

**IL****CRA****FALL****2024**www.ilcra.org**ad infinitum****ILLINOIS
COURT
REPORTERS
ASSOCIATION****In this issue**

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President's Message

Y'all!!! I LOVE STENOGRAPHERS!! What a fabulous time we had in Schaumburg at ILCRA's 2024 Annual Convention! If you didn't join us, you missed out on a great weekend. After this convention, I am filled with pride and more optimistic than ever about the state of our Association. Although our membership numbers are not what they used to be – something I hope all of us are working on - ILCRA is fortunate to have a dedicated, strong board of directors and an engaged membership.

For me, the best part of any convention weekend is getting to hang out with other stenographers. If you're a freelancer like me, seeing other stenographers is a rare occurrence. The best I can hope for is a chance walk-by on the street (certain types of roller bags are a dead giveaway – even my spouse Rob can identify a stenographer on the horizon) or spotting someone rolling through the halls of the Daley Center. On the other hand, convention weekend is a total immersion experience - stenographers as far as the eye can



see. I can't explain how it works, but there's something about the fellowship and being together with you all that motivates and reenergizes me. I know I am not alone in this feeling because others have mentioned it as well. We just "get" each other.

To those of you who couldn't make it, I hope to see you next time. We missed your presence and energy. Our 2024 presenters were fantastic and presented on a wide range of subjects from voice writing, to a 35-year history of the freelance market in Chicago, to combatting digitals, to best practices in making yourself irresistible, to a punctuation lesson by the grammar queen herself, Margie Wakeman Wells. We heard from our lobbyist Brittan Bolin about the ILCRA board's role

Continued on page 6



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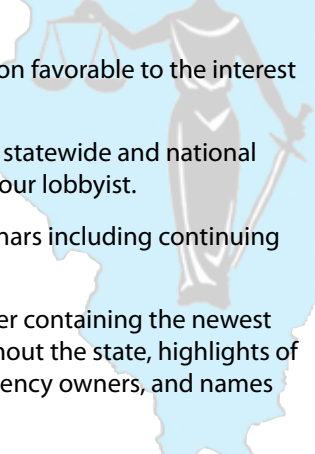
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What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- 
- **Works** to maintain your right to be certified.
 - **Monitors, promotes, and lobbies** to pass legislation favorable to the interest of court reporters, captioners and CART providers.
 - **Monitors** legislation affecting our professions on a statewide and national basis through both our Legislative Committee and our lobbyist.
 - **Sponsors** an annual conference and one-day seminars including continuing education and the latest in reporting technology.
 - **Publishes** *Ad Infinitum*, a quarterly online newsletter containing the newest up-to-the-minute reporting developments throughout the state, highlights of board meetings, advertisements of vendors and agency owners, and names and telephone numbers of ILCRA officers.
 - **Serves** as an affiliated state unit of the [National Court Reporters Association](#).
 - **Offers** members significantly reduced rates for the conventions and seminars.
 - **Awards** Student Scholarships, a Distinguished Service Award, an Award of Excellence for an Outstanding Educator, and conducts [speed contests](#) each year.
 - **Provides** resources on the ILCRA website, including the CSR Act, Court Reporters' Act, Rules and Regulations of the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Transcript Act, and ILCRA Bylaws. It also includes officers' names and contact information as well as Committees and Committee Members. ILCRA Member Information is included on the website under "Find a Reporter."
 - **Offers** an Online Student Mentor Program.
 - **Promotes** student recruitment.
 - **Organizes** letter-writing campaigns on issues affecting our professions.
 - **Sends** representative members to legislative boot camps, leadership conferences, and the national convention for training and education.
 - **Provides** reporters for demonstrations on request and attends career days throughout the state.
 - **Provides** free CART brochures to its members.
 - **Provides** a court reporters network through Constant Contact which allows ILCRA to immediately be in touch with members via email.
 - **Serves** the membership with the phone number 703-729-4861 and a [website](#).
 - **Provides** an association management company to assist members.

ILCRA MISSION STATEMENT

To maintain standards of excellence in verbatim shorthand reporting, to provide continuing educational opportunities and advocate technological advancements, and to promote a spirit of mutual assistance between the profession of verbatim shorthand reporting and its consumers.

A Report On My First Year as an ILCRA Board Member

By Brad Benjamin, CSR, RPR
Vice President ~ ILCRA

At the age of eleven, I conceded that I was not cut out for politics. I confidently threw my hat into the ring and ran to become Ravinia Elementary's fifth-grade class president. Well, actually, one of four class presidents. Nonetheless, four of us would be elected to sit on a board, charged with the responsibility to lead our classmates with the savvy decision-making and prowess of small children. Twelve students ran, and I was one of eight that made it through the primary.

I know what you are thinking. The answer is, yes, it is true. My elementary school elections had a primary – for four presidential posts!

With the general only a week away (if only real election cycles went this fast), the wait was almost over. I was certain to soon be (a) president of Ravinia Elementary. I just had to put on the final charm.

I had a very catchy campaign slogan. In one of my videotaped campaign ads, which I can't imagine where or when it aired, my friends banded together, shouting "You'll be glad if you vote for Brad!" Then I boldly walked on camera and declared "And you won't be sad!" followed by "Hi, I'm Brad Benjamin, and I approved this message."

We were all required to give a campaign speech in front of the entire student body and administration. I wrote an impassioned speech, undoubtedly with plenty of input from my mother who just happened to be a professional speechwriter. I don't recall what my policies were; after all, it has been 40 years. Maybe something about building a wall between the playground and the kickball field at the back of the school so balls wouldn't roll over; I'm not sure. But what I do remember is that I was going to be a unifying president. I was going to bring people together – seriously.

The four winners of the Ravinia Elementary presidential election were announced over the PA system by our principal right after the final bell rung on Friday. My name was not one of them. I was crushed.

Thinking back, I only remember one of the other campaign speeches, my friend Randy's speech. When it was his turn, he got up and walked over to the mic with a small box in his hands. He tilted the box towards us, and you could see there was a small turtle inside. He said "My name is Randy, and this is my pet turtle. Vote for me." Then he walked back to his seat. He was one of the winners.

Over the next few months, from time to time I'd get in fights with other students. Nothing remarkable, just your usual arguments kids have. I was pretty tough, but they knew how to get to me that year. When in an argument, the other kid ultimately yelled "I didn't vote for you, Brad!" That hurt. I would expect these memories to fade as most childhood





disappointments do; you just pick yourself up and move on. However, a final nail in the coffin worked to keep the ordeal sharp in my mind.

My classmate Tomo's family decided to move to Japan in the middle of winter. Tomo was one of the winners. When the bell rang to end the school day, I burst out of the doors eager to get home. However, I was still close enough to the school to hear the principal on the PA system inform the school that Tomo, one of the winners, was moving. This meant a vacancy on the board of presidents. The principal announced the seat would go to the also-ran with the most votes. It still wasn't me. I wasn't even close.

My fifth-grade political devastation was my first thought a lifetime later when Greg Weiland asked me to serve on the ILCRA Board of Directors. I responded that, although I was intrigued, I had run for office before, and it did not go well. I'm not sure if I provided further detail.

I never saw myself as the sort of person to serve on a board, and I was quite certain that was the world's view as well. Not only that, I wasn't even an ILCRA member just a few months before. After the communication slowed for a month, I thought I was off the hook. Then Greg reached out, and we met, and now I am vice president of ILCRA.

Perhaps I was worried about being rejected and passed over again for a position that I didn't know if I was qualified for and wasn't even sure I wanted. But my real concern was what if I was elected?

My fears and concerns were, at best, unfounded. This has been an industry that has supported and encouraged me from day one. And by "day one," I mean from day one as a theory student a little over 16 years ago. The same can be said for becoming a member of the ILCRA Executive Board. We all have different degrees and years of experience but all work together for a common goal.

Being a board member of ILCRA this past year has been an eye-opening experience. It bears repeating how hard this board has worked to ensure the Illinois House and Senate's re-passage of the five-year sunset extension of the CSR Act. Each instance where special interests came in to sneak language in the Act that would give digital "reporters" rights the same as ours were blocked by the board. I could barely keep up watching President-Elect Lorie Kennedy and Immediate Past President Georgia Northway work with Greg and furiously redline and resubmit repeated drafts of the Act to protect us all the while wearing the legislature down until they threw up their hands and repassed a clean five-year extension of the original CSR Act.

I have seen members like our former legislative representative Catherine Rajcan join the CSR Board, which had not met for years beforehand, also with the goal to protect CSRs through her involvement with the board.

The unexpected passing of Bernice Radavich last year left such a great loss that it was unimaginable we could find someone to take over her responsibilities. We are thankful to have all the skill Isaiah Roberts now brings as ILCRA's new education liaison. Isaiah was an obvious choice. He was already a resource to all reporting schools in Illinois with his passion for shepherding new programs and recruiting new reporting students. Isaiah has been a board member at ILCRA ever since I've known him, and he is a true champion for this cause and others.

This year I joined Kirstie Anderson, our secretary; Andrea Jent, our treasurer; and Lorie Kennedy, our president elect, on the special committee to plan this year's ILCRA convention. I assumed we would struggle trying to recruit speakers; so I took one for the team and volunteered myself. I could not have been more off the mark. Kirstie, Andrea, Lorie along with Greg and Dave Wenhold worked hard to provide an incredible lineup of speakers for a wonderful convention.

I am grateful for all my experiences at ILCRA this year and look forward to the second half of my term as Vice President in the next year! ■



President's Message

continued from front page

in the successful extension of the CSR Act through 2030, and we were graced by Illinois' very own Donna Urlaub with her tips on enjoying a long career in this noble profession.

To all who joined us at the convention, THANK YOU!!! Your support is acknowledged and appreciated!

Plans are underway for our virtual Marathon in the spring and the 2025 annual convention next fall. We plan these conventions for you, and we would love to hear your thoughts on session topics. If you have suggestions on session topics, please reach out to me or any other board member and let us know your ideas. Keep a lookout for save-the-date emails for both events in your inboxes.

I am looking forward to the next time we are all together! Until then, happy writing to all of you. Thanks for your continued support!

Greg

Thank You to Our Valued Sponsors of the Convention

Illinois Court Reporters Association wishes to thank the following sponsors for their generosity and support in making the 2024 ILCRA annual convention a success.

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Greg's Angels: Digital Deception!

Writer: Andrea Jent

Starring:

Greg Weiland, ILCRA President

Kirstie Anderson, ILCRA Secretary

Georgia Northway, ILCRA Past President

Andrea Jent, ILCRA Treasurer

OPENING SEQUENCE - THEME SONG PLAYING

GREG

(Voiceover)

Once upon a time, there were three very different little girls who grew up to be three very different women with three things in common: they're brilliant, they're court reporters, and they work for me. My name is Greg.

INT. ANGELS' OFFICE - DAY

The camera pans across a stylish office filled with a collection of antique stenography machines on the shelves. GREG, the unseen boss, speaks through a speakerphone.

GREG

(Through speakerphone)

Good morning, Angels. I've got a critical mission for you.

ANDREA

What's the situation, Greg?

GREG

(Through speakerphone)

There's been a surge of digital recorders posing as Certified Shorthand Reporters. They are

infiltrating courtrooms, sabotaging trials, and undermining the profession. Your mission is to find them and shut them down.

GEORGIA

We must protect the record.

KIRSTIE

Let's show them what real Certified Shorthand Reporters can do.

GREG

(Through speakerphone)

Exactly. Use your steno skills. Remember, these machines are tricky.

Stay sharp, Angels.

The trio exchanges determined looks.

CUT TO: EXT. COURTROOM - DAY

The Angels arrive outside a bustling courthouse. They're dressed in professional attire, each armed with their steno machine, ready for action.

ANDREA

All right. Let's split up. Georgia, you take the south entrance.

Kirstie, you're with me at the north.

GEORGIA

I'll scan for anything suspicious.

They nod and the Angels disperse.

CUT TO: INT. COURTROOM - SOUTH ENTRANCE - DAY

GEORGIA enters, casually observing the crowd. She spots a DIGITAL

RECORDER in the corner, acting strangely.

GEORGIA

Time to investigate.

She approaches the recorder, crouching down to examine it. Suddenly, it begins to SPUTTER NOISES.

DIGITAL RECORDER

Error...error...I am a certified reporter...error...error...

Georgia raises an eyebrow, pulls out her steno machine, and begins to take down the proceedings.

GEORGIA

You're not fooling anyone!

The recorder starts to shake violently, then EXPLODES into a cloud of sparks.

CUT TO: INT. COURTROOM - NORTH ENTRANCE - DAY

ANDREA and KIRSTIE enter, spotting a DIGITAL RECORDER on a table. ANDREA and KIRSTIE exchange knowing glances.

DIGITAL RECORDER

You cannot stop progress!

ANDREA and KIRSTIE exchange glances, a mix of determination and amusement.

Continued on page 6

GREG'S ANGELS

DIGITAL DECEPTION



ANDREA

Let's give it a taste of what a real Certified Shorthand Reporter can do.

ANDREA and KIRSTIE approach the bench and sit down at the front of the courtroom with their steno machines and nod to the judge.

KIRSTIE

We are ready, Judge.

JUDGE

On the record.

ANDREA and KIRSTIE spring into action, expertly taking down the verbatim record at over 225 words per minute, which confuses the recorder and it begins to sputter and fizzle out.

KIRSTIE

That's how Greg's Angels do it!

The recorder bursts into flames, and the courtroom bursts into applause.

CUT TO: INT. ANGELS' OFFICE - DAY

The Angels return to their office, high-fiving and laughing. Greg's voice comes through the speaker.

GREG

(Through speakerphone)

Well done, Angels. You've saved the profession today.

GEORGIA

Just another day at the office.

ANDREA

And we did it without having to put one (inaudible) in the record.

KIRSTIE

What's next, Greg?

GREG

(Through speakerphone)

Let's just say the digital world is always evolving. We must always stay vigilant and aware!

They share a smile, ready for their next adventure.

FADE OUT.

THE END.

This is a work of fiction. Any resemblance to real persons, dead or alive, or other real-life entities, past or present, is purely coincidental.

The Assignment of a Lifetime: The 49th Quadrennial Democratic National Convention (Aug 2024)



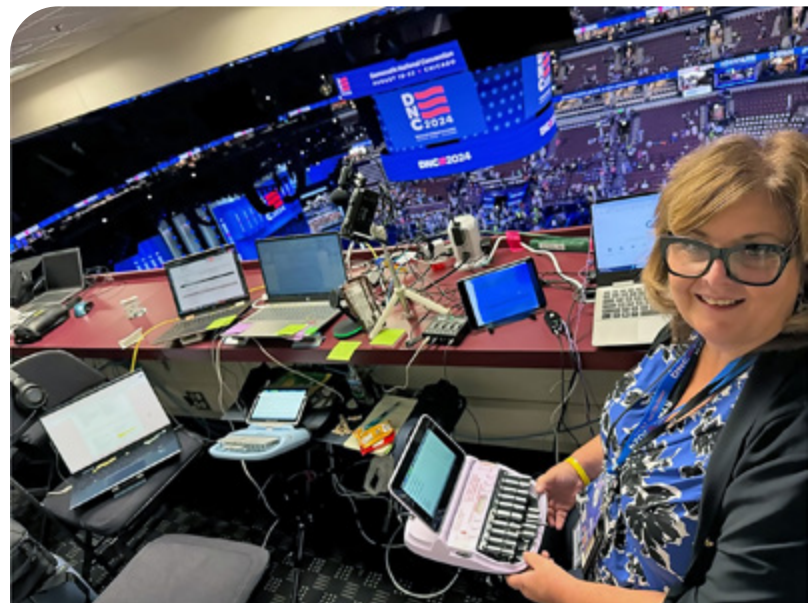
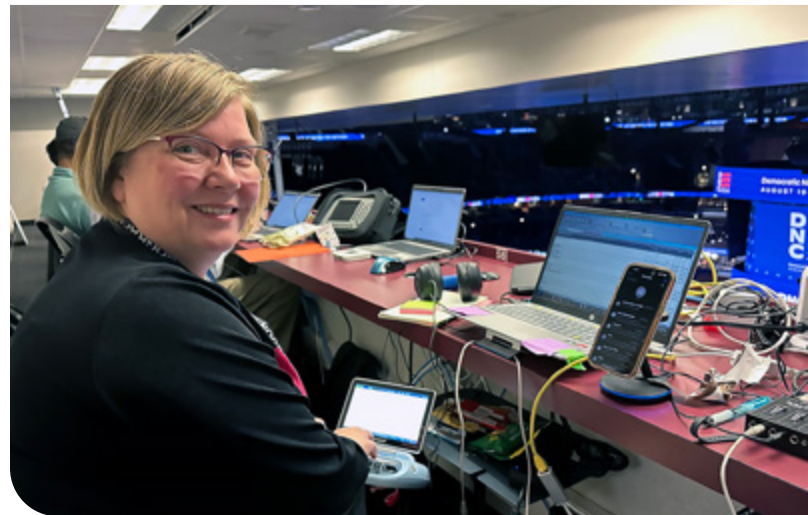
By April Metzler
CSR, RMR, CRR, FCRR

I had just gotten settled into my 90-minute flight layover and was checking emails, when I saw the notifier come across for the newest email arrival with a “re” line that said something like “Chicago DNC Daily Copy, Interested?” I’ve always wondered on those high-profile assignments that I’ve seen throughout my career, “How did so-so get that job?” Now I know!! Everything I had done in my career prior to that day put me in the spot to be able to answer the call immediately to be able to say, “Count me in, please!!” If you think not getting everything you can out of your software is just enough, or your career relationships are just enough, or the clients you encounter are just enough to get you by, then you would not be getting everything out of this career in stenography that’s available to you. But I’ll assume if you are reading our ILCRA Ad Infinitum, you are not of that thinking and you want the best for stenographers, the best for yourself, and the most out of your career!!

With just a few short meetings with the firm and chats with my assignment partner, JoAnn Losoya, we were prepared to encounter any possible equipment need!! We interacted with the different departments within DNC, US Secret Service, and United Center sound engineers to weave our way into discussing and receiving exactly technology-wise what and where we needed to be stationed on-site, so we could take down their record, and to be able to testify, if ever called, as to what occurred at the venue and what the record consisted of. By the end of the last day, as we were going through our last Secret Service “active barrier,” I think we both were happy to be getting back to our regular,

mundane, not-investigated-by-bomb-sniffing-canines-at-each-entrance-and-exit-of-our-daily-locations lives.

The bottom line of this job is that our names and licensures appear on the official transcript forever and ever and ever; and we have joined the club of the pen writers and stenographers who have taken the official record of every quadrennial since the first convention of the Democratic Party in 1832. The details of such an experience we are happy to share. And we are also excited to share that because the live stenographer offers an impartial, unbiased, and licensed individual based on skill and knowledge, and who is responsible for the security of the record in its entirety, the DNC will continue to engage live, on-site stenographers going forward!! ■



2024 Distinguished Service Award

By Melissa Clagg



Georgia played an integral part during the COVID pandemic shutdown as ILCRA pivoted to online seminars to keep members safe while receiving their continuing education points.

Georgia has also proven to be a selfless leader by volunteering to assume the position of Immediate Past President after Mary Ann Casale relocated to Miami at the end of her term as president, thus making this a second term for Georgia. Most people would have run away; am I right?

Over the years, as board members came and went, Georgia remained the constant. She was able to provide guidance to the new board members with her institutional knowledge.

There is nothing more meaningful than your colleagues and fellow board members crediting you as the glue that keeps the association together. What an accolade!

Another great quality about Georgia is she exudes kindness and grace. On the day she was installed as President of ILCRA, she brought her aging dog with her. Georgia's warm and kind heart has no bounds.

There is also another secret that accompanies the DSA award, and that is a mission of sneaking the recipient's family members into the luncheon for the big surprise.

Georgia's husband, Jared, and her mother, Mary Beth Pruitt, were up for

Congratulations to Georgia Northway, who was awarded the 2024 Distinguished Service Award at the ILCRA convention on September 21. It was a thrilling moment as her name was revealed during the Nancy Davis Luncheon.

With the untimely passing of last year's recipient, Bernie Radovich, it was my great honor to present the award in her stead.

Throughout the history of this award's presentation, the presenter takes on a challenge to keep the winner's name concealed until the very end of the presentation. It was a very difficult task in Georgia's case because her accomplishments were at the forefront of her service with ILCRA. Any slight mention of those would have let the cat out of the bag too soon. An example would be that it's been said that the Association is alive today because of her nurturing and guidance.



that challenge! You see, her mother received this same award in 2011, so she knew it was a very special and momentous occasion. Jared and Mary Beth wanted it to be so special, they were willing to be stuck in the back of the kitchen until their presence could be revealed. I'll never forget the image of them sitting in wait in the not-so-pretty corner of the kitchen behind the service doors.

It was during my recitation of a quote from Georgia's mother when Georgia realized it was her name that was about to be announced. The quote started off with, "My daughter is tenacious." Georgia's mother thought it would be cute to tell the story of how her daughter attended three court reporting schools in order to finish. Instantly, Georgia knew the quote came from her mother. As cute as that is, that might have been where the tenacity prospered in making her the true leader she is today.

I am ever so grateful that I had the opportunity to be the presenter of this prestigious award to Georgia.

Georgia, despite what you think, you ARE very deserving of this award. For what you feel has been just doing your job, you are doing it with exceptional hard work, dedication, and passion. Thank you, Georgia, for your unparalleled service and leadership. ■

Keys for Your Keys!

3-D printed steno keychains made with love by an aspiring court reporter

For the 2024 ILCRA Convention Swag Bags, the ILCRA Board was proud to feature ILCRA "KROERT" keychains made by Bianca Karr. Bianca is an aspiring court reporter who is well on her way to becoming certified, having recently passed her 120 jury charge!

Bianca says, "For my first ever steno networking conference, I made these keychains with my email printed on the back as a neat way to connect with working professionals and other students. I was so pleasantly overwhelmed with how well it was received! Organizations, firms, and officials have reached out to get their own keychains, and I'm so excited to make them!



"As I grow with this amazing community, I've since made full-sized steno boards for practice and display, and I have other super exciting steno products in the works. All the revenue and contributions from everyone's generosity goes directly to my school tuition, which helps tremendously to support my little kids as I power through speed building and show them that we can do hard things.

Thank you for supporting a steno student!"

Your ILCRA board was happy to provide you with this unique product, while also supporting a student's education, and we wish Bianca the best of luck on her steno journey!

You can contact at her website, <http://bonkaiscrafty.com/>, or email her for custom and bulk orders at bpazkarr@gmail.com.



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Seymour Wolfe Scholarship

This year ILCRA was pleased to receive nine essay submissions for the Seymour Wolfe scholarship. The winner received a \$1,000 scholarship and a complimentary registration for convention. The subject of the essay was why the applicant is passionate about the profession and what they have done to donate back to their communities, stenographic, and personal areas of interest. This year's winner was **Schuyler McFarland**, who attends Court Reporting Services Official Training Program.

Some excerpts from Schuyler's essay are below.

"The time I've spent becoming acquainted with this profession has been teaching me more and more what it takes to make it in this field, and that the way to fulfillment is through struggle and perseverance that sometimes revealed what one is made of and at times pushes one to change and grow stronger in order to continue.

"My most frequent method of giving back to my community is through donating to the aid of women in crisis....women who are expecting and have the desire to carry their children and love them throughout life, but fear that due to lack of resources or lack of support and in many cases both, they wouldn't be able to be capable of providing a stable home for a child.

"This is something that is important to me, because I believe it's a valuable desire, to seek, to make a positive difference in life, even the life of just one person.

"Helping a struggling woman or family to find the resources needed in order to provide for and love a child throughout its life is something that will echo down through generations and make a difference in every family aided."

Congratulations to Schuyler on your perseverance with court reporting school and your passion to give back to community!

ILCA Scholarship

This year ILCRA received one essay submission for its annual scholarship award. The first-place winner received \$1,000, hotel accommodations for a night, a \$50 travel stipend, and a one-year Associate Membership in the Illinois Court Reporters Association. The winner will become a member of the ILCRA Student Scholarship Committee for the following year.

Applicants must be enrolled in a court reporting program and must have achieved a minimum speed of 160 words per minute. The subject of this year's essay was: "Describe an experience where you faced an obstacle or adversity at school, how you overcame it, and what you learned from it."

This year's winner was **Iris Thaller** from Lake Land College. Iris is a court specialist who is at exit speeds of 225 words per minute.

Here are some excerpts from Iris' essay:

"I would hold my breath for what felt like an eternity. And my hands would shake so much that my entire transcript looked like slop. My turning point came when I was attempting a

particularly challenging set of literary 160 word per minute tests."

She decided this next one was going to be the one she passed. She told herself over and over again, "I can do this," out loud.

"Since then, I have kept up with most of my same testing rituals, but personally, the one that has been the most effective is the positive affirmations I say to myself.

"I have also joined several encouraging court reporting student groups where I post these positive affirmations for everyone else to see as well.

"Whether it's telling yourself it's okay after a not-so-good test, or repeating you can do it over and over, it really does make a difference.

"In the end, it is the confidence and belief you put into yourself that will give you that boost to make it over the most challenging hurdles."

Congratulations, Iris!

Bob Fields' Scholarship

The Bob Fields annual scholarship award, sponsored by Donna Urlaub, is presented every year at the Awards Luncheon. Donna sponsors the Fields scholarship in honor of her mentor and friend Bob Fields. All students in attendance at the luncheon enter their names in a drawing, and the name selected receives a \$500 cash award. This year's winner was Jasmine. Congratulations, Jasmine!

Meet Our New Board Members

Heather Perkins-Reiva, BSRR, RDR, CRR

It was truly a privilege to be sworn in as Regional 1 Official Representative on Saturday, September 21, 2024. Thirty-three years ago, after graduating from the Minnesota School of Business in Minneapolis, Minnesota, I left my home state for a reporting opportunity in bankruptcy court at the Dirksen federal courthouse in downtown Chicago. In the year that followed, I joined the reporting "exchange" in Chicago, where I worked as a freelance reporter for 25 years. Currently, at this point in my career, it has now come full circle, and I have returned to federal court, this time assigned to the Roszkowski federal courthouse in Rockford, Illinois, where I have been reporting for the past eight years. I am the sole official reporter at the courthouse, assigned to one district court judge and covering two magistrate judges as well.

Recently, as a membership, we have faced a great challenge regarding renewal of the CSR Act. After attending the last board meeting, I have an even greater appreciation and respect for the board members who worked effectively, diligently, and tirelessly on our behalf with respect to that issue. This inspired my personal call to board service, to be an advocate for or against legislation that impacts our professional organization, as well as address other important issues that need to be tackled on behalf of our membership.

In my quest to find what are the strongest attributes of an effective board member to prepare myself for this new role, I found, in essence, the

following: "to promote high standards of professional practice and advocate for the interests of our common profession." I promise to assiduously work to advance our shared interests in these respects, and I am thankful for this opportunity to serve.

Jo Ann Losoya

Hi! I'd like to introduce myself. My name is Jo Ann Losoya, and I'm your new Freelance Rep for Region 1. I've been a freelance reporter (deep breath) since 1980! I've decided now is the time to volunteer and devote some time to our great ILCRA board. I plan on working many more years as I truly enjoy this profession, and I want to contribute to keeping this profession alive and well for many years to come.

I was introduced to court reporting in high school. It was offered as part of their business occupations program. When it came time to decide what to do with my life after high school graduation, my mother said (Thanks, Mom!) "You're going to court reporting school." Best decision ever.

I started at MacCormac in the fall of 1978 learning the Hedman theory -- a revolutionary theory that was computer compatible before computers were even a thing. Ask me about the stick in between my vowels! It allows me to hit the asterisk key with my thumbs. My teacher was the notorious Mr. Tossi. I still shudder at the phrase, "Jo Ann, pick up 3 folds." Reporters who started with paper machines know that drill. He said I'd never make it. Well, here's looking at you, Mr. Tossi. Still going strong after



Jo Ann Losoya

44 years. Not that I'm holding onto any animosity or anything. LOL

Once I got that magic CSR license, off I went to conquer the world. I tackled everything and anything. I reported City of Chicago Council Finance Committee meetings for 40 years. I was on the floor taking the roll call when Harold Washington was mayor and the "Vrdolyak 29" took control of the Council in 1984. That's something from the wayback machine! I have reported trials, arbitrations, and depositions of all kinds -- medical malpractice, asbestos, IP litigation, sworn statements. You name it, I've done it. Recently to cap off my career, I had the honor and privilege to work as the Official Court Reporter of the Democratic National Convention along with April Metzler.

I hope this gives you a little insight as to who I am. I look forward to the challenge of working with the ILCRA board for the upcoming term. Please feel free to reach out to me at any time if you have any questions or concerns: jlosoyacsr@gmail.com.

Changing Hats from ILCRA Legislative Representative to CSR Board Member - Using Our Common Senses

By Catherine A. Rajcan
CSR, RPR, RMR, RDR, CRR,
CRC

As described elsewhere in this edition of *Ad Infinitum*, as well as announced at the ILCRA Fall Conference September 20-21, 2024, the Illinois CSR Act has been renewed for another five years with minimal administrative changes made by the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation (IDFPR). The bill filed by IDFPR at the start of the 2024 Spring Legislative Session can be generally described as a “clean bill” as no substantive changes were made to the Act. This hard-fought battle to protect the veracity and security of the verbatim record in Illinois was won thanks to the participation of many stakeholders. As my second term as ILCRA Legislative Representative came to a close, with the CSR Act sunset extended for five years, I submitted my application to IDFPR to serve on the CSR Board, and my offer to serve was accepted.

The Illinois CSR Board has been reconvened after more than six years of not meeting – the first meeting of the current board was held on July 22, 2024. The CSR Board is a professional administrative board which operates under the auspices of the IDFPR; and the IDFPR website indicates: “The Board is composed of six licensed shorthand reporters and one public member appointed by the Secretary. The Board constructs examinations and makes recommendations to the Secretary

regarding matters of discipline and professional conduct.”

The six licensed CSRs who comprise the board at this time are: Cheryl Barone, Chair; Pamela Taylor, Vice Chair; Dyann Berndt, Kathleen Bono, Lidia Stefani, and myself, Catherine Rajcan, members. The Board still needs to seat a public member, (non-CSR), to serve with the CSR members. As this edition of the *Ad Infinitum* is published, this seat for a public member remains open, and my CSR colleagues and I would appreciate suggestions from ILCRA members on who may be a suitable candidate to serve. Please contact an ILCRA board member or myself with suggested candidate names.

When the board met in July, it had created a short list of concerns affecting the profession which it would like to address; and the board members look forward to serving the people of Illinois through IDFPR -- as is indicated in the CSR Act: by protecting the public interests, i.e. their “health, safety and welfare” as affected and impacted by the practice of shorthand reporting in Illinois.

Court reporters are the “Guardians of the Record.” We are well situated to observe or hear of possible violations of the CSR Act by licensed/unlicensed individuals or entities, and we have ethical and professional duties to speak up and report to or alert the State, through its agencies, of incidents of deviations in processes and procedures from statute or rules. We may believe something doesn’t “look right,” doesn’t “sound right,” or “doesn’t ‘smell’ right” as we are individually serving in our

“hands-on” role as Officer of the Court.

With respect to the practice of shorthand reporting in Illinois, the CSR Act states:

- “No person may practice shorthand reporting...in this State without being certified under this act” (225 ILCS 415/3);
- Any person who practices, offers to practice, attempts to practice, or holds oneself out to practice as a shorthand reporter without being certified under this Act shall...pay a civil penalty to the Department in an amount not to exceed \$10,000 for each offense...” (225 ILCS 415/3.5(a));
- The Titles of “Certified Shorthand Reporter,” “C.S.R.” and “Court Reporter” shall only be used by or pertain to persons licensed under the CSR Act (225 ILCS 415/5);
- “The practice of shorthand reporting” means “the use of manual or mechanical shorthand” (using a pen or stenotype machine to write simultaneous verbatim shorthand notes of the proceeding) (225 ILCS 415/4);
- And the CSR must create the shorthand notes “while in attendance at such proceeding for the purpose of reporting the same” (225 ILCS 415/4(6)).

Illinois Supreme Court Rule 46 has been reaffirmed by the Illinois Conference of Chief Circuit Judges in February 2024:

- Court Reporting Personnel (c) includes only 1, “court reporters defined by the Court Reporters Act (705 ILCS 70/1)”; 2, “court personnel who have fulfilled the training and certification” [of] “the Supreme Court”...; and

3, “certified shorthand reporters hired through an agency or as an independent contractor by a private party or parties to take a stenographic record in court proceedings.” In other words, **private contracted electronic recorder operators, aka digital audio recorders, are not permitted within Illinois Courts to record proceedings, whether onsite or via videoconferencing.**

In light of the specific sections of the CSR Act and Supreme Court Rule 46 identified above, and reports within court reporter groups over the past decade that several individuals and legal services entities are claiming to provide “court reporting” services without the engagement of an actual Illinois licensed CSR to be present at the

legal proceedings – instead audio or video recording the proceedings and subsequently transcribing the recording by unidentified transcriptionist(s) -- it is **very important** for all CSRs, attorneys, and court personnel to be vigilant in reporting such violations to IDFPR through the online complaint process. The link to the complaint form on IDFPR’s website is: <https://idfpr.illinois.gov/admin/dpr/dprcomplaint.html>.

Please contact any of the CSR Board members mentioned above if you see, hear, or “sense” someone is identifying or presenting themselves as a court reporter when they are not using a stenotype machine, whether at a deposition, at court, or other proceeding described within the CSR Act, 225 ILCS 415/4(4): “Grand

Jury proceedings, court proceedings, court related proceedings, pretrial examinations, depositions, motions and related proceedings of like character, or proceedings of an administrative agency when the final decision of the agency with reference thereto is likely to be subject to judicial review under the provisions of the Administrative Review Law.”

Be confident in your skills, take serious your responsibilities to the People of Illinois, and fulfill your duty as an Officer of the Court to protect and secure the verbatim record. Use your common sense, and our common senses. And as the Union Pacific’s marketing campaign has stated: If you see something, say something! ■

This past weekend, I attended my fourth ILCRA conference. I’ve been going since I was a student. I know I can always count on great seminars and speakers every time. This year, however, truly surpassed my expectations. I was riveted the entire two days, and there was truly something for everyone. Need to brush up on your punctuation? Want to learn about scary AI? Interested in what our lobbyist is doing for CSRs? Craving some straight-up entertainment brought to you by your impressively knowledgeable peers? ILCRA has you covered. I learned so much, and I’m confident I left Schaumburg a better stenographer, not to mention all the fun I had at the blackjack table exasperating our card dealer and losing all my chips at the Friday night reception. Our board did a wonderful job putting this event together, as they do every single year. Join us in 2025!



Sara M. Sapp, RSR, CCR-WA

"I Would Like To Thank The Association..."

**By Georgia Northway,
RPR, CSR-IL, CCR-MO**

This is likely to come out sounding like an acceptance speech for some blockbuster Hollywood movie. But as I reflect on what happened Saturday afternoon and how and why I got where I'm at today, I can only think of those who have had such an impact and an influence during my time on the ILCRA Board and before; those who set the precedent for quality leadership, perseverance, thoughtfulness, and grace.

I also think of those who have come before me. And for my entire existence, I have been so happy to be close enough to previous DSA winners that I might stand in the shadows they cast from their greatness. People like Nancy Hopp, whose name was synonymous with court reporting advocacy, locally and nationally; Nancy Davis, who single-handedly held the office of the Executive Director of ILCRA for decades, and for whom the Awards Luncheon is now named; Seymour Wolfe, who ran a successful deposition empire and who donated gratuitously to ILCRA Presidents' parties, who now has a scholarship named in his honor. All of the names are as recognizable as A-list movie stars – Donna Urlaub, Rita Corson, our very dear Bernie – the "Cher" of ILCRA; you know her just by her first name.

Even my own amazing mother, who I could write an entire article on alone. Keeping it brief, her work in the early 2000s helped lay the framework for developing Court Reporting Services & transferring supervision of officials from the AOIC to the Chief Judges of Illinois.



Each and every recipient of the DSA going back almost 25 years is a person I have met and revered since before I was even a student. I was doe-eyed and star struck in their presence. So I'm still trying to process how someone could see my contributions in a similar way to how I see those who have come before me.

All I ever felt like I was doing was fulfilling a promise, following through on what I had committed to, what I said I would accomplish, taking all of the highs and lows as they came with a steadfast dedication towards open communication, decision making, and execution. It didn't really seem all that distinguished. I just felt like I was doing my job.

But the truth is, I do love ILCRA. It has been a truly rewarding experience, though we work pretty hard to earn our rewards. I take the DSA as a medium through which the association is saying, "I love you, too."

I have come to care deeply about each and every board member I serve

with now and have in the past. I have a genuine, abiding interest in their professional well-being as well as their personal lives and their overall happiness.

They are, in a way, more than friends. We are bonded by a general understanding of what it took for each of us to get where we are, and the common ground we share serves as a cementitious foundation for our relationships.

Sometimes we become trauma bonded! When dealing with legislation and those sneaky digital recording advocates, we navigate these unfamiliar territories together with heads spinning and overwhelming anxiety. Yet we always end up even stronger than we were before. We have cried together over how much we love our jobs.

We also laugh together, a lot! Our conferences have created a space for us to enjoy more social time with each other instead of only communicating when we're working. It has been a wonderful opportunity to genuinely get to know my board and how their experiences and their lives have shaped them. If you need a reason to attend a conference, the connection and networking and socializing is reason enough. There is so much value in coming together and being in fellowship with your colleagues from all over this state and our neighbors across the border.

I told my husband receiving the DSA this year has only strengthened my commitment to ILCRA and doing what I can for court reporting. He said, "Honey, that award is for services rendered!"

But I reflect on recipients in years past, and I know the DSA did not slow them down either. Court reporters are really just built differently.

I am entering my last year on the board after joining as secretary in 2013. It's been eleven of the most grueling, wonderful, frustrating, heart-opening, joyful, educational, demanding, transformative years of my life.

I remember going to my first meeting, where Jill Layton gifted me a set of wine glasses etched with our steno keyboard. The kindness of my first group of board members taught me it's okay to have "bad" ideas. Shaming is not required, because those ideas became the fodder for brainstorming and coming up with the "good" ones.

I have my collection Steno Moms – Judy, Dee, Patti – classmates and colleagues of my mom's who have supported and encouraged me through every step of my schooling and career. I have friends I never would have met any other way, and now I never want my life without them.

I have my yoga buddy, Andrea. I have my bestie, Kathryn, who I followed up the board ladder looking and feeling very much like a lost puppy. She has been who I measure myself against when I ask if I'm doing a good job, if I'm doing enough. She is my sounding board, my sage when I need good advice, my greatest empathizer when I get stuck. And our friendship started thanks to ILCRA board service.

After eleven years, I still feel like I haven't lived up to my full potential. I'm interested to see what that might look like in the years to come.

So again, I would like to thank the Association! I write you all with a heart full of gratitude and a little lingering disbelief. But I am learning how to accept the recognition and the honor, with humility and solemnity.

Please accept my deepest thanks and my ooey-goey sentiments, knowing I share them with absolute sincerity. ■

The Incredible Power of Community: Together We're Stronger

By Lorie Kennedy

The 2024 ILCRA convention was community at its finest. Community is not just a group of people living in the same neighborhood. It's a bond, a connection, a sense of belonging. Think of a campfire surrounded by friends; the warmth of that fire is like the support of a community. At my office, we used to get together to do Wine Down Fridays. It's where laughter thrives, ideas bloom, and you feel safe to be yourself. That's community.

As I looked around the room and saw the whispers between participants, I smiled. I know you were either explaining a topic of the speaker further or sharing a private joke, and that's community. I saw connections of old friends and new. ILCRA is your community, and together we are stronger.

Community is essential for personal connections, education, and happiness. Having a network of like-minded individuals can lead to valuable friendships, learning opportunities, and a sense of belonging. It's through these connections that we find support, encouragement, and inspiration. When we come together to share our knowledge and experiences, we create a powerful community where everyone can benefit. Whether it's through educational workshops, social events, or collaborative projects, the joy of learning and growing together can bring immense happiness.

Being a part of a strong community can have a big impact on individuals' lives. It creates a support system where members look out for one another. This connection can lead to increased emotional support. A community that works together can help its members feel less alone. This connection can also lead to shared resources. Communities can pool resources to benefit everyone.

A community is a support network, which can take many forms. Each one is crucial in reinforcing the idea that we are stronger together. Mentorship programs, pairing experienced members with youth can guide the next generation. It aids growth and learning. Skill swaps, neighbors can exchange skills, like briefs or quicker ways to back up files. This builds relationships and mutual respect. Resource sharing is also an important benefit, sort of like a community toolbox, where members can lend or borrow tools, cooperation, and trust.

A community is fostered in realizations of people who want to be part of something together – an idea, a hope, a purpose or possibility – and that in coming together, they can create something greater than they could have alone. Even Helen Keller wrote, "Alone, we can do so little; together, we can do so much." The annual ILCRA conference was a perfect example of nurturing our community, to do things together. To those who attended, thank you. I hope to see you next year and the years thereafter.

Continued on page 21

2024 Realtime and Speed Contests

**By Rita Corson,
ILCRA Speed and Realtime
Contest Chairman**

We had a good turnout for our contests this year. We had nine sit for the realtime contests and eight for the speed contests. We had some new faces, too, and we had people come from three different states to join us – California, Indiana, and Minnesota. Word gets out how much fun we have!

We couldn't have these contests without our wonderful sponsors. Thank you to Donna Urlaub of Urlaub, Bowen, and Associates for sponsoring the Realtime Contest, and thank you to Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag for sponsoring the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest.

I had a new dictator this year, Laurie Kornmuller, join us. And of course,

my trusty dictator Teresa Ozuna, as always, was there. Thank you so very much, ladies. You did a superb job, even without Nancy Davis's trusty stopwatch, which I didn't know needed new batteries. Thank goodness for cell phones, right!

I usually have three dictators, but Peg Sokalski moved to Florida, and Judy Lehman was out gallivanting around Europe. I don't understand why she would rather do that than be here! But Judy helped me tremendously ahead of time writing three of the takes we used this year.

I couldn't have put on these contests without those who helped grade. Kathryn Dittmeier and Janine Ferren joined Teresa, Laurie, and I and helped us grade for hours. Thank you so much.

Several, if not all, of my contestants belong to a practice group that practices EVERY DAY! They are very dedicated to perfecting their amazing skills! They take this contest very



Speed Contest winner Lori Kennedy

seriously, and the committee tries really hard to make these tests fair, yet challenging. There's a balance there.

Unfortunately, we had an empty chair near the back of the room to honor our fellow contestant, Bernie Radavich, who is no longer with us. She was sadly missed, but I'm sure she was watching over us as my contestants strived to bring home that Bonni Shuttleworth trophy.

Well, let's find out who this year's speedy fingers are!

Realtime Contest

The Realtime Contest took place Thursday, September 19, 2024. There are two parts to this test – 180 wpm Literary and 200 wpm Testimony. It takes 95% accuracy to qualify. That's only 45 errors on the 180 Lit and 50



Theresa Ozuna, Rita Corson, Laurie Kornmuller

errors on the 200 wpm Testimony. The contestant has to write realtime, transfer their notes to a thumb drive, and then print them out for us to grade. They aren't allowed to correct anything they have written. What they write is what we grade. They are given word lists of every proper noun and told the subject matter of each take.

These contestants nailed their homophones each and every time! Some of those homophones were peaking/peeking, pair/pare, tale/tail, jean/gene, tow/toe, and many more. Some had a little problem with Brooke/brook.

But they never cease to amaze me. Those daily practices really paid off!

The 180 Lit was about an elusive creature that is called Bigfoot or Sasquatch. I didn't know this, but there

have been over 300 credible reports of its sighting in Illinois, which ranks fifth in the nation for reported sightings. Unfortunately, for our contestants this creature was VERY elusive as we did not have any qualifiers in the 180 Lit. We will throw that one out and just concentrate on the 200 wpm and base our winners on just the 200. I have never had this happen before!

The 200 wpm Testimony was about a master sergeant with the Illinois State Police who was questioned extensively about his towing and storage of a pickup truck that was involved in a fatal accident. This test must be written in lower and upper case, which makes it a bit harder. We had several qualifiers who had 50 or fewer errors, and they will receive certificates. And since we had no one qualify in the 180, I will also be awarding medals for 1st, 2nd, and

3rd place for this section of the contest:

The 200 wpm Testimony:

Receiving a certificate in 4th place with 95.3% is Patrick Mahon.

Coming in 3rd in the Realtime Contest with 95.7%, receiving a medal and a certificate is Jennifer Coulthard.

Coming in 2nd, with a tie at 96.4%, receiving certificates and medals are: Donna Urlaub and Greg Weiland.

And our winners, plural, of the 2024 Realtime Contest tied at 97% -- and, believe me, we graded and regraded their tests four times—receiving certificates and medals are Lorie Kennedy and Kathryn Thomas.

Since our rules say that the Bonni Shuttleworth trophy is awarded to the contestant with the highest percentage after averaging both tests, and we didn't have a qualifier in the 180 wpm portion, the trophy will stay with ILCRA this year. I have never had this happen before.

Congratulations to all my realtime contestants. They are winners in my book just for sitting for the contests.

Next, I will announce the winners of the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest.

Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest

I had eight contestants participating in the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest on Friday, September 20, 2024. Each contestant worked very hard to be able to take home the Sally Cochran Speed Contest trophy. I admire their hard work and dedication. Just wait till you hear some of their results!

The Speed Contest consisted of three takes - 220 wpm Literary, 230 wpm Legal Opinion, and 270 wpm Testimony.



Speed Contest winners Donna Urlaub 2nd Place, Lorie Kennedy 1st Place, Greg Weiland 3rd Place

The 220 Lit was about cochlear implants and one woman's mission to bring hearing to the deaf community. This was not just a story Judy Lehman made up. There really is this person in Springfield, Illinois. It was a very hard take, but we had several qualifiers. To qualify, our contestants had to have 55 errors or less.

Those contestants who qualified and are receiving certificates include:

220 Wpm literary:

95.91%, Amy Doman.
96.27% Myrina Kleinschmidt.
97% Patrick Mahon.
97.73% Greg Weiland.
98% Kathryn Thomas.

And now we get really close:

Coming in third in this section of the speed contest with 19 errors and 98.27% and receiving a certificate, Donna Urlaub.

Second place in this section with 18 errors and 98.36% and receiving a certificate, Jennifer Coulthard.

And 1st place in the 220 wpm Literary section of the speed contest, with only 11 errors and 99% accuracy and receiving a certificate is Lorie Kennedy.

The 230 Legal Opinion was an argument before the Appellate Court of an appeal of a woman charged with driving while suspended and improper left turn that caused a fatal crash. Legal Opinions are always so hard, but my amazing contestants came through, once again. Oh, and next year, the Legal Opinion will be replaced with a Jury Charge. Yay! They could only have 58 or less errors. Those contestants receiving certificates are:

230 wpm Legal Opinion:

With 95.04% a tie between Amy Doman and Greg Weiland.

Coming in 3rd in this leg of the Speed contest with 96.43% Kathryn Thomas.

Coming in 2nd in this leg with 97.13% Donna Urlaub.

And coming in 1st in the 230 Legal Opinion with only 16 errors, 98.61% Lorie Kennedy.

The 270 Testimony was testimony from a fire investigator who determined the origin and cause of a fire at Lowe's. The qualifiers in this leg of the Speed contest can only have 68 or fewer errors. Those contestants receiving certificates are:

270 Testimony:

96% Jennifer Coulthard.

96.22% Amy Doman.

In third place in this leg of the Speed contest with 97.11% Donna Urlaub.

Coming in second in this leg of the Speed contest with 97.93% Greg Weiland.

1st place of this leg of the Speed contest with only 14 errors 98.96% Lorie Kennedy.

Again, to be considered for a medal, you have to qualify in all three areas, and we had four who did just that. First, second, and third place receive medals. The one with the highest percentage takes home the Sally Cochran traveling trophy and gets to boast that they have the fastest fingers in Illinois!

I'm going to announce them from fourth place on down to 1st place, but keep in mind only 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place receive medals.

After I averaged their scores in all three legs:

Realtime Contest Winners:

Donna Urlaub Tie 2nd Place, Greg Weiland Tie 2nd Place, Kathryn Thomas Tie 1st Place, Lorie Kennedy Tie 1st Place, Jennifer Coulthard 3rd Place





Realtime Contestants

Coming in fourth place with 95.72%, and receiving a certificate, is Amy Doman.

Our third-place medal, with an average score of 96.9% goes to Greg Weiland.

Our second-place medal, with an average score of 97.5% goes to Donna Urlaub.

Our first-place winner of the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest, and taking home the Sally Cochran traveling trophy with an average score of 98.86%, and was last year's Speed contest winner also, Lorie Kennedy.

Congratulations, Lorie, for winning the speed contest!

All of my speed contestants deserve to be congratulated just for sitting for this contest.

These wonderful writers always impress me. I'm impressed by their dedication to practice daily to hone their skills. Everybody is so dedicated to these contests. They are phenomenal writers and phenomenal people!

If you have never attempted a speed contest, why don't you sign up next year? When you hear your name called at the banquet luncheon saying you qualified, you can't imagine how exhilarating that can be until you experience it! I found that I was a better reporter when I was practicing for the speed contests. Being able to write faster makes your job so much easier. So come on down next year and join us. ■

Power of Community

continued from page 17

We also need to grow our community. If you have a reporter friend or colleague that isn't a member, encourage them to join. If you know a student, encourage them to join now. ILCRA loves students. If you know of someone who let their membership lapse, let's encourage them back. Communities are built from all different backgrounds, skill levels, looks, and demographics, but we all have the same purpose. We are all members, but together we are ILCRA. ■

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