

Paralegal Division member finds rewards in greater involvement each year

By Kathleen Brieske
Maricopa Lawyer

Ever since she relocated to Phoenix from Texas four years ago, Kathryn Bunch has been working as a paralegal with immigration attorney Nancy-Jo Merritt. Bunch started with Merritt at Fragomen Del Rey Bernsen & Loewy, then moved with her to Littler Mendelson. Now the two are a part of the Fennemore Craig's immigration practice group. Bunch's responsibilities include processing immigration documents for foreign national employees who work for the firm's corporate clients.

Bunch brought a wealth of experience with her from Texas. She had an impressive 20-year career at Texas A&M University in College Station. Her last role at A&M was as international services manager in the human resources department, responsible for all immigration-related issues and processing for international faculty, staff and visiting scholars. Prior to that, she served as international student advisor for several years, preparing and tracking immigration documents for international students attending the university.

Bunch has been a member of NAFSA: Association of International Educators for the past 20 years and has held the various positions within the group focusing on government regulations with respect to immigration and nationality. She also is a certified Professional Development Program (PDP) trainer.

Bunch has been actively involved in the Maricopa County Bar Association and its Paralegal Division for the last three years. Currently the division's liaison to the Maricopa County Bar Foundation, she also has been nominated for a director position on the 2005 Paralegal Division board. Her goals for the division include increasing membership and highlighting the benefits the group provides. In addition, she has volunteered to act as a mentor to a paralegal student who may be interested in immigration law.

Where does all this drive and energy come from?

Bunch says she is very fulfilled with being a paralegal. "I enjoy working with people from all cultures, and helping them with the legal hurdles of studying and working in the U.S.," Bunch said. "It was just by chance that I began in the field of international education and immigration, but I've enjoyed all of it, and hope to continue for several more years." When asked what is required as a successful paralegal, Bunch says the three most important skills are attention to details, excellent time management and multi-tasking skills and the ability to cope with "emergency" situations.

She defines a successful working relationship between an attorney and a paralegal as

MCBA MEMBER PROFILE



Bunch

having "a solid foundation of trust and effective communication between the attorney and the paralegal."

Bunch believes her membership in the MCBA and the Paralegal Division add value to her career.

"In addition to networking with other career-minded paralegals, there are opportunities for continued education throughout the year as well as review courses for the Certified Legal Assistant (CLA) and Paralegal Advanced Competency Examination (PACE) exams. Quarterly division meetings are held with presentations on timely issues such as electronic discovery, and brown-bag lunches are also organized periodically to encourage informal discussions

among the members."

These benefits, combined with the uniqueness of the MCBA as the only county bar association whose paralegal members are full members of the association and hold a voting seat on the board of directors, make the worth of belonging invaluable to Bunch.

She is excited about the division's upcoming paralegal conference on Nov. 8. This will be the third one she has attended since moving and she feels they have gotten "better and more professional each year."

The conference, the only statewide conference of its kind in Arizona, includes a panel of speakers who provide attendees with the most current information as well as with tools for professional success. The conference also provides a full day of networking with other paralegals from around the state, and the opportunity to develop contacts with a variety of vendors exhibiting at the conference. Conference attendees qualify for six hours of Continuing Legal Education (CLE) credit, including one hour of ethics.

When asked what is special about this year's Paralegal Conference, Bunch says it is especially exciting for two reasons. It is cele-

Security...

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requires the court to do so. Bypass of security screening should be an exception, based upon justifiable need and appropriate background checks, not the rule."

Last year over 43,000 weapons and potential weapons were detected during security screening at court entrances. In all, security staff found 18,968 knives, 11 firearms and 23,448 potential weapons including martial arts devices, box cutters, bullets, mace, razor blades and tear gas.

Recent incidents of security breaches punctuated the need for a review of court security matters. Court officers have reported a police officer with pending litigation taking a gun into a court building, a lawyer possessing a gun while heading to a court hearing and a court visitor with a cane discovered to be concealing a 20-inch sword inside.

Under the new restrictions, only judges and court commissioners are allowed to bypass security checkpoints. The new procedures require court employees to undergo criminal background investigations before obtaining photo identification badges to allow them to bypass security. However, court employees now will be subject to random security checks.

Attorneys are the largest group of individuals impacted by the new policy. Court officials are reviewing the possibility of lawyer entrances to ease potential long lines and delay in their ability to get to court on time. Court employees are to use special decision

criminal or family court case, order of protection, injunctions against harassment, eviction hearing, any pre-disciplinary hearing or disciplinary proceeding pending against them. These employees are required to report any pending court case against them.

Police officers — either in uniform or with law enforcement identification — who appear in court as witnesses or for official business purposes may bypass security as long as they do not have any pending family court cases, including orders of protection, or criminal case matters or disciplinary proceedings against them.

Attorneys with physical disabilities may apply for security bypass privileges. If the attorney with disabilities needs to be accompanied to court, an assistant may also apply for bypass card. Applicable background checks will be performed as part of the approval process.

Additional security measures are detailed in Campbell's administrative order. To read the order in its entirety, go to: www.superior-court.maricopa.gov. Go to the index on the home page and click on Administrative Order 2004-122. ■

brating its fifth anniversary, and Gov. Janet Napolitano has signed a proclamation declaring November 8 Paralegal Day in Arizona, to coincide with the event.

For Bunch, the significance of Paralegal Day is that it "gives further recognition to the profession and the important role paralegals play in the legal arena."

"My job never gets boring," she said. "What we do directly affects people's lives, and the work is often very rewarding."

And it seems how she spends her free time is rewarding as well. ■

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