

The following is the President's Message from the July 2006 issue of Citations, a publication of the Ventura County Bar Association.

**MEET YOUR NEIGHBOR
THE VENTURA COUNTY PARALEGAL ASSOCIATION**

By Loye Barton, Esq.

Depending on your point of view, you may or may not accept the premise that “behind every successful woman, there is a good man,” or vice versa. But I suspect there is little argument that “behind every successful lawyer, there is a good paralegal.” Ventura County is blessed to have an entire association of paralegals working to make Ventura County attorneys even better. Meet the Ventura County Paralegal Association (“VCPA”).

I first became acquainted with VCPA when they were known as the Ventura County Association of Legal Assistants or VALA, and VALA was making a contribution to the Ventura County Legal Services Program – better known as VLSP. (Don't let all of the acronyms confuse you.) That was my first hint that this was an organization that put its collective noses to the grindstone and made things happen. I became better acquainted with VCPA as a speaker or attendee at several VCPA dinner meetings, and through their awesome annual wine tasting parties. Several of the paralegals in my office are VCPA members, and I am certain that their association with VCPA has empowered them.

Paralegal Jami Knupp says, tongue in cheek, that VCPA is just a group of folks who get together to have dinner once a month. They are much more. VCPA is a corporation founded in August of 1984 with the purpose of providing a forum for paralegals to network, help each other out when they enter unfamiliar territory—which attorneys send them into all the time, and a place to exchange “experiences, information and opinions.” VCPA is a member of CAPA (the California Alliance of Paralegal Associations) and NALA (the National Association of Legal Assistant).

VCPA helps its members to comply with Business and Professions Code § 6450 (d), which requires a paralegal to complete four hours every three years of continuing education in ethics and four hours every two years of continuing education in general or specialized areas of law. Each Spring VCPA conducts a Springtime MCLE conference, a cost-efficient, convenient, local, and well prepared and attended opportunity for paralegals and attorneys to earn credits in multiple subjects at one location and on one Saturday. The presenters include federal and local judges, attorneys, and technology experts.

For nine of the twelve months of the year, VCPA has a dinner meeting with a speaker for MCLE credit, generally on the third Thursday of the month at Ottavio's in Camarillo. The dinner meetings are an opportunity to socialize, talk about changes in the law and share practice ideas, and to be exposed to new areas of the law. I recently received my hard-to-get credit in bias at a dinner meeting with Tina Rasnow as the speaker, and got insight into the court's particular views about special needs trusts at a dinner meeting where Judge Kent Kellegrew spoke.

The biggest event of the year is VCPA's wine tasting and silent auction, which raises money for scholarships and VLSP. The party and auction generally coincide with Paralegal Day in June. This year the event was held at the Sheraton Four Points in Ventura and attended by around 125 members of the legal community, who enjoyed great wine and hors d'oeuvres and the opportunity to bid on approximately 65 auction items. Everyone is welcome to the party. It is one of the few opportunities to bring a significant other and have a good time.

In addition to the high-profile events, you will see VCPA members at the Bar's annual planning meeting and at the Law Day 5k, helping to make the event a success.

One of my outstanding paralegals joined VCPA when she was still in paralegal school in 1988. She remains a member because of the networking, the camaraderie, the friendships and the information available through the association. She also likes the idea of VCPA's job bank, just in case, which provides an opportunity for members to learn of attorneys seeking paralegals.

VCPA is a consistent support to the bar association. Not only does VCPA help the paralegals who are members to achieve their highest level of work success, it also provides the members with opportunities to support each other in a profession that is often demanding and complex. Meet your neighbor.

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