

**ABA/NLADA EQUAL JUSTICE CONFERENCE- MAY 9-12, 2018**

The 2018 American Bar Association (ABA)/National Legal Aid & Defenders Association (NLADA) Equal Justice Conference was held on May 10-12, 2018 at the Hilton San Diego Bayfront. Christine Flynn, NFPA Chair of Pro Bono and Community Service and NFPA Liaison, along with Teresa Scharf, President of the Paralegal Association of Columbus, Ohio and NFPA Pro Bono Committee member, were invited by the American Bar Association (ABA) to present a paralegal pro bono session at the conference. We also attended the various workshops while at the conference. We arrived in San Diego on Wednesday, May 9, 2018.



## **THURSDAY- MAY 10, 2018**

On Thursday, May 10, 2018, we headed to the conference location for registration.



Following completion of registration, the Opening Plenary Session was held. The session included the following speakers: (1) Tani G. Cantil- Sakauye, Chief Justice of California; (2) Robert K. Ross, M.D., President and Chief Executive Officer for the California Endowment, a private, state-wide health foundation addressing health needs. The Opening Plenary Session continued with remarks from Nalani Fujimori Kaina, Conference Co-Chair and the Executive Director of the Legal Aid Society of Hawaii as well as George T. (Buck) Lewis III, Chair of the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono and Public Service. We then each attended different workshops in order to maximize our information gathering process and overall experience.

Christine began the day by attending “Integrating Senior Attorney Volunteers into the Core Services of Your Organization.” This gathering included numerous panelists from the Legal Aid Society of Cleveland, Ohio. We discussed tapping into the senior volunteer population and how to engage and retain senior volunteers in your pro bono program. We thought this encounter might be particularly helpful to NFPA in recruiting retired paralegals for volunteer projects. In the meantime, Teresa attended the seminar “Educating Legislators About Legal Aid.” The panelists noted the significance of personal relationships with legislators, involving staff and inviting legislators to pro bono events.

Next we both attended the networking lunch “Combating Sexual Harassment in Housing.” This session consisted of a stimulating and frankly eye-opening presentation by R. Tamar Hagler with the U.S Department of Justice on Combating Sexual Harassment in Housing. We explored issues including the effects of stress, eviction and homelessness in the community. Following the session, we had an extensive conversation with Ms. Hagler on exploring new paralegal pro bono opportunities for our NFPA members in this area. We exchanged business cards and agreed to follow-up and continue our dialogue.



During the afternoon, Christine attended “Anchoring Legal Aid in Health Centers through Medical Legal Partnership (MLP)” where an overview of MLP components was provided with a focus on community centers. We discussed case studies and focused on how the MLP approach identified legal needs directly associated with health issues. Teresa attended “Perfect Pro Bono Attorneys: Defining Greatness and More”. This session addressed the need to stay abreast of changes in technology with a discussion of software and the benefits of tools such as CLIO, virtual law office technology and other software products. Attendees were also encouraged to contact Probono.net ([probono.net](http://probono.net)), a national non-profit organization dedicated to increasing access to justice through innovative uses of technology and increased volunteer lawyer participation. We closed out the day by attending the “Youth Homelessness” and “Anything But In Person”, noting the importance of the user experience in court planning and operations via on-line, by telephone or by video conference. The evening continued with the Conference Committee Party where we were able to catch up with old friends, including representatives from Legal Aid in Ohio as well as members of the Standing Committee on Pro Bono & Public Service, and become acquainted with new ones.

## **FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018**

On Friday May 11, 2018, we were honored to present “Paralegal Pro Bono Roundtable.” Our workshop had good attendance, was well received and provided us with an opportunity to share some background information on NFPA, our pro bono committee, voluntary reporting of hours, the paralegal role in pro bono and some of our national (as well as local) projects. We also conducted an interactive question and answer session with the attendees and enjoyed extensive discussions with several attorneys who thanked us for sharing the information we provided. Some attendees were not even aware that there is a definition of “paralegal” and appreciated being advised. The session lasted an hour and a half and we were still taking with the attorneys well past that time limit!



We thereafter attended the concurrent workshops including “Latest News from ABA Free Legal Answers” (a national portal for low income individuals to pose civil legal questions). The panelists provided the status of this ABA project, developments and plans, including disaster response. We also discussed the great need for paralegal volunteers to serve as remote administrators. Teresa attended “Collaborating Pro Bono Services with the Courts.” This meeting included dialogue on the need, as well as the numerous benefits, of self-help centers and web sites.

During the conference on Friday we also had some time to network with the wonderful sponsors and vendors at the conference. We met with the representatives from the Animal Legal Aid Defense Fund (ALDF). ALDF’s Pro Bono Program is the nation’s largest pro bono network for animal protection. Working to expand the practice and understanding of animal law in the legal community, the Pro Bono Program partners with attorneys and pro bono coordinators across the country. The program utilizes these volunteers to support the Animal Legal Defense

Fund's litigation, criminal justice, and legislative goals. The representatives advised us that the project is in need of paralegal volunteers on a national basis to assist with pro bono projects. We were quick to advise that we would be happy to help! We exchanged information and documentation. We are proud to report that this new pro bono opportunity has been sent out to the NFPA membership with the assistance of NFPA Headquarters, Lisa Lynch, CRP, and our wonderful Region Directors. A true team effort!

We then headed to the Awards Presentation Luncheon, where several ABA employees were honored for their years of service and dedication. Hilarie Bass, American Bar Association President and Jo-Ann Wallace, President and CEO of National Legal Aid & Defender Association provided remarks.

The afternoon continued with courses including "VetLex", an innovation for connecting veterans to lawyers. NFPA is actively involved in this pro bono project through the Veterans Claims Assistance Network (VCAN). Teresa attended "Creating a Pro Bono Partnership to Close the School to Prison Pipeline." Thereafter, Christine attended a brief meeting of the ABA Standing Committee on Pro Bono & Public Service. During this two hour meeting, the committee provided basic updates on projects and working groups. Teresa continued with a session on "Increasing Seniors Access to Justice in Rural Communities." This class facilitated a discussion on ways to reach this community, including public announcements, community centers and legal wellness check-ups. Potential issues were identified, including lack of transportation and communication. In fact, during that session, Teresa met the three speakers from West Tennessee Legal Services and inquired as to whether they considered utilizing paralegals to meet their goals and staffing needs. The panelists quickly noted that they were extremely interested but stated that they just did not know how to find or partner with local paralegals. Within seconds Teresa was able to provide information on the Middle Tennessee Paralegal Association, who is very active in pro bono. The speakers were beyond thrilled and agreed to reach out to the local association for some much needed assistance.

The evening ended with a Tribute Reception for our ABA friends, Terry Brooks, Beverly Groudine, Will Hornsby and Steve Scudder. These individuals were honored for their long standing service to the ABA. We then headed down out on the town for a wonderful dinner at the Old Spaghetti Factory and Christine's first taste of "mud pie" for dessert!

## **SATURDAY, MAY 12, 2018**

On Saturday May 12, 2018, we returned for Concurrent Workshops #8, including a fascinating presentation on "Prison Justice" and the role of students, law clinics, community partners and paralegals. We discussed the growing need for legal service delivery to prisoners and/or those on parole and understanding how best to partner with different groups. Teresa attended a very stimulating presentation "Success at Every Step: Developing Milestones for Legal Services Professionals." This session provided a comparison on the various phases of

your professional career. The session was interactive with a spirited discussion of milestones and lessons learned, as well as building relationships and how professional skills develop over time.

We then headed to the Closing Plenary Session and Brunch. Perla Ni, Esquire offered thought-provoking overview of the upcoming 2020 Census: How Local Governments and Non-Profits Can Help Stating Now. Ms. Ni stressed issues such as how to ensure a fair and accurate 2020 Census (for funding purpose) and serious undercounting. The closing session allowed us to come together to discuss access to resources, ideas and inspiration to answer this important call to action. The conference concluded at noon. This provided us with just enough time for a quick trip to through Balboa Park outside the San Diego Zoo. We then travelled onto Old Town San Diego for an early dinner and to see the beautiful Coronado Beach before heading to the airport!



## **CONFERENCE- CONCLUSION**

We extend our heart-filled thanks to the NFPA Board, Armed Forces and Pro Bono Committees for allowing us to attend this conference and for their ongoing support. This conference was attended by over 1000 individuals from every aspect of pro bono. The meaningful programming afforded us opportunities to network with fellow attendees, foster our skills and experience, increase dialogue, while garnering new ideas and approaches to pro bono and community service projects. However, we can truly attest that the most important take-away from this conference was our rekindled inspiration, passion, and appreciation for the importance of NFPA's ongoing work and dedication to assist in the access to justice. As the leader of the paralegal profession, we look forward to continuing our crucial work in this area through NFPA.

Save the date--the 2019 Equal Justice Conference will be held from May 9-11 in Louisville, Kentucky.