

## From the Desk of the PCRA President *Susan E. Kiniry, RDR*



Happy New Year! I am sure many of you feel the same way I do...Where did 2017 go? Time flies. This will be my last President's message for *The Outline*, as my presidency will come to an end with our convention in April. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve this fine association as President. I want to thank my good friend and your immediate Past President Kathy McHugh for being such a great advisor to rely on these past two years. Our current board, as well as others who served on the board during my presidency not only made my job easier, but to work with such a fine group of dedicated professionals is extremely rewarding.

I am not one for making resolutions, because I always seem to break them a few days into the new year. However, it is imperative that we all resolve to pay attention to the current state of the court reporting and captioning profession in Pennsylvania. The number of students entering our profession has been in a steady decline, and we are beginning to see the effects of that shortage, especially in our court systems. Counties facing vacancies with no one to fill the position are being forced to use alternative means to create the record. This trend is sure to continue over the next few years, and it is imperative that we recruit students into our profession, or face its ultimate demise.

Marketing our profession has been a steady focus for PCRA during the last two years. We have spent a considerable amount of money on various marketing ideas hoping to raise awareness of our profession. We are committed to continuing this endeavor. I encourage you to read about "Project Steno" in this issue of *the Outline* and visit their website. "Project Steno" is the idea of four well-known, well-respected individuals from the court reporting industry. Two of the four are very familiar to Pennsylvania, as they are our own James DeCrescenzo, RDR, CRR, FAPR, and William Weber, RDR, CRR, RSA, FAPR. PCRA is proud to say we are the first state to have committed funds to this endeavor. Our board has made a \$10,000 investment in this important project. Nancy Varallo, RDR, CRR, FAPR, will be at our convention in April to speak to the members about "Project Steno" and we will be holding several fundraisers to assist in their endeavor. Stay tuned and resolve to help PCRA support "Project Steno."

The other program that needs a commitment from every reporter in Pennsylvania is the “A to Z” program. Since its introduction, more than 700 prospective students have participated in the “A to Z” program nationwide. Forty percent of those who participated have expressed a desire to enter a court reporting program. Pennsylvania has had one group of reporters in the Harrisburg area run an “A to Z” program. However, one of those reporters who applied and was accepted into the “Project Steno” program was unable to start in January due to a personal situation. It is imperative that we start “A to Z” programs across the state, as it seems to be working to attract interest in our profession. NCRA is slated to make the program available online in early 2018. Resolve to work with a prospective student in 2018 through the “A to Z” program!

We will be launching registration for our annual convention in Pittsburgh, to be held April 13-15, 2018, at the end of January. We have a great lineup of speakers you will not want to miss! Pittsburgh is an up-and-coming city. The downtown area offers free transit service to the North Side and Station Square, both areas filled with restaurants and nightlife. You won’t want to miss a trip to the Strip District either, just a few blocks from the hotel. The Strip has a vibrant mix of old-style grocers, gourmet food shops, street stands, and upbeat bars and restaurants. I look forward to seeing you there! Melissa Keating, RPR, will be installed as your new President. PCRA will have strong leadership and continue in a positive direction under Melissa’s leadership.

As I enter my final months as your President, I have already started a transition process with Melissa. PCRA is also transitioning to a new management association. We will be ending our contract with IAMC at the end of March and entering into a new contract with Bower Management Company of New Jersey. I want to personally thank Melanie Dixon for her strong leadership over the past seven years. PCRA has grown and prospered under her leadership. IAMC and Bower Management have already begun a transition process, and we are confident that process will be a smooth one.

Let’s make 2018 the year we make a difference in our profession! Together, let’s support the “A to Z” program, “Project Steno,” and our Pennsylvania court reporting schools by resolving to work together and recruit the next generation of court reporters and captioners!

**Sincerely,  
Susan E. Kiniry, RDR  
PCRA President**

## 2018 PCRA Annual Convention: Register Now

Plans for the 2018 PCRA Annual Convention are well underway and you won't want to miss this year's speaker line-up! Register now and join us in Pittsburgh, PA, April 13 - 15. Earn up to 1.15 CEUs.

Sessions include:

### ***Implementing Rule 4000: What Works and What Doesn't***

Cheryl Hansberry, RDR, CRR, and Melissa Keating, RPR

### ***RULONA: Pennsylvania's New Notary and How it Impacts You***

Marc Aronson, PAN

### ***Mock RPR Exam***

Marybeth Everhart, MA, BA, RPR, CRI, CLR, CPE

### ***Rebuilding our Profession – Together – One Student at a Time***

Nancy Varallo, RDR, CRR

And so much more!

[Register now!](#) Don't miss out on early bird registration rates. For more information [click here](#).

## 2018 PCRA Speed Contest: Are You Ready?

Ready...Set...Go! PCRA is hosting its first Speed Contest, Friday, April 13, at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel & Suites Pittsburgh Downtown, 10am - Noon. Registration is \$95. Speed Contest registrants will be tested with five-minute tests dictated to include literary at 220 wpm; legal opinion at 230 wpm; and testimony at 280 wpm. Each take will allow for 75 minutes of transcription time.

For more information, [click here](#). To register, [click here](#).

## 2018 National Court Reporting & Captioning Week to Raise Awareness About Career Opportunities

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), the country's leading organization representing stenographic court reporters, captioners, and legal videographers, has designated Feb. 10-17 as the 2018 National Court Reporting & Captioning Week. The week-long event will highlight the many aspects of court reporting and captioning that make it a viable profession, including good salaries, flexibility,

interesting venues, and the increasing demand for more reporters and captioners to meet the growing number of employment opportunities available in the field.

Court reporters, captioners, state court reporter associations, and court reporting schools around the country will participate in the week-long event by hosting an array of activities, including visits to high schools to showcase the profession, Veterans History Project interviews, media outreach, and more. Professionals in the field will use these opportunities to demonstrate how the stenographic machine works to capture the spoken word and translate it into written text in realtime. NCRA members will also share their stories with the public about how they became involved in the profession, the interesting events they have reported on, and why their career choice has proven to be one of the best decisions they've made.

"Reflecting on more than 32 years in the stenographic reporting profession brings a profound sense of pride. Providing instant access to the spoken word and being involved in a multitude of cases involving topics from business to medical to intellectual property, products liability, and personal injury have been educational and rewarding," said NCRA President Christine J. Willette, RDR, CRR, CRC, an active reporter and owner of Willette Court Reporting in Wausau, Wis.

"I'm grateful for the opportunities I have been given both professionally and personally. The flexibility and income potential are what drew me to the profession, and I have not been disappointed. The opportunities are endless in the stenographic reporting profession. Anyone entering the profession has the chance to mold their future by choosing from multiple paths available to those who possess the stenographic machine-writing skill," she added.

To help celebrate the week, NCRA has made available a vast collection of resources including informational and marketing materials available on its [DiscoverSteno.org](https://www.discoversteno.org) site, launched to help promote the profession to high students, career changers, college redirects, and veterans.

NCRA will also support an official legislative recognition of National Court Reporting & Captioning Week and rely on its social media outlets including Facebook, Twitter, and blogs to reach thousands of people throughout the week to raise public awareness about pursuing a career in the field, and the important role court reporters and captioners play in capturing the official record, preserving history, and providing vital services to the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities.

"Court Reporting & Captioning Week gives our profession an opportunity to showcase and share the skills possessed by stenographic reporters working in the judicial and captioning fields. Coming together as a profession to celebrate has become an annual event across the country that is not to be missed," Willette said.

Career information about the court reporting profession—one of the leading career options that does not require a traditional four-year degree—can be found at [DiscoverSteno.org](http://DiscoverSteno.org).

## **PCRA and Project Steno**

**Jim DeCrescenzo, RPR, RMR, RDR, CLVS, CRR, FAPR, CSR-NJ**

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” is the opening line of Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities*.

He could have been talking about court reporting today.

Over 20 court reporting programs have closed their doors or stopped accepting new students just in the past few years. This alarming situation has frustrated freelance agencies and caption/CART companies in their search for graduates to hire. Court administrators and judges struggle to find applicants for official reporter positions in their courts. It must seem to them like the worst of times. But we believe it may be the best of times.

In April of 2017 Jim DeCrescenzo, Bill Weber, Glyn Poage and Nancy Varallo began brainstorming a plan to attract young people to court reporting after observing the grassroots success of the A to Z Program. Project Steno is the plan and you can visit <http://projectsteno.org/> to see the latest information.

The A to Z Program is administered by NCRA, but 100% implemented by volunteers from the reporting community. It is a novel concept to introduce prospective students to the stenographic keyboard, let them try it out and see if they like it. The program relies on court reporters and captioners who give their time to teach small groups of individuals in their local communities how to write shorthand on the machine. It’s truly just the basics. Using donated steno machines, students learn the alphabet from A to Z and practice writing simple, one-syllable words. Nothing fancy. The course is completed in eight three-hour sessions (eight weeks) – by which time a student knows if this is a career they’d like to pursue.

NCRA makes the instructional materials available free of charge to the reporter volunteers, and there is no charge to the students. The volunteers need no prior teaching experience, just a willingness to give their time.

The A to Z initiative continues to grow due to the enthusiastic support of reporters and CART/captioners like you and it is the launchpad for Project Steno. Once a candidate successfully completes the A to Z Program, they can go to our website and complete the application at <http://projectsteno.org/students/>. Once they have furnished their transcripts, letters of recommendation from their A to Z instructor and tendered their personal essay outlining their desire to complete their court reporting education, they are

interviewed. Students selected to receive tuition assistance are directed to participating reporting programs to enroll and begin training at the next available opportunity.

Pennsylvania currently has two NCRA approved schools, but only one is continuing to enroll new students. There are currently fewer than 20 states that have a school currently enrolling court reporting students. Many times the cost to maintain brick and mortar programs, accompanied by low graduation rates, has led to schools and colleges dropping their reporting programs. It has also resulted in some schools across the country offering online programs and some of these programs have begun meeting with success as reported a few months ago in the *Journal of Court Reporting*.

Today's high school graduates are accustomed to doing everything online, including education. Online training solves many of the economic issues facing schools and students. The use of Realtime Coach by every Project Steno program enhances the training experience and provides tools to the students and the instructors, allowing students to receive individual coaching based on realtime practice results.

Project Steno is committed to work with as many programs as possible. We are currently working with one online court reporting program, but as the financial support for Project Steno grows, the number of students and programs we can work with will also grow.

Project Steno has one goal: get students into school, and graduate reporters into our profession as soon as possible.

We will monitor each student's progress through the use of Realtime Coach, to make sure they are on track to succeed and graduate within a two-year timeframe. This tool allows us to identify students whenever they struggle and offer them the help they need to get back on track in a timely manner and remove the main barriers to successful speedbuilding.

This entire program is ambitious, and timely, and costs money. We are seeking support from everyone who has an interest in the court reporting profession. Donors from within and without the profession have already begun to contribute to Project Steno and their names appear at <http://projectsteno.org/pledges-to-date/>.

We're excited about the prospects for Project Steno. The A to Z Program and its volunteers across the country have proven we can attract students to the field; now we need to get them into schools, in numbers, and out into the workforce. Are you ready to help? We need your help if we are to reverse the decline in student enrollments/graduations and get the graduate pipeline flowing again. Whether you are a reporter, captioner or a school interested in participating, please go to <http://projectsteno.org/support-us/> and consider how you can help. Together, we can make this the best of times.

## **PCRA and Project Steno**

**Kathy McHugh, Immediate Past President-PCRA, RPR, CRR, CCR-NJ, RSA**

I hope you're as excited as I am about the possibilities that Project Steno brings to the future of court reporting and its connection to the great state of Pennsylvania. Four luminaries of the profession, Jim DeCrescenzo, Bill Weber, Nancy Varallo and Glyn Poage, have put their money where their mouth is and have issued a challenge to all reporters who love this profession and want to see it continue as a viable career for many years to come.

Project Steno is looking for continuous funding for its students from reporters across the country and Pennsylvania wants to be one of the leaders in this effort. Please stay tuned for opportunities for you to contribute to Project Steno before our annual convention, during the convention, and throughout the year.

If you have fundraising ideas you'd like to share, please contact Kathy McHugh at [kathymchugh@verizon.net](mailto:kathymchugh@verizon.net).

I hope we can count on your support for Project Steno and for the future of court reporting.

## **Convention Auction Donations Needed**

Please consider making a donation to PCRA's auction held at our annual convention, this year April 13-15, at the Hilton in downtown Pittsburgh, PA. Gift cards, stenographic –related items, entertaining pieces are just a few ideas for donations.

The auction is a great fundraiser with all money raised going directly to PCRA.

Please contact Kathy McHugh at [kathymchugh@verizon.net](mailto:kathymchugh@verizon.net) if you have any questions or to donate an item.

You can also bring your donation to the convention on Friday night/Saturday morning, or send it directly to Kathy McHugh at: 143 Paris Avenue, Audubon, NJ, 08106.

Thank you for your anticipated generosity.