

Chairman's Message

Theresa (Terry) Irvin, CLA

"Every accomplishment starts with the decision to try."

– Anonymous

Before a decision is made, the "Why?" question may be asked, "Why try?" If you have (young) children, you may be programmed to answer "Because" when you hear the "W" word. If you are the one promoting the accomplishment, (or you have older children) you may answer the question with another question, "Why not?" However, if you are the one asking "Why?" you require a more substantive response.

All of you are being asked to consider a more active role in NCPA. Nominations for officers and directors are now due. Have you made the decision to try and seek office? Hip, Hip, Hooray! to those of you who have made this decision! The Nominations and Elections Committee looks forward to receiving your nomination and contacting you for further action.

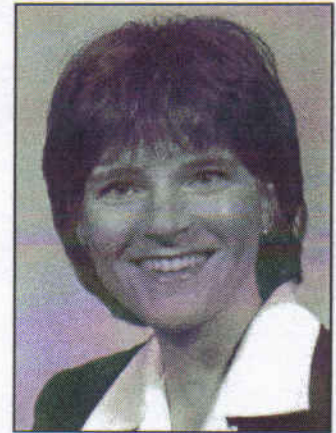
Or are you asking, "Why try?" I suspect most of you may be in this category. Why try? If you need some convincing, here are a few reasons to consider.

Networking. To answer the question with another question: What better way is there to meet your peers than to work with your colleagues towards a common goal? Although we only have five scheduled meetings a year and two large educational events, opportunities abound to meet paralegals who live in different areas of the state and work in different fields of law. Have you ever been given an out-of-the-ordinary assignment? One in which the attorney who has delegated the task is looking to you to find the answers? Through your membership in NCPA, you have at your disposal the membership directory, which lists specialties and provides you with resources. Through active involvement in NCPA, you may personally meet someone you can call upon for assistance. A few months ago, an attorney I work with asked if I knew of any restrictions placed upon

utility companies to guarantee debt. I had absolutely no idea where to even begin to look, but I had a contact to call, NCPA Member and Parliamentarian Sherry Vaughan, CLA. Sherry works for North Carolina Electric Membership Corporation and was able to point me in the right direction. By networking and working with others in NCPA, a five-minute phone call saved me five hours of research and impressed my employer.

Education. Education is at the heart of NCPA. It is in our mission statement, bylaws and standing rules. It is embedded in all we do and any actions that we take. Being a member provides you with numerous educational opportunities. Being active in a leadership role provides you with hands-on educational experiences. You learn to master skills you currently have, such as organization and attention to detail, and you acquire new skills, such as public speaking or learning a new software program. These skills translate to a résumé, and they might not be learned in your current employment position. When I left the law firm environment four years ago to enter the corporate world, the law firm where I worked was wedded to WordPerfect 5.0 for DOS. Through my involvement in NCPA, I learned Microsoft Word for Windows and acquired other computer skills which had been unavailable to me at the law firm. When seeking a new position, I was not hindered by my limitations from the law firm, I was empowered by my skills acquired through NCPA.

Professional Development. Through NCPA's various publications and news sources, we keep you informed on national and state professional issues. The Executive Committee and the Board of Directors discuss these issues and at times make decisions for NCPA based upon those discussions. With the variety of paralegals represented on the Executive Committee and the Board, many opinions and viewpoints are expressed. Insight is gained on the different issues that affect us in both



our employment situations and our personal lives. By taking an active role, you make an additional commitment to your career and you become a direct voice in discussing the issues we face. You develop an understanding of the decisions that are made, and you also acquire knowledge to assist you in comprehending the issues. In turn, you are then fully equipped to discuss these issues with paralegals in your office, your attorney, or friends and family and help to educate them about our career.

Motivation. A common experience shared by seminar attendees, Board and Executive Committee members, is the "boost" or "recharge" that is experienced at an NCPA meeting or seminar. You come away revitalized, ready to give your all to your work and career. You see that differences are being made and that the profession has grown tremendously over the years. You also meet others just like you, paralegals with family, work and church commitments, and quickly realize that so many of them manage to give a portion of their time to further our profession. It is talking with these dedicated professionals that renews our sense of direction and purpose. You do make a difference and together, NCPA makes a difference. So, Why not try?

"What you do speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say."

– Ralph Waldo Emerson