



For The Record

Fall Quarter 2008

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The Quarterly Publication of the Skagit Valley College Student Paralegal Association



President's Corner

Thank you for taking the time to read the Fall 2008 edition of For the Record, the quarterly newsletter written, edited, and published by the Skagit Valley College (SVC) Student Paralegal Association (aka 'the Club'). It has been my pleasure to serve as the Club's President this year. I hope that reading our publication will give you a glimpse into the workings of paralegal education, and show how valuable that education can be, not only for those of us who are seeking a career change, but also for those who are already employed in the legal field, but do not have formal, paralegal-specific training.

Shelley Acero, who works as the paralegal for the City of Burlington, says of the program's benefits, "For me, even though I was and am working as a paralegal, the program offered an opportunity to have a more well-rounded understanding of the various types of legal areas that there are, and how to incorporate the skills I already had with those I would be learning. I had little knowledge of how other types of law firms might do things, due to the uniqueness of working for a municipality. In the SVC Paralegal Program I gained insight as to what other paralegals would be doing in 'regular' firms."

I agree with Shelley. I have been delighted to find that many of the skills I learned before I began the program have come in handy, skills like speaking Spanish, and small-group leadership. Studying at SVC gives students a chance to explore our talents and apply them to paralegal, technology, and liberal arts studies.

Self-improvement through the pursuit of knowledge is an ongoing process. Taking a Paralegal Studies class at SVC is an affordable, local way for aspiring paralegals to broaden our horizons. For the attorneys, more well-rounded legal assistants mean better service to clients and more of the attorneys' own time to devote to the higher-level functions of representation.

I would like to thank the legal communities of Northwest Washington for welcoming this year's class into your world. I assure you that the internships, job offers, advice, and volunteering are well appreciated. We look forward to doing our part to give back to our communities for years to come.

Sincerely,
Glen Bristow, President
SVC Student Paralegal Association

An Internship at the Prosecutor's Office

*Editor's Note: As a requirement for graduating from the SVC Paralegal Program, each paralegal student must complete 150 hours of internship practice at a law office under the guidance of a licensed practicing attorney. **Dave Metheny** shares these notes about his internship at Island County Prosecuting Attorney's Office.*



The Prosecuting Attorney is **Greg Banks**. Eight deputy prosecuting attorneys and eight legal support staff assist him. The Criminal Division is the largest division of the office, in terms of staff and resources. Here, Prosecuting Attorney Banks and six deputies apply their efforts to criminal cases.

Three attorneys prosecute primarily felony level crimes and their appeals. Felony crimes include everything from burglary and drug offenses to sexual assault and murder. Three deputies handle the high volume misdemeanor caseload, which consists primarily of DUI, possession of 40 grams or less of marijuana, domestic violence, and a wide variety of traffic offenses. A single deputy prosecutor handles the juvenile caseload, which includes all levels of criminal activity, as well as school truancy hearings and the juvenile drug court.



Paralegal students in Skagit County Law Library (November 2007)



Skagit Valley College
Paralegal Program

Approved by the American
Bar Association

**SVC Classes
Winter Quarter
2009**

Starting
January 5, 2009

Legal Research and
Writing

Interviewing and
Investigation

Administrative Law

Business Organizations

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***These Classes and More!
Enrollment Begins Soon!***

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www.skagit.edu/paralegal

Contact Program Director Ted Maloney

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The majority of misdemeanor cases come from either the Police Department or Sheriff's Office in Oak Harbor, or the Washington State Patrol. The high volume of cases means a very quick pace in this division. The paralegal for this division must be very organized and work closely with the deputy prosecuting attorneys.

All adult felony cases and juvenile cases enter the office by referral, with a request for prosecution. The Prosecuting Attorneys review the referrals for prosecution, and either decline to prosecute, request follow-up investigation, or file formal charges.

The workloads of the deputy prosecutors and the nature of the case determine who gets assigned a new criminal case referral. Three adult felony deputies are supported by two paralegals. Usually, a paralegal is given primary responsibility for a given case, but they may end up working on any felony case, as the need arises. The deputy is responsible for the case from charging decision to trial or disposition once a case is assigned to him. This includes any appeals, post-appellate review, and any post-sentencing violation hearings.

Island County operates one drug court for adult felons, and one drug court for juvenile offenders. After a short while in the Prosecuting Attorney's office it becomes apparent that the majority of the criminal cases involve drugs or alcohol. The addition of a drug court has saved both time and money.

Technology is highly utilized in the office. The system that is used as its case management system for criminal cases is called CRIMES. It was interesting to note that the way a case is supposed to flow through the system is very different from the way it actually does. Each case is idiosyncratic in its content as well as the way it is processed. Nevertheless, all of the cases seem to eventually make it to the shelves where closed cases go to rest.

SVC Student Paralegal Association Mission Statement

Our mission is to guide the Association's Members successfully through their academic studies, help them develop leadership skills and experiences, and assist them in networking with the legal world to find permanent employment. As an Association, we also choose to enrich and assist our members and community through our participation in service activities and charitable endeavors.

Washington State Paralegal Association

Upcoming Events for Northwest Washington's Paralegals:

Skagit County Brown Bag Luncheon November 19, 2008

Featuring Guest Speaker The Honorable **Susan K. Cook**

Skagit County Superior Court Judge

Discussing **MEDICAL MALPRACTICE**

Annual Student Dinner January 30, 2008

Resume Writing Workshop preceding dinner

Practicing Paralegals and a Hiring Manager discuss trends in the profession

FOR THE LEGAL COMMUNITIES OF

**SKAGIT, WHATCOM, SAN JUAN,
AND ISLAND COUNTIES**

Skagit Valley College provides a drug-free environment and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, sexual orientation, or age in its programs and employment.