

SUMMONS

WDALA

An Association for Paralegals/Legal Assistants



FEBRUARY 2025

www.wdala.org

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From the PRESIDENT

Hello Members! I hope this finds you and your family well...and staying warm!

As we begin a new year, I would like to take a moment to reflect on our incredible journey through 2024: the new connections we made as an organization, the new members we gained, the amazing continuing education seminars that we continue to provide, and the astonishing 40-year milestone WDALA has surpassed. It is with heartfelt appreciation that I get to lead this organization and be a part of an organization that is so wonderful and compassionate!

Your dedication, commitment, and continued collaboration has helped WDALA achieve recognition in the legal field and within our communities. Together, we've demonstrated the power of our collective efforts, and I'm truly excited about what we can accomplish in the year ahead. Let us continue to build upon the foundation we've laid, with a renewed focus on openness, collaboration, and outreach. I'm confident that, with your ongoing involvement, we will continue to grow and strengthen our organization.

Please keep an eye out for the upcoming teleseminar in February and information on our Spring and Fall Seminar! Also, we have new members, so please reach out to them, invite them to your region events, and make them feel welcome!

As always, please let me know what WDALA can do better for you, its members, and its communities? Also, let me know how I can assist you going forward - specific training sessions, one-on-one discussions, group gatherings, and/or volunteering options; as I am here to help in any way possible. Please reach out!



I wish you and your loved ones a year filled with health, happiness, and success. Thank you for your unwavering support to our shared vision. I look forward to working alongside each of you to make 2025 our most successful year yet. Thank you!

Anna Heinen



Congratulations

Ashley Miller, ACP

Ashley Miller has successfully completed the Advanced Certified Paralegal program. She is now entitled to use the "ACP" (Advanced Certified Paralegal) credential.

Save **THE DATES**

MAY 1, 2025

WDALA'S SPRING SEMINAR

Sleep Inn & Suites
Minot, ND

SEPTEMBER 16-17, 2025

WDALA'S FALL SEMINAR

ND Heritage Center
Bismarck, ND

Member Spotlight



Trisha Kinnischtzke

How long have you been a member of WDALA?

This is my second year as a member and also Region III Director. Shout out to Laurie Guenther for persuading me to join and Melissa Hamilton for convincing me to jump in and take the Region III Director position.

What do you like most about being a member of WDALA?

After being in the legal community for 20 years, I have enjoyed getting to know so many talented individuals working in the same field. I wish I would have joined sooner; it would have been helpful to have this wealth of knowledge and support when I was new to the legal field!

What company do you work for?

The North Dakota Supreme Court for Chief Justice Jon J. Jensen. I also had the pleasure of working for former Chief Justice Gerald W. VandeWalle, as well as his successor, Justice Douglas A. Bahr.

Why did you choose to pursue a career in the legal field?

In high school, through the cooperative office education program, I worked every day after school at the North Dakota Department of Health. It was then I realized I really enjoyed clerical work. While at NDSU, I initially wanted to go into criminal psychology, but after my first introduction to psychology class I realized it was not what I had anticipated. I ended up switching to MSUM when I found out they had a four-year paralegal program that offered an emphasis in criminal law. It combined my desire for criminal and clerical work!



Do you have any creative outlets or interests?

I have always had a love for dance. I danced competitively from my youth through college. I previously mentioned that I transferred from NDSU, where I was on the dance team, to MSUM. I was able to continue dancing at MSUM as they offered a minor in Theatre Dance. Upon graduation, I moved back to Bismarck where I coached my competitive high school dance team for over a decade. I received the North Dakota Association of Dance and Drill ("NDADD") Coach of the Year award in 2012 and was inducted into NDADD's Hall of Fame in 2015. I stopped coaching when I had kids, but continued to stay involved with NDADD as an executive board member and have been a certified judge for NDADD since 2019. In 2023, I received my 20-year NDADD service award (pictured on the left, with my friend, Desiree Nygaard, who was previously a NDADD executive board member and judge, formerly on my coaching staff, and dancer on my team).



What do you love most about your job?

Aside from the wonderful people I work with, I enjoy the ebb and flow of the workload. Although the workload itself can vary depending on the day, I like the consistency of the type of work I do, while having enough variety that it does not get boring. I also have an incredible boss who lets me structure my workday as I see fit and has always made me feel valued in my position.

Which celebrity would you like to meet?

I would love to meet Kristen Bell. She seems kind, funny, generous, and down-to-earth. I have been a fan of hers since her Veronica Mars days. I actually know someone who knows Ms. Bell personally, so I am still hopeful it will happen some day!

What experiences and past roles have led you to where you are today?

I have worked in several areas: Bismarck Regional Child Support Unit, private practice, and an assortment of non-legal jobs. I believe having a diverse work background helped reinforce my decision to stay in the legal field.

If you had a month off to travel anywhere you desire, where would you go?

My dad is of Scottish descent, so I would love to travel to Scotland. Judge William Falconer, my great grandfather (pictured on the left), and his son, my grandfather—who my dad is named after, Harry McLean Falconer (pictured on the right), belong to the McLean Clan of Scotland. Their kilts are made with the McLean plaid. In former years, you could tell what clan a person belonged to by what color plaid they were wearing in their kilt. Since they all belonged to the McLean Clan, the name McLean has been continued down through the years. My dad, my older brother, and my nephew all share the middle name “McLean.”



What is the last TV show you binged watched?

Nobody Wants This starring Kristen Bell and Adam Brody.

If you could visit any place in the world, where would it be?

Scotland or Africa. I have always wanted to go on an African safari!

Have you ever met a celebrity?

In 2010, I met Holly Madison—a former Playboy Bunny, while in Mexico. She was filming for her show, Holly’s World, which was a reality TV show. It solidified how fake “reality” TV truly is. They were very inconsiderate their entire stay, acting like the upscale, all-inclusive, five-star resort we were on was a “Spring Break” destination. Needless to say, every guest was happy to see them leave!

What career advice would you give to your younger self?

Keep going. You will have several jobs, some better than others, but all of those jobs lead to opportunities. Eventually, you will have a pinch-me-moment when you realize you get to work with some of the most brilliant people and have the world’s best boss!

Member Spotlight

Shari Erdman, ACP



Happy New Year!

I believe I first became a member of WDALA during my days with the Williams County State's Attorney's Office. I started with this office in the mid to late 90s and stayed for thirteen years. This is where my paralegal career actually started with the encouragement of the State's Attorney. I was not a continuous WDALA member during my job transitions but always came back!

WDALA has so much to offer, including top-notch continuing legal education at their spring and fall seminars. And the fact that we can attend those seminars via zoom definitely affords me, and others, the opportunity to attend when our work calendars/personal lives are not the most accommodating. Another benefit is the lasting friendships you will make. Some of my fondest WDALA memories are attending the NALA conventions with my fellow members! Additionally, you will have amazing contacts to bounce ideas off or ask questions. One of my highest honors was serving as WDALA president for two years. I encourage anyone to become a board member at some point if they haven't yet.

I have had such wonderful and varied job positions. After leaving the State's Attorney's Office, I went to work at a private law firm. I was there just under seven years before deciding to go back to school. Upon graduating from Williston State College (at age 50!), I was offered a job at WSC. Even working as the Learning Commons Coordinator, I was still utilizing my paralegal skills while assisting students in locating appropriate scientific journal articles to support their findings for their APA papers. I also worked in the writing lab and reviewed students' papers. I took a couple of years off after leaving WSC as my dad was not well and after his passing, a position came open with the court system. I started as a District Court Paralegal on November 1, 2022 and that's where I currently "reside." Having worked as a paralegal for both sides of the table, I now get to enjoy hearings and trials where I do not "have a dog in the race." It is much less stressful! Without all my prior work experience as a paralegal, the transition into my current position would have been much tougher. I love my job and truly enjoy working with all my district judges, co-workers, and counsel.

As noted above, I didn't actually pursue a career in the legal field; it found me. I had a wonderful State's Attorney at the time who went to the Williams County Commission and asked that I be reclassified as a paralegal. I then attended a UND/Division of Continuing Education Paralegal Certificate Program online. I obtained this certificate in 2006. I found that I truly enjoyed researching and drafting motions and responses. My favorite task was drafting appellate court briefs.

My biggest professional accomplishment has certainly been obtaining my Certified Paralegal (CP) credential from NALA in July 2013 followed by my Advanced Certified Paralegal (ACP) in Trial Practice in January 2014. Anyone who has taken the CP test knows that it is not easy. I studied from December – April prior to testing in early May of 2013. I am always hopeful that the CP/ACP designations will earn more attention from employers and that they wouldn't gloss over those credentials and instead would ask what is involved in obtaining them. I think they would be surprised. The seminars offered by WDALA help a great deal by providing CLE credits to maintain my CP designation. Also, if anyone is thinking about taking their CP test, please utilize the WDALA scholarship. Once I took the plunge and applied for and received that scholarship there was no turning back! I am so grateful I did and would be remiss if I did not thank Melissa Hamilton and Melissa Klimpel for all their encouragement and support. I'll never forget how I felt when I received that letter from NALA addressed to me with the letters "CP" after my name.

Outside of work, I like to make time with friends and family. I enjoy walking, trying new recipes, and some "girl talk" during an occasional happy hour. My husband and I just finished watching the first year of the new series Landman. Seeing as how we have our own oil industry in western North Dakota, I found it quite interesting. I also enjoy traveling. We have been fortunate enough to visit England, Scotland, Ireland, and Wales for our 30th anniversary. For our 36th anniversary last summer, we took our three grown children to Norway, Denmark, and Iceland. I will treasure those moments forever! Now I cannot wait to take my 9-year-old granddaughter, Lily, on her own travels.

I do look forward to retirement at some point, however, my judge has indicated I cannot leave before him. I will take that as a compliment!



Legal Services of North Dakota: Advancing Justice, Changing Lives

By Jen Lee

Each year, we assist thousands of individuals in navigating complex legal systems to achieve outcomes that profoundly affect their lives.

Legal Services of North Dakota (LSND) stands at the forefront of providing crucial civil legal assistance to low-income and marginalized populations throughout the state. As a nonprofit organization, we are committed to addressing the justice gap, ensuring that individuals and families facing life-altering legal challenges have access to the support and resources they need.

LSND's work spans a wide range of legal areas, including housing stability, debt collection, public benefits, family law, elder rights, and protection for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking. Each year, we assist thousands of individuals in navigating complex legal systems to achieve outcomes that profoundly affect their lives.

Housing issues make up a significant portion of LSND's caseload. Many of our clients face the threat of eviction due to rising housing costs, landlord-tenant disputes, or unforeseen financial hardships. By representing tenants in eviction proceedings, negotiating payment plans, or enforcing housing rights, LSND helps families remain in their homes. This stability is critical for preventing homelessness and maintaining the educational and emotional well-being of children.



Another cornerstone of our work involves assisting survivors of domestic violence. LSND provides comprehensive legal support to individuals seeking protection orders, custody arrangements, and divorce judgments. For these clients, legal assistance is often the first step toward breaking free from abusive environments and rebuilding a life of safety and independence.

LSND supports seniors throughout the state, addressing issues such as consumer fraud, Medicaid access, and estate planning. Many older adults in North Dakota live on fixed incomes and face exploitation or barriers in the legal system. LSND's advocacy ensures that seniors can age with dignity and security, free from predatory practices or unnecessary financial strain.

Rural and tribal communities represent another focus of LSND's efforts. Geographic isolation and limited access to resources mean that individuals in these areas often face additional hurdles when navigating legal systems. LSND's outreach programs and partnerships with tribes enable us to provide tailored services that respect cultural contexts while addressing pressing legal needs.

We are currently designing many self-help resources that are identified as a critical resource for North Dakotans who do not qualify for full representation or prefer to handle their legal matters independently. The new self-help website will offer easy-to-understand forms, instructions, and virtual assistance to guide pro se litigants through processes such as divorce filings, custody modifications, and small claims disputes. We are also developing self-help clinics across the state to provide a la carte legal advice to those facing court proceedings. This approach empowers individuals to take control of their legal challenges while ensuring they have the tools to succeed.

Beyond direct client services, LSND plays a vital role in education and advocacy. We host workshops, legal clinics, and public forums to inform North Dakotans about their rights and responsibilities under the law. For example, LSND frequently collaborates with organizations, local governments, and community groups to educate about tenant rights, consumer fraud prevention, and family law basics.





To learn more about Legal Services of North Dakota or explore ways to support our mission, visit [LSND's website](#) or reach out directly. Every effort counts as we work to protect rights, provide opportunities, and empower individuals to thrive within their communities.

The impact of our work is tangible. In one case, LSND assisted a family of five in avoiding eviction after the father suffered a workplace injury that left him unable to pay rent. By negotiating with the landlord and connecting the family with rental assistance programs, LSND ensured they remained housed and stabilized their finances. In another instance, LSND helped a grandmother obtain guardianship of her two grandchildren after the children's mother was incarcerated. These outcomes are not merely legal victories; they are life-changing moments that bring hope and security to our clients.

Paralegals and legal assistants are integral to LSND's mission. Their meticulous attention to detail, organizational skills, and client communication expertise ensure that legal processes move forward smoothly and efficiently. Paralegals often act as critical liaisons, helping others to find LSND when they are unable to afford the fees of a private attorney. Many of LSND's clients simply cannot afford private attorney fees, making these connections vital in getting them the legal help they need.



Jen Lee is the Executive Director at Legal Services of North Dakota (LSND). Prior to joining LSND at the end of 2022, Jen was in private practice as a bankruptcy attorney, or as she likes to call it: a debt and credit strategy attorney. She is licensed in California and North Dakota. Law was a second career for Jen, after working for ten years in insurance and underwriting. She opened her own law firm straight out of law school and realized that her undergraduate degree in business and an MBA made a huge difference in running a law firm as a business. She often speaks at conferences, bar associations, professional groups, and other trade associations on substantive issues for bankruptcy and debt, as well as on law practice marketing, technology, and management. Jen enjoys doing things that others say can't be done and coming up with innovative ways to move the practice of law forward to improve access for all.



Rules is rules, 'til they ain't!

(With apologies to my high school grammar teacher.)

By Judge James Gion

I practiced law in rural North Dakota for over 30 years before I became a judge. And, while I didn't always get the time to follow his advice, I remembered clearly Justice Robert Vogel, who was a professor at the law school, telling us to read the rules at least once a year - not just the Rules of Evidence, but also the Rules of Civil Procedure, Rules of Criminal Procedure, Rules of Court and Rules of Appellate Procedure. In addition to those rules, we have Rules of Juvenile Procedure, Administrative Rules, local rules and the like. The various rules provide plenty of reading material, but unfortunately, many in the legal profession don't read them. (Plots are poorly developed and writing style is stilted!)

For example, Rule 8.3(4) of Rules of Court requires the parties to a divorce to file a joint property and debt listing, at least 14 days prior to the trial. Each asset or liability needs to be numbered separately. Often the parties each submit their own listing, which complicates the matter for the Court as rarely do the parties list the assets and liabilities in the same order.

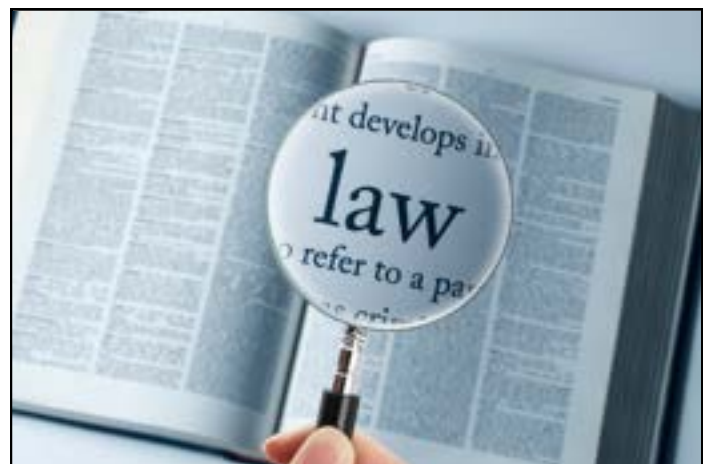


Likewise, Rule 3.2 of Rules of Court set out the timelines and procedures required for filing motions and the accompanying documents, the timeline for filing a response, the timeline for filing a reply brief, and the requirements for securing a hearing. Rule 3.2 requires that if a party wants a hearing, they must request one in writing, and within 14 days of making the request, obtain a time and date for the hearing. In our district, the requesting party must contact the calendar clerk to get the time and place for the hearing. Attorneys from New York City to Los Angeles routinely contact the calendar control clerk a month or so after the timeline has expired, requesting a hearing.

In the Southwest Judicial District, all civil cases include a pre-trial conference, and the rules require the attorneys have a pre-pre-trial conference between the attorneys to address concerns on the foundation of evidence, as well as pathways to narrowing the issues. (As an aside, our local rules require the Plaintiff/Petitioner to mark all exhibits using numbers, and the Defendant/Respondent to use letters, and the exhibits be pre-marked – but the Court often is presented with unmarked exhibits, or Defendant's exhibits marked with numbers – perhaps the legal assistants need to take the lead on making their attorneys look good on this issue – even though I doubt that information has ever been passed down to the assistants.)

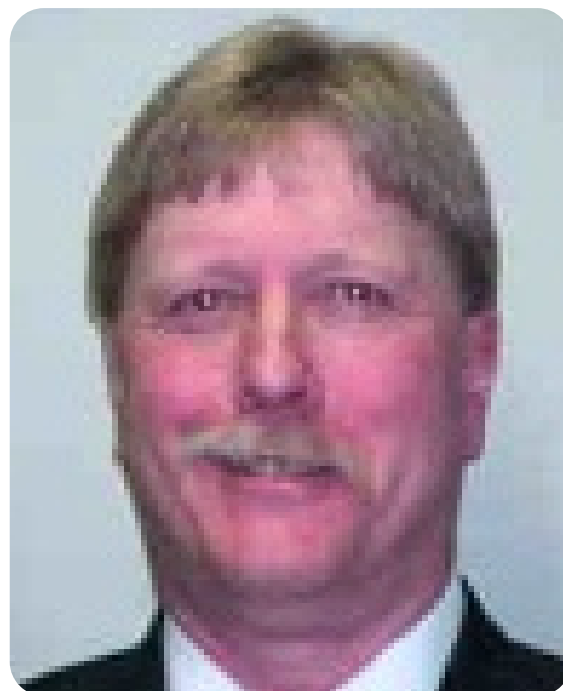
I could go on and on. Kind of like athletics, there are rules for almost every situation in court filings and proceedings. However, too many parties ignore the rules, and that takes up the Court's time because, generally, we try to explain to the party at fault what the rule says and why we are denying what they are requesting or trying to do.

There are instances where the parties to a legal action can agree to disregard the rules. For example, one party may grant an extension of time to respond to a motion, or to file an answer. Giving notice of the extension of time, preferably by stipulation which is filed with the Court, is greatly appreciated. I recently worked on a matter where one party had failed to file a response within the time limits, and the applicable rule indicated that failure to file is to be taken as an admission by the non-responding party that they have no defense. So, I am working on writing the opinion and find out after hours of research and writing the parties agreed to give the responding party an additional 30 days. Needless to say, I was not pleased.



Some deadlines seem to have been ignored forever. For example, one who is appointed as personal representative of a decedent's estate is required to file an inventory and appraisal within 90 days of appointment. When I was practicing, it was rare that a personal representative would get the information in my hands to complete that deadline – sometimes for over a year. While the delay may be attributable to the client, it may be the attorney who gets scolded (and we know who gets the blame when an attorney gets scolded, don't we?)

So, why burden the legal assistants with this complaint? I had secretaries that would remind me of some of the more obvious rules – telling me that discovery was due in one week according to our law office calendar, and reminding me of other deadlines. I analogize my reason to bringing this to your organization with the seat belt use campaign that children and grandchildren used – demanding Dad or Grandpa not start the car until everyone (including Dad or Grandpa) had their seat belts on and adjusted. Or, the children asking their parents to stop smoking. I'm not sure those burdens belonged to the children and grandchildren, but in many cases it worked. Perhaps the legal assistants can convince the attorneys to follow the rules.



Judge Gion was appointed as District Court Judge by Governor Jack Dalrymple in 2015 for the Southwest Judicial District judgeship #1 located in Dickinson, ND. He was then elected in 2018. Born in 1953; Judge Gion is a lifelong resident of Hettinger County. Judge Gion graduated from Regent High School in 1971, and received his Bachelor of Administration from University of North Dakota in 1976. He obtained his Juris Doctor from the University of North Dakota School of Law in 1982, and was admitted to the N.D. Bar on October 11, 1982. He was in private legal practice in Hettinger County from 1982-2015 and was the Hettinger County State's Attorney from 1991-2015. Judge Gion also served as State's Attorney of Bowman and Slope Counties.

The Battleship USS North Dakota and Its Silver Service

By Lori Nohner, Research Historian, State Historical Society of North Dakota

Did you know that every two years you can drink punch from an over-100-year-old museum artifact? Attendees at the reception marking the opening of the North Dakota legislative session are offered glasses of punch from the silver punch bowl that once sailed on the battleship USS North Dakota.



Punch bowl from the USS North Dakota silver service at the opening of the legislative session on Jan. 7, 2025.

On Nov. 10, 1908, while President Theodore Roosevelt's Great White Fleet sailed around the globe, Mary L. Benton of Fargo broke the bottle of champagne that christened the battleship USS North Dakota. The state-of-the-art North Dakota was the first dreadnought warship launched by the U.S. Navy, along with its sister ship, the USS Delaware. The two were officially commissioned into the Navy in April 1910.



USS North Dakota. SHSND 10054-00002

Sponsor states gifting presentation silver to U.S. warships is a long-standing tradition. According to the Department of the Navy, "The silver forges a symbolic and historical link between the military crew of the vessel it is aboard and the civilian community from whence it came." In 1909, Gov. John Burke appointed a committee to raise funds, select designs, and oversee production of the silver. The committee solicited donations from around the state. Fraternal organizations, local banks, school children, and many North Dakota citizens contributed to the fund. It took the committee nearly six years to raise the \$16,000 to pay for the 40-piece silver set (nearly \$500,000 today).

The Silver Service Committee hired the Gorham Manufacturing Company of Rhode Island to create the set using the designs submitted by Hans Klimmek and Lilla Lorshbough, both of Fargo. The designs incorporated prairie roses, corn, wheat, and bison motifs to represent North Dakota, along with Navy symbols such as seashells, anchors, and stylized dolphins. The final set weighed 169 pounds and included a large punch bowl with a plateau, ladle and 24 serving cups, a pitcher with two goblets, a coffee urn, two candelabra, four serving trays, a salad bowl, a cigar box, and a centerpiece. Gov. L.B. Hanna presented North Dakota's gift to the battleship on May 5, 1915.

The U.S. Navy decommissioned the USS North Dakota in 1923, and the silver service sat in storage at the Hampton Roads Naval Yard in Virginia. In 1926, with the support of North Dakota Sen. Gerald Nye and Rep. James Sinclair, the 69th U.S. Congress passed Public Law No. 147 authorizing the secretary of the Navy to transfer custody of the silver service to the State of North Dakota. The service returned to Bismarck to a public reception at the Liberty Memorial Building on July 30, 1926. Shortly after the reception, the 40-piece set was transferred into the care of the State Historical Society of North Dakota.



First lady Grace Sorlie serves punch in 1926 with Gov. Arthur Sorlie to her left. SHSND C0307-00004

Five months later, Gov. Arthur Sorlie began the tradition of using the USS North Dakota silver service at affairs of state. On Jan. 5, 1927, the Bismarck Tribune reported on Sorlie's inaugural reception: "Leaving the governor's office, guests passed the silver service of the battleship North Dakota, which was temporarily removed from its case in the historical museum. Punch was served from the massive punchbowl, which stood on a table with candelabra at either end." This custom continues to this day.



Punch bowl and candelabra. SHSND 2893.1, .5

Every two years, at the request of the Governor's Office, State Historical Society staff remove the punch bowl and (sometimes) the candelabra from their permanent exhibit at the North Dakota Heritage Center & State Museum for use at affairs of state. This is most often the opening of legislative sessions or the governor's inaugural ball. Each time a piece of the silver service leaves the ND Heritage Center building, it is accompanied by a staff member and a National Guard escort. Staff meticulously clean the bowl before and after its use. A clearcoat applied to the silver in 1926 keeps the pieces tarnish-free, so no polishing is required. Other pieces of the silver service have made appearances at state functions, but preservation concerns have limited their use. For example, the original ladle was used with the punch bowl until the 1960s when it broke during use.

Although the law passed in 1926 transferred custody of the silver service to North Dakota, legal title of the 40 items remained with U.S. Navy, essentially setting up a long-term loan. In 1997, staff at the State Historical Society formally requested permanent ownership of the silver service under Title 10 of the U.S. Code Section 7545 and 7546. With support from Sen. Kent Conrad, the secretary of the Navy approved the request, and the State Historical Society obtained legal title of the silver service.

Many of the pieces of the USS North Dakota silver service are on exhibit 361 days a year at the ND Heritage Center & State Museum. Visitors can also see a model of the battleship, alongside its original bell and bow plate. If you want to learn more about life on the battleship, check out [this collection](#) at the State Archives.



The silver service on exhibit at the ND Heritage Center in Bismarck. SHSND 2893

This article was originally written, in part, for SHSND publications.



Lori Nohner is the Assistant Curator of Collections in the Audience Engagement and Museum Division. She helps take care of the State Historical Society's artifact collection.

Get to Know . . .

Anna Heinen

WDALA President



What is your job title and which company do you work for?

I am a Paralegal for Smith Porsborg Schweigert Armstrong Moldenhauer & Smith in Bismarck.

What led you to this career and how did you get into your current field or position?

I wanted a change from my job as a Medical Insurance Claims Processor. I took the Legal Assistant position with Smith Porsborg and I liked the work, so in 2017 I went back to college for a Paralegal Studies Degree and I got offered a Paralegal position in 2019.

What inspired you to pursue the career you have today?

I have always enjoyed crime shows on tv and even though I don't handle Criminal law, I enjoy the mix of civil litigation cases that come across my desk.

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What inspired you to pursue the career you have today?

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How long have you been a member of WDALA and what do you like most about being a member?

I started with WDALA in early 2019 and took a Board position that Fall. I have been part of the WDALA Board since. I like the networking and friendships I have made. I enjoy the volunteering opportunities and being part of the continuing education that WDALA provides.

How did you get involved with WDALA's Board?

Shortly after I joined WDALA, they were looking for a Treasurer and I volunteered. I have been a part of the Board ever since.

What are your goals as WDALA's President?

I want WDALA to be a common name in the legal field. I have been working on solidifying our relationships with the State Bar Association of North Dakota and United Tribes Technical College. I want Attorneys to know how to utilize us and what we bring to the table and I want Paralegals to know that we can help them with their continuing education, networking, and volunteering opportunities.

What qualities do you appreciate the most in a board member?

Involvement in the organization as a whole, not just in their specific duties, and openness to change!

What is your definition of a great leader?

Someone who leads by example, not just by word. They should be empathetic and have great communication skills. Being self-aware as to their strengths and weaknesses and knowing how to delegate and explain the work requested. They should be organized and keep things on track but also open to new ideas and changing technology.

What makes a board successful in your opinion?

Communication and team work! Being able to bring to light new ideas and new perspectives to achieve a better outcome than before. Always striving to be better and do better for the common good!

What's the best piece of professional advice you've ever received?

Never stop learning. This isn't just professional advice; it holds true in your personal life as well.

If you could meet any historical figure, who would it be and why?

Amelia Earhart. She was a pilot looking to circumnavigate the world when she disappeared over the Pacific Ocean in 1937.

I did a report on her in the 5th grade and often think about her. It is on my bucket list to get my pilot's license and I just think it would be cool to get to meet her.



Tell us about your family.

I currently have three daughters, ages 19, 17, and 12, from a previous marriage. My oldest attends Mayville State, working towards a degree in Early Education. My middle child will graduate high school in May and is looking to pursue the police force. And my youngest is a 6th grader at Wachter, who loves Tik tok dances and anything skin care related. My fiancé Shayne and I are planning a wedding for this upcoming September and we are expecting a baby boy in May! We also have a dog (boxer/pit) named Moose.

What game show do you think you have the best chance of winning?

Family Feud or the Price is Right. Not that I think I could win them but that they would be so fun to be a part of!

What is one question you wish people would ask you more?

“How do I join WDALA” or “How can I be more involved”!

What is something you have always wanted to do but haven't done yet?

Travel the U.S. in an RV.

If you could be famous for one thing, what would it be?

Being able to play any instrument or fluent in any language. Not that that would make me famous to others but it would be so cool!

How do you recognize when you're stressed and how do you handle it?

When little things can tip my patience and mood. Cleaning and/or organizing helps me to feel better aligned and better able to handle life's stressors.

If you didn't have to work, what would you do with your time?

Travel! I want to see the beauty in everything and experience the adventures!

If you could choose to do anything for a day, what would it be?

Sit by the Ocean and listen to the waves crash on the beach.

If your pet could talk, what do you think they might say about you?

He is mad that I won't take him out for walks in this weather, so he would probably say that I currently run a prison!

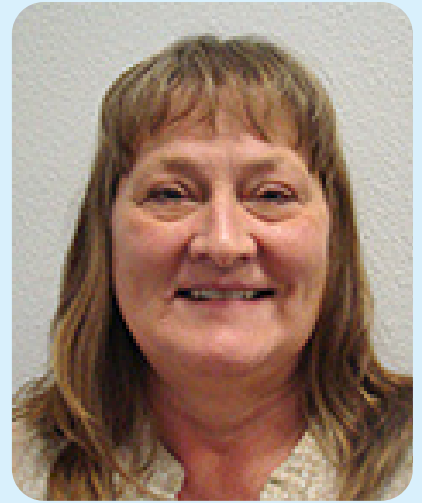
WDALA's Officers/Executive Committee and Board of Directors



President
Anna Heinen



1st Vice President
Melissa Hamilton, ACP



2nd Vice President
Kathy Johnson, CP



Secretary
ReBecka Wohl, ACP



Treasurer
Cassy Clark, CP



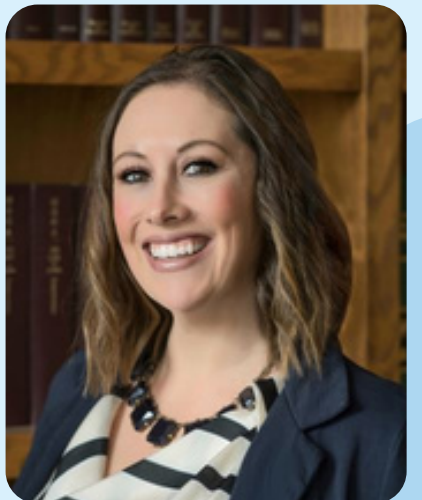
NALA Liaison
Ashley Miller, ACP



Region I Director &
Parliamentarian
Holly Radke, ACP



Region II Director
Andrea Johnson



Region III Director
Trisha Kinnischtzke

1st Vice President's Report



Happy New Year! It seems like January has drug on FOREVER, but it is finally over spring is in sight. I am tired of going to work and leaving work when it is dark – I am ready for some extra sunlight and warmer temperatures.

The Education Committee is hard at work planning educational opportunities for WDALA members and legal professionals in our area. Last year, we reinstated the Luncheon Teleseminars, which were well received. These teleseminars are a member benefit as WDALA members can attend for free! On February 5, 2025, the Luncheon Teleseminar “E-Filing Basics and Tips” will be presented by Kari M. Knudson, Clerk of Court of the District of North Dakota Federal Court. This teleseminar will be held via Zoom and provide a great source of information for legal professionals who practice in the District of North Dakota Federal Court.

Mark your calendars for May 1, 2025, the date for the 2025 WDALA Spring Seminar. The seminar will be held in Minot, ND, at the Sleep Inn & Suites. We have two speakers/topics lined up, including a presentation by the Highway Patrol and their Blood Hound and Bankruptcy Basics. Keep an eye on your email for the seminar brochure and plan to attend!

The 2025 Fall Seminar will be held September 16-17, 2025, in Bismarck, ND, at the North Dakota Heritage Center – we will have a 2025 legislative update and are working on identifying speakers and topics – if you have an idea or a speaker, please let me or a member of the Education Committee know – we want to make sure we are addressing your educational needs.

Melissa Hamilton, ACP

2nd Vice President's Report



As of this date, our membership stands at 37 members: 31 Active, 1 Associate and 5 Emeritus.

If anyone needs to contact me or has any questions regarding membership, you can email me at kjohnson@ndcourts.gov.

Kathy Johnson, CP

Treasurer's Report



Greetings WDALA! I hope the new year is treating you well. For me, the holidays were a great time to reflect on all the accomplishments of 2024. In December, WDALA gave me the opportunity to participate in shopping for the Drug Court Participant's Christmas gifts, as well as the gift-wrapping party with my daughters. This was a heartwarming experience and gave us a chance to put some perspective on our own life and appreciate what we have.

Sponsorship letters were mailed out last month and we received generous responses from several law firms in our district. I am excited about the opportunities that lay ahead for our group. Thank you for your ongoing support and dedication.

The treasurer balance for the Western Dakota Association of Legal Assistants as of January 13, 2025, is \$11,445.90.

Cassy Clark, CP

NALA Liaison's Report

Happy New Year WDALA! The 2025 NALA Conference is taking place July 10 - 12, 2025 in Atlantic City, New Jersey at the Harrah's Resort Atlantic City. The rates for early bird in-person registration are \$629 for NALA Members and \$699 for Nonmembers. Early bird registration ends May 7th. If you register by February 12th, you can receive an additional \$30 off. The conference offers up to 12.5 CLE hours along with networking and socializing opportunities. I will share information about virtual options once they become available. If you are studying for the CP exam, I highly recommend attending the CP Review courses.



If you are a NALA member, the \$80 member credit can be used toward any education materials offered by NALA. If you need or are interested in CLE's, please take advantage of this opportunity and check out NALA's webinars, and CLE seminars. <https://nala.org/education/>

I just finalized and submitted our annual report to NALA, and I have to say, we are doing great work WDALA. We have some truly amazing members contributing both here in our community and nationally. Congratulations to our very own Melissa Klimpel, ACP on being nominated as the NALA Affiliated Associations Secretary!!!

If anyone is interested in becoming a member of NALA or obtaining their CP/ACP credential, please feel free to reach out to me with any questions. I can't stress enough how beneficial it can be to your career. I just received my advanced paralegal certification and boy, does it feel great to have accomplished that goal. May this year bring you much joy and success!

Ashley Miller, ACP



Region III Report

I hope everyone had a wonderful holiday season!

Our Region III monthly luncheons resumed in January and will continue the second Wednesday of the month at A&B Pizza South at noon.



Region III celebrated its 14th annual Drug Court Christmas project. Once again, we had a generous amount of donations and were able to provide gifts for four families identified by the Adult Drug Court program. I enjoyed shopping and wrapping gifts as well as delivering cookies to the Drug Court participants. This year was a first for me to help deliver the gifts to the families at the Parole and Probation Office. Watching the kids' faces when opening gifts was priceless! Thank you to everyone involved, especially Smith Porsborg Law Firm and their paralegals for letting us use their office space once again to set up our own Santa's workshop!

This year the Santa Run took place on December 14, 2024, supporting Hope Manor. For the first time, it was run by the Mandan Progress Organization. It sounds like several WDALA members were able to volunteer in the fun!

If you are looking for more ways to be involved, WDALA has several committees you can join. It's a great way to meet more people and learn more about our organization!

Trisha Kinnischtzke



The Santa Run

By Anna Heinen

Saturday, December 14, 2024, marked the 11th year of the Santa Run! I am proud to say that the move from Bismarck's Heritage Center to Mandan's main street did not sway the Santa Run attendance!!! Along with the move to Mandan, this year's run consisted of some other minor changes. There were no scheduled Friday evening activities, no cool mile, and no post-race indoor refreshments. The race also started in the late afternoon this year, so the participants could end the race with the glow of the holiday lights. Even with the minor changes, the attendance and the location were great.

Ann Reich and
Candy Schafer



Shayne and Anna Heinen; and
Megan Klym and Girls





There was an amazing turnout, from our community members to the recovering addicts themselves, to help support and raise money for our local addiction recovery. The event was held at Dykshoorn Park in Mandan with the race beginning and ending at the Holiday Lights on Main! Copper Dog Café donated hot chocolate to be disbursed after the race. It was a nice warm treat to enjoy as the participants and their supporters strolled through the holiday light displays in the park.

Stations were staffed by WDALA volunteers, Mandan Progress Organization, and Hope Manor making the event another successful year.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude for the WDALA members and their families that volunteered: Candy Schafer, Megan Klym & Girls, and Shayne and I.



Shayne and Anna Heinen



Candy Schafer and Judge David Reich



Drug Court Christmas Project 2024

By Laurie Guenther, ACP



Now in its 14th year, WDALA partnered with Adult Drug Court this past Christmas to provide gifts and a food basket to four families (3 adults and 8 children). We also provided a Walmart gift card and boxes of homemade cookies to 27 Drug Court participants.

If you are tracking that, you may have noted we bought for four families, but only three adults. That's because two of the 4 adults insisted that we not buy gifts for them, but that we focus our intentions on their children. This demonstrates the growth and maturity of those participants. Their focus is turning outward – allowing external care and support to be provided to their family while they are working internally on themselves.

The WDALA team is happy to support them all. WDALA is, in turn, grateful to everyone that helps us keep this partnership running. The paralegals at Smith Porsborg Law Firm stepped it up again this year. Twice they designed creative silent auction baskets and then put their baking skills to work and sold cookie trays before Thanksgiving. (I can attest that the cookie trays were delicious and had great variety! My family loved them.) The firm's partners also made a separate donation to our cause. Imagine the possibilities if every firm matched Smith Porsborg's donation or won the bid on a basket. Challenge accepted!?



I know the following individuals and law firms said “yes” this year and we thank them for supporting this worthwhile effort to improve our community one step at a time.

Nicki Behm
Cassy Clark
Justice Daniel J. Crothers
Laurie Guenther
Linda Hagen
Melissa Hamilton
Anna Heinen
Tami Hulm
Carol Kapsner
Trisha Kinnischtzke

Melissa Klimpel
Melissa Klimpel’s sister
Vicki Kunz
Justice Lisa Fair McEvers
Ashley Miller
Penny Miller
Candy Schafer
Smith Porsborg Law Firm
Justice Jerod E. Tufte
Wheeler Wolf Law Firm

Region III held its annual Christmas party on Dec. 16 to see the fruits of its labor. We enjoyed pizza, visiting, wrapping presents, and putting together cookie boxes. A special thank you to Anna Heinen who single-handedly managed the food baskets for the four families. Taking our Cookies to Court on Friday, Dec. 20 was special because there was a graduation of a participant. These are great days to witness. All those little steps the participant took led to that day. We are honored to be able to be there.

In closing, it continues to be my personal hope that your experience volunteering with WDALA left you feeling proud and inspired. If you haven’t been able to volunteer and are interested, we would love to have you join us. May you all have a happy and healthy 2025!



We Asked . . . You Answered

What helps you stay organized with all your paralegal tasks?

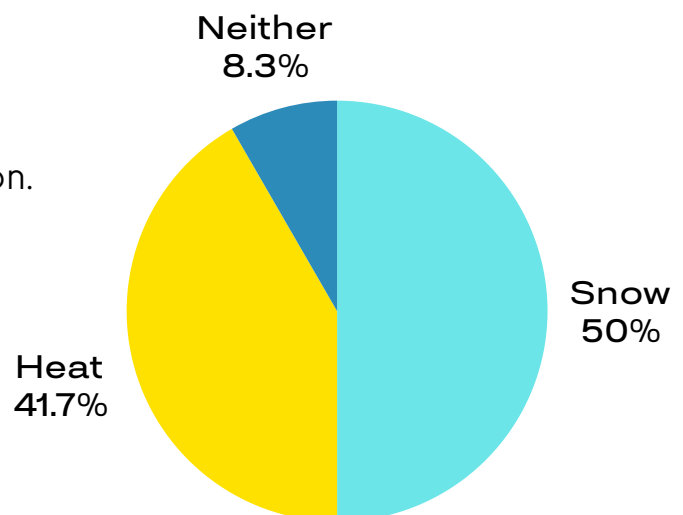
- My planner and post-it notes! I make lists for everything!
- Having a deadline sheet and a daily to-do list.
- Post-its and the one touch rule – if I can take care of something by only touching it once then get it done!
- I use the sticky notes app to create lists and color-code the notes. I also set reminders on my Outlook calendar.
- For starters, I have to have a clean environment. If my office and/or desk are a mess, I can't focus. After that, I usually keep a weekly list of tasks that need to be accomplished, then break those down into daily tasks based on approaching calendared deadlines. Tasks that are written down on Monday that don't get completed get moved to the top of Tuesday's list, Tuesday's (if not completed) to the top of Wednesday's, etc. I'm a paper/handwritten notes person, so funky note pads and pens also make this more enjoyable. My Fridays are my 'catch-up' days when it comes to filing paperwork that I didn't get done during the week and saving emails or other correspondence where necessary. Lastly, in order to complete my work, I usually have earbuds in and listen to scary/creepy stories or podcasts while I work (I'm a "Halloween is year-round person").
- Having a daily/weekly routine for when I do certain tasks and my constantly evolving list of to-do's.
- Lists – lots of lists! And colored folders for the things I can't put on a list.
- Outlook Task list and post it notes.
- Outlook calendar and tasks.
- Outlook tasks are amazing! I use and abuse them for everything I do.



Would you rather live where it only snows or the temperature never falls below 100 degrees? Why?



- Is neither an answer??? If the 100 degrees is near an ocean then that probably would not be as bad. If it was 100 degrees in the middle of a desert, then I definitely would pick snow!
- Where the temperature never falls below 100 degrees. I feel like I could adapt to the heat better than a lack green foliage and grass. I live for the summers!
- Having said I am tired of cold temps, I would still prefer to live where it only snows - you can always add layers of clothing to stay warm, but stripping to cool off is just not an option with this body!
- While I dislike the severe cold, I think the incessant heat would be unbearable!
- Where it only snows. I love sweater/sweatshirt weather and would rather bundle up and be cozy than sweating all the time.
- I'd rather live where it only snows. You can always put more layers on during when it's cold but in 100-degree weather, there's only so much AC/cooling units can do before even they get overheated. That could also be the native North Dakotan in me talking.
- I despise shoveling and being cold, so I would definitely say somewhere 100 degrees is where you would find me.
- I would stay in ND or move further north like Alaska. I love having snow for Christmas and I enjoy a nice lite snow fall like a snow globe outside. Plus I like the wildlife up here. I will visit warm, but there is no way I could live there for the rest of my life.
- I definitely prefer the heat vs. the cold!
- Where it only snows - I am not a heat person.
- I'd rather live in the 100-degree temps - snow is depressing!
- I would choose warmer temps b/c I feel more active and productive.



If you win a *million dollars*, what would be the first thing you buy? Why?

- Airplane tickets to Europe! There are so many places I would like to see such as Ireland, the Netherlands, London, Italy, and on and on! I would definitely spend time traveling!
- A two-week vacation to Hawaii or Bali with my family. I love to see new places and try new things.
- A winter home in the South. I am soooo tired of the cold temperatures!
- An adjustable triple monitor mount for my desk to plan a trip on an airbus A350 to Bora Bora for some yacht sailing and snorkeling with sea turtles.
- People...As bad as that sounds I would surround myself with people. A financial advisor, a cook, and a house keeper. Someone to make sure I invest that money wisely and people to do what I don't want to do anymore - cook and clean.
- A new house so my kids can each have their own bedrooms.
- First, I would pay off my student loans and any familial debt (cliché, I know). Then, I'd purchase our forever home with my partner and invest the rest... maybe set aside a lump sum of spending money and fulfill my dream of owning a red or purple Ferrari. The reason why is so I can live the remainder of my life without so much debt and make sure I invest another portion of it to set myself up for the remainder of my life when the winnings run out.
- I wouldn't buy anything, instead the first thing I would do is make some large donations and share the wealth!
- A red Mustang convertible with the biggest engine/most horsepower I can get - so I can jump the roundabouts!
- The first thing I would buy is a vacation trip to Ireland. Then I would buy a bigger house.
- A house in the country with a lot of land. My family's dream is to live in the country where we can run wild, adopt all the cats and dogs, and build a massive greenhouse and garden.

WINNER

WE ASKED . . . YOU ANSWERED

**Thank you to everyone who
sent in their answers.**

Giveaway Winner!



**Tami
Hulm**

WDALA SPONSORS

WDALA gratefully acknowledges the following sponsors for their generous support throughout 2025.

Olympic Level

Smith Porsborg Schweigert
Armstrong Moldenhauer & Smith

Gold Level

Revive Law Group

Silver Level

Knoll Leibel, LLP

WDALA's Committees

Auditing

Holly Radke, ACP and Becky Kocourek, CLA

CLA Chairman

Ashley Miller, ACP

Education

Melissa Hamilton, ACP (Chair);
Melissa Klimpel, ACP; Ashley Miller,
ACP; Megan Klym; Dehan Schwan;
Kimberly Perkuhn; and Anna Heinen

Ethics/Professional Development

Melissa Hamilton, ACP

Finance/Budget

Cassy Clark, CP (Chair)

Historian

Laurie Guenther, ACP

Legal Assistant Day

Ashley Miller, ACP and Shannon Barth

Membership

Kathy Johnson, CP (Chair); Anna Heinen; and ReBecka Wohl, ACP

Nominations/Elections

Andrea Johnson and Dehan Schwan

Public Relations

Melissa Klimpel, ACP (Summons Editor); Anna Heinen (Facebook & Website); Andrea Johnson; Melissa Hamilton, ACP; Stephanie Howe; and Candace Schafer

Sponsorship

Trisha Kinnischitzke and Cassy Clark, CP

State Bar/NDTLA Liaison

Ashley Miller, ACP

Student Liaison

Ashley Miller, ACP and ReBecka Wohl, ACP

HAPPY BIRTHDAY

February 16	Laurie Guenther
February 18	Noni Geer
February 23	Megan Ryan
February 27	Holly Radke
March 5	Anna Heinen
March 25	Andrea Johnson
March 27	Nicki Behm
March 31	Megan Klym
April 7	Alice Johnson
April 8	ReBecka Wohl
April 11	Afton Basden
April 16	Trisha Kinnischtzke
April 18	Shannon Barth
April 27	Melissa Klimpel



**Paralegal
Moms**



"And while the lawyers argued,
the King's paralegals got all
the real work done."

**Laughing at
the Law**

What is a will?

*It's a dead
giveaway.*