

“Setting the Pace”



Professional Spotlight on Valerie Dolan, RP

While still in high school, Valerie developed an interest in the legal field after completing a class in criminal justice. Several years later, laid off from a secretarial position, Valerie was presented with the opportunity to make a career change. Through the unemployment office, she became aware of a program that provided a grant for tuition, and a stipend for transportation, books and daycare in order to return to school. After some research, Valerie decided that the paralegal profession was “the best suited for what I wanted...it was the perfect job for me... the most rewarding

and challenging.” In 1996, she earned a paralegal certificate from the American Center for Technical Arts and Sciences. Since that time, through her involvement in the paralegal profession, Valerie has demonstrated that she is a woman of focus, energy and discipline

Upon completing paralegal school, Valerie quickly secured a secretarial position in estate planning and administration with the Philadelphia general practice firm of Dolchin, Slotkin & Todd, P. C. She was correct in believing it would be a way to break into the paralegal field. Her background in banking, along with the paralegal certificate, aided in impressing her supervising attorney. After taking on more paralegal-oriented assignments, Valerie’s official job title was elevated to paralegal, allowing her to branch out into the litigation and immigration practice areas. Recently, she has started to learn a fourth area, in Dolchin’s matrimonial practice. Valerie credits her ability to work for thirteen attorneys (in three different practice areas and learning a fourth) to the fact that she is a Gemini, with a tendency to become easily bored. However, this observer thinks it is her keen ability to focus and prioritize.

Always seeking new opportunities to grow and learn, Valerie joined the Philadelphia Association of Paralegals (PAP) in 2002. She began participating in various committees including the 30th Anniversary Gala Committee, Education Committee, Professional Development Committee and Public Relations Committee. She also chaired the Immigration Committee. Currently, she remains active as the Treasurer of the Association, through preparing the layouts for this newsletter, and is one of the Association’s two National Federation of Paralegal Association (NFPA) representatives. On a national level, she is Co-Coordinator of NFPA’s Unauthorized Practice of Law Committee. Through the service she renders to PAP and the paralegal profession, Valerie is an example of energy and enthusiasm to its members.

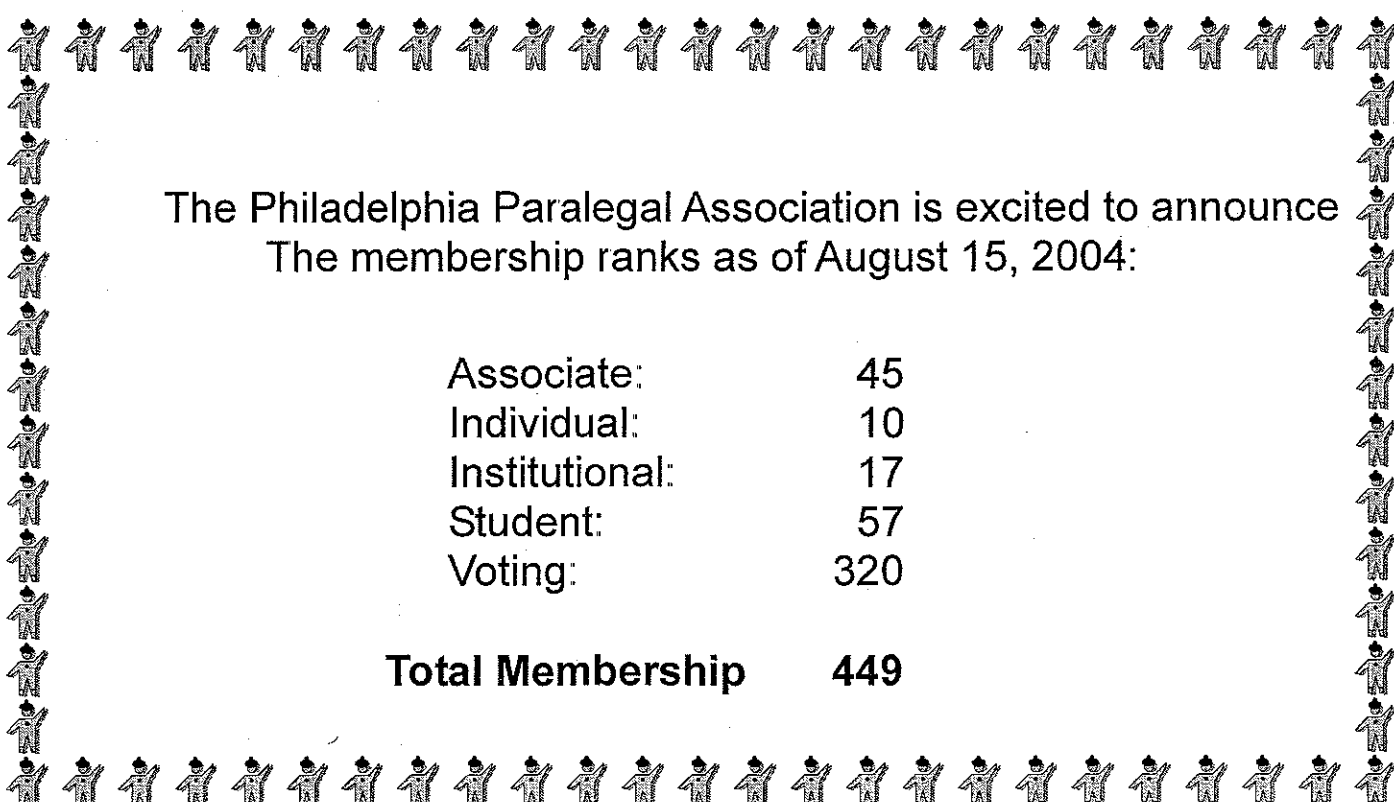
In mid-2003, Valerie decided to take on yet another challenge – the Paralegal Advanced Competency Exam (PACE) offered by NFPA. (According to the NFPA, PACE was developed in the mid-1990’s with the support of its members as a “direct response to [the] states that are considering regulation of the paralegal profession and are seeking a method to measure job competency.”) PACE has a history of being an extremely difficult, comprehensive exam, with very little formal, organized support for those desiring to prepare for it. Valerie boldly states that she

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wanted to take the exam to "test my own knowledge to see where I stand." Utilizing the PACE manual provided by NFPA, she studied independently for three months. In May 2004, Valerie passed the exam, solidifying her competency as a paralegal. In doing so, she demonstrated the level of discipline needed to earn the right to use the initials "RP" (Registered Paralegal) after her name.

Believe it or not, Valerie does have spare time. She is a mother to daughter, Jessica (who is 12 years' old at the time of this printing). Balancing her time, she is an assistant coach to Jessica's swim team, the St. Katherine of Siena Kats. In the past year, she learned how to crochet and recently completed a baby blanket, a gift to her sister's first child, a baby boy named Bryan. Her favorite television shows are *24* and *The Apprentice*. With a talent at solving *Wheel of Fortune* puzzles with only one or two letters revealed, Valerie dreams of one day being a contestant on the show.



The Philadelphia Paralegal Association is excited to announce
The membership ranks as of August 15, 2004:

Associate:	45
Individual:	10
Institutional:	17
Student:	57
Voting:	320
Total Membership	449