralegal Association of New Jersey (PANJ). The real question is, why haven't you joined yet! There are several benefits to joining PANJ such as networking opportunities, monthly events and available educational sources to individuals who are trying to be a paralegal and those who are currently are the professional. If I never joined PANJ, I would not be where I am today in my career.

I had a deeper understanding of the paralegal industry is when I attended the New Jersey Paralegal Convention for the first time of October 2018, sponsored by PANJ. At that time, I was just accepted to the ABA Approved Paralegal Studies Program at Fairleigh Dickinson University. I had little knowledge of what being a paralegal entailed. I knew the Convention would be the perfect opportunity to network with other professionals, give me a deeper understand of the different fields of law and prepare myself for the paralegal program. From that day on, I still get excited attending the annual event and I always learn an abundant amount of information, more than I was expecting, both about the different types of law and about myself.

The Association emphasizes the importance of networking and I learned major skills to connecting with other legal professionals. I communicated and still do, with several members and board members alike from attending webinars and events hosted by PANJ. The monthly seminars and lectures are presented by guest speakers on various legal topics and current interest for students and veteran paralegals (fun fact: members are qualified for discounted attendance fees!). I have my most recent job because of actively networking. The beginning of this year, PANJ's Treasurer, Carol Snyder, reached out to me because she believed I would be a great candidate for a job opportunity that was posted on the Association's Job Bank. The Job Bank is a great resource that contains positions available for the novice and experienced paralegals. The valuable interview skills I learned from the events also helped me land my present-day job.

PANJ is a resourceful and excellent professional non-profit association that has been serving paralegals since 1982. Joining the Association will provide you career opportunities, networking, educational seminars and lectures, and materials that are up to date with the different law fields and the paralegal industry. Joining the Association would be a great benefit for a personal and career aspect.

Samantha Vitone is currently a Legal Specialist at Becton Dickinson and Company in the Regulatory and Litigation departments. She graduated from Salisbury University with a bachelor's degree in Sociology and received her Paralegal Certificate from Fairleigh Dickinson's ABA Approved Paralegal Studies Program. She is always learning to grow and expand her knowledge by trying to obtain certificates and attending lectures. On her free time, she enjoys doing long walks, spending time with family and friends and exploring.



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Finally, please remind your students to visit www.NJPara.org for upcoming events. If your school wishes PANJ to participate in co-sponsorship of an event or plan a Saturday seminar or simply visit your school to meet with your paralegal students, please contact Info@NJPara.org.

NALA Expo and Conference*

Over 1,400 people attended NALA's At Home Expo and Conference in July (a summary of which was included in *Perspective's* Summer edition). NALA is hoping for an in-person Expo and Conference in Phoenix, July 14-15, 2022.

ACP

NALA added Contract Management as a new ACP credential.

CP Exam*

The Knowledge Exam is administered all year long. PSI opened some centers. Check out their website for availability in your area: <https://www.psionline.com/closures>. If you're having difficulty finding a testing center, your workplace may be eligible. Contact NALA @ testing@NALA.org.

The Skills Exam testing window is October 2021.

**More information coming soon on PANJ's NALA Conference Attendance Drawing and CP Exam Sweepstakes!*



Christine A. Principe, is a Certified Paralegal. She has been a paralegal for 34 years assisting attorneys in a variety of practice areas including commercial litigation, mortgage and tax lien foreclosures, and estate administration. Currently, she is in the complex commercial litigation department at Sills Cummis & Gross, P.C. Christine is a PANJ Board Member and NALA Liaison. She is also a Board Member of NJ Paralegal Conference. Christine can be reached at: NALALiaison@NJPara.org

Are you seeking employment? Make sure you check out the Job Bank! New positions are added regularly. Don't miss out on a potential great opportunity!

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MD

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Kerry A. Mackey, CP

President of PANJ and Member of the New Jersey State Bar Association Special Paralegal Committee



How did you decide to become a paralegal and why did you stay as a paralegal?

After graduating college in 2008 with my Business Administration degree I moved to Florida and got a job working as a restaurant manager. I was miserable working in a restaurant because my only restaurant experience before that was a hostess position over summer break, now, I was running the place. Not long after I started I realized that I wanted to go back to school. The job market in 2008 was awful so the only jobs that I could get were in sales or working in a restaurant with my degree. I decided to move back to New Jersey and found the Paralegal Certificate Program at FDU.

What's a helpful tip for someone in our industry?

Always be willing to learn. If you are always interested in learning something new it will help with your career and it shows initiative.

Why did you join the PANJ Executive Board?

Honestly, I joined the PANJ Executive Board because I was asked, and I was looking to further my career/education. It was the best decision I have ever made. I love being a part of this organization.

If you could change one thing about how you got into the legal profession, what would it be?

I do not think I would change anything on how I got into the legal profession. I was in the process of obtaining my paralegal certificate from FDU when I got my first job at a law firm. I started working for 3 young attorneys at the time and it was a great first job. They were very helpful and patient with me as I was still learning about the legal field.

What do you do to relax/wind down after a long day of work?

I like to relax and hang out with friends after a long day of work. If the weather is nice, I will go for a walk and clear my mind. I also enjoy sitting out on my patio with friends and a glass of wine.

Do you prefer coffee or tea to start your day? If you don't drink either, what do you drink?

I drink one cup of coffee a day. I also like tea but usually only drink tea in the winter time.

Jessica E. Resnick

Newsletter Editor and Trustee-at-Large

What's a helpful tip for someone in our industry?

Always ask for help before making a critical mistake. I'd rather learn to do the job right than think I'm doing it correctly.

Why did you join the PANJ Executive Board?

I joined the PANJ Executive Board to network and to find a way to add regulations for paralegals in New Jersey since paralegals are not currently under any guidelines in this state.

What book are you currently reading? Or what book do you recommend?

I try to read as many books as possible (at night). Therefore, I will recommend a book that was one of my favorites this year. "Where the Crawdads Sing" by Delia Owens is a must read and you won't be able to put it down.

What is a typical day as a paralegal like for you?

I am a real estate paralegal. I normally work on commercial or residential closings, business transactions, lease agreements, and entity formation documents. Most days I am preparing for a closing, which entails tasks such as reviewing closing figures, drafting affidavits or resolutions, checklists and coordinating the schedules of all the parties who are required to attend the closing. There are many more responsibilities when arranging for a closing – those are just a few!

What is the most important skill you have developed in your career?

Remaining organized under pressure and maintaining harmony between individuals or companies who are involved with a closing.

If you worked as another profession before becoming a paralegal, how did you transition into the paralegal profession?

I went directly from college to Fairleigh Dickinson University to obtain my paralegal studies certificate. I didn't have another career, however, I briefly worked in retail before becoming a paralegal.



Jennifer Ciaburri
Recording Secretary



What is a typical day as a paralegal like for you?

With the many positions that I hold, there is no typical day as a paralegal. Some of my days are completely filled with administrative responsibilities, while other days there might be a client emergency or motion to be filed. As a paralegal, it is important to know that your day will not be routine, and you need to be prepared for anything that might come your way.

What is the most important skill you have developed in your career?

There are many important skills that I have learned over the years. You need patience, remember that you are not the only one who is busy and that others you might be waiting on have competing deadlines as well. Stay organized—it will help not only you but the attorneys you work with to stay on track. Dependability is key...it is important for your attorneys to know that they can rely upon you. For as much work as you might have, they have at least that, and probably more.

Why did you join the PANJ Executive Board?

I decided to join the Executive Board because I wanted to help the organization grow and help my fellow paralegals obtain the skills they need for a successful career.

Do you prefer coffee or tea to start your day? If you don't drink either, what do you drink?

Neither, I am a hot chocolate drinker.

If you worked as another profession before becoming a paralegal, how did you transition into the paralegal profession?

My current job was my first job out of college and I am happy to say that after 21 years, I am still there.

What's a helpful tip for someone in our industry?

It is important for someone to know that no matter how well you plan your day out, there will be those days where you just don't seem to get anything done that was on your list. Don't let that upset you...there is always tomorrow (unless, of course it was due today. 😊)

How did you decide to become a paralegal and why did you stay as a paralegal?

My initial career path was to go to law school. After college, I decided to work for a year in a law firm to make sure that law school was what I really wanted to do. After working, I knew that, while I loved the legal field, being a lawyer wasn't for me.



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Paralegal Mental Health Awareness: Appreciate You!

By: Laurie A. Robinson, RYT

MentalHealth.gov describes mental health as "emotional, psychological, and social well-being." Mental Health, more specifically Wellness, as I like to call it, is and always will be a salient topic of discussion. You can always find mental health support for "legal professionals." When you look, you can find resources for an attorney who has had a mental break and uses alcohol to cope, and you can find a resource for attorneys who are struggling with issues like substance abuse or just coping with life. Even the New Jersey State Bar has a Lawyers Well Being Special Committee to "promote the professional well-being of attorneys..." However, perhaps what has always been most notable to me was that the resources did not, and still does not, include Paralegals as "Legal Professionals." We are indeed "legal professionals." Moreover, I believe that our stress levels are just as high, if not higher than some attorneys.

Think about it for a second, paralegals are charged with so many tasks that many attorneys really do not understand the complexities of, and they do not understand the time it takes for us to complete the tasks effectively and efficiently. Lest we forget, they say it must be done "immediately if not sooner." As a result, Paralegals are often stressed, dealing with high anxiety levels, yet still trying to do a great job. Well, that was my life. It started becoming difficult to destress. I was anxious all the time. I was told to try "a glass of wine before bed." That did not work. I was told just don't think about it. Well, you know that won't happen. After completing a half-marathon with a friend, she gifted me 10 yoga classes. Those classes gave me a new appreciation for self-care. So much that I became a yoga instructor. Self-Care is mental freedom.

Sadly, there will always be something else to do. Another memo, brief, or appointment to schedule. We are constantly reminded of a deadline. There will always be an "immediately if not sooner" assignment. Despite what we think, it is okay to take your time off- you work hard for it. It is okay to take your vacation. The mere fact that you are busy does not mean that you must never take any time for yourself. Take a midweek day off and go watch the sunrise. Setting boundaries is necessary for your mental health. Being a paralegal is as challenging, as it is rewarding. That does not mean that your work is your life.

You see, as a Paralegal, or anyone for that matter, you must learn to appreciate yourself, outside of your job. As you are reading this, do you notice that maybe your jaws are clenched, or are your shoulders hunched? Perhaps you are holding your breath. You are probably thinking whether you've forgotten something. That must not be your life.

Mental health and wellness looks different for everyone, but the end goal is the same, taking care of YOU. I believe that everyone, if you have not already done so, should try yoga and meditation. Yoga is the union of mind and body. There are so many benefits of yoga. Perhaps one of the most important benefits of yoga and meditation collectively is breathing. Through yoga and meditation, you learn to control your breathe. It has been said breathing can boost your immune system. Yoga has also been found to improve posture and help with back pain. This is important for those days you've been working long hours. Yoga helps manage stress and boost your metabolism. Not to mention, it can also improve your self-esteem.

Likewise, the benefits of meditation are endless. Meditation increases self-awareness and provides you with a mechanism to put your stress into perspective. It also helps to increase your patience, by controlling anxiety. This is something that is useful at work. Ultimately,

whatever self-care looks like for you, you must practice it. You must maintain a work/life balance. Set boundaries, understanding that it is ok to take some time for yourself. See yourself as a burning flame on a candle, once the flame is out, the light is gone. Don't do that to yourself. With that same energy that you pour into your work, pour some into yourself. Love, Honor, and Appreciate yourself every day! Accept that you are perfect, even if you sometimes don't feel like it. Not just because you are a Paralegal, but because you are you, uniquely made.

Finally, I invite you to take a Deep Breath (Inhale) in through your nose and Deep Breath (Exhale) out through your mouth, and again, and one last time. Deep Breath In and Deep Breath Out. Now take a moment to notice how that made you feel. That is what self-care feels like.

~Namaste/Ase'



Laurie A. Robinson, is a 200-hr RYT yoga teacher with Yoga Alliance. She is currently completing her 300-hr YTT practicum. She is certified in Restorative Yoga, Yin Yoga, and Meditation. She is a Paralegal, hiker, runner, and yogi. She prefers teaching Restorative yoga, Yin Yoga, and Gentle Yoga.



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Mental Health for Paralegals

By: Anne Murphy Brown, J.D., Associate Professor and Director of Legal Studies at Ursuline College

Mental health is always a relevant topic, but the current situation with the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the importance of self-care, support and awareness needed to maintain good mental health. The ABA's Commission on Lawyer's Assistance Programs has provided a number of mental health resources for legal professionals that may be helpful during these challenging and unpredictable times.

Even during relatively normal times, the law is a profession that requires extensive "brain power" for critical thinking, analytical reasoning, logic, focus, attention and recall. As professionals, the "output" or "product" that we create is the documentation of our ideas and advice. None of this work can be done at its best without taking care of our mental health.

What is mental health? Simply stated, it is our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It comprises how we feel and how we react to the world. To be sure, we all have "good" days and "bad" days, but compromised mental health, in the form of depression, anxiety or other mental disorders, can take an enormous toll on our lives and careers.

Lawyers, paralegals and support staff may face greater mental health challenges because of the nature of our work. Clients bring legal professionals the most difficult problems of their lives and demand they be resolved favorably. Expectations are high and deadlines are ever-looming. In 2018, the American Bar Association, in conjunction with the Hazelden Betty Ford Foundation, completed a study titled, The Prevalence of Substance Use and Other Mental Health Concerns Among American Attorneys.

How do paralegals fit in to the legal profession's mental health movement?

Although there is no specific data on paralegals, if the attorneys with whom we work are experiencing mental health issues at a greater rate, it would stand to reason that paralegals and legal support staff are subject to the same concerns. According to an August 12, 2019 article from ALM Media (formerly, American Lawyer Media), law firm staffers feel left behind in the legal profession's mental health movement.

In addition to law firm resources, attorneys may be able to turn to their local Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP), but what resources are available for paralegals and support staff? There are places all people who are struggling can turn, both locally

through addiction and mental health organizations and crisis hotlines, and nationally from the following organizations:

National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)

Phone: 1-800-950-6264

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Phone: 1-877-726-4727

RehabCenter.Net

An organization that connects people who are seeking treatment to the resources they need. They offer an extensive list of rehab programs and treatment facilities to choose from. They also have a library of educational articles on addiction and recovery, which can benefit residents both in the US and internationally.

Phone: (866) 650-2452

Steps are being taken to address the widespread substance abuse and mental health issues experienced by legal professionals, such as the ABA's Well-Being Pledge which encourages firms and companies to adopt specific steps in promoting employee well-being. But, while these efforts mention covering legal staff, as do some COLAP mission statements, more needs to be done to ensure that paralegals and other legal support staff are included and supported by these efforts.

Moreover, research shows some simple things we can all do to improve our mental health; exercising, spending time outside, eating a balanced diet, getting enough sleep, and even talking to a friend. Winter can be a particularly challenging time as days are shorter and colder. Taking care of our mental health is an important part of maintaining our careers and having happy, healthy, productive lives. Emotional and psychological well-being must be a priority for all legal professionals, including paralegals.

Please, be well.

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