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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE** by Dana Jorna, Pa.C.P.

**HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

I hope everyone was able to enjoy a holiday season full of joy and as much togetherness as was possible. We now enter a new year with new goals, hopes, possibilities and a new MCPA Board. Our former President, Nancy Piechota, has returned to the Board, filling a Board position of long term member and treasurer, Chris Gregg. We thank Chris for his eight years of service to the Board and we welcome back Nancy, who never stopped assisting and guiding the Board this past year. The Board held its first 2021 meeting on January 7th, wherein we nominated and elected MCPA's officers for 2021. Tracey Barnes, Debbie Arbuckle and I were re-elected to Vice-President, Secretary and President, respectively, while Trista Davis was elected as Treasurer. All board members and officers will be sworn in by the Honorable Stanley Ott on January 25, 2021 at 7 pm via Zoom. I encourage all members to attend the induction ceremony and stick around for a CLE presented by Judge Ott on guardianships.

Moving into 2021, we now have our own Zoom subscription which will allow us to host our monthly CLEs and Board meetings remotely until it is safe to return to in person gatherings. This will also allow committees to schedule meetings as needed throughout the year. If you are a committee chair and would like to schedule a Zoom meeting amongst your members, please feel free to reach out to any active Board member for the needed information. While this subscription became necessary due to the ongoing pandemic, we believe it can increase Board and membership participation and productivity well after the virus is gone.

See Page 2

As for CLEs, the planning committee has come up with a variety of possible topics for this year, including mindful meditation, immigration law, the Montgomery Child Advocacy Project, follicle drug testing and practical applications for new paralegals. As always, if you have an idea for a CLE topic or speaker, please reach out to Jenn Echikson.

The Board has also set goals to increase our membership numbers/participation and expand our social media presence. We will be looking to make connections with local paralegal programs, making ourselves and other interested members available to their students for meetings/round table discussions about our experiences as working paralegals and benefits of membership with a professional organization. We are also interested in increasing our social media presence on our current accounts with Facebook and LinkedIn, and possibly branching out to additional platforms that can assist us in highlighting the paralegal profession. If anyone has any contacts at schools who would be interested in having MCPA host a discussion, or any ideas or suggestions as to articles or events we should be posting or even what platforms we should be posting to, please pass them along to Chris Gregg or I.

Together we can make this MCPA's best year yet. Δ

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**CLE Seminar**

	January 25, 2021
<i>Where:</i>	Via Zoom
<i>Topic and Speaker:</i>	<p><b>GUARDIANSHIPS AND HOW TO AVOID AND 2021 INDUCTION CEREMONY</b></p> <p>Presented by <b>Honorable Stanley R. Ott (Ret.)</b></p> <p><b><i>**Applying for approval of CLE 1.0 (S) by NFPA and Keystone Alliance**</i></b></p>
<i>Cost:</i>	<p><b><u>Free</u> for MCPA Members</b></p> <p><b>\$10.00 for NFPA affiliated members (evidence required)</b></p> <p><b>\$20.00 for non-members</b></p>
<i>Collection:</i>	<p><b>MONTGOMERY COUNTY OFFICE OF CHILDREN &amp; YOUTH</b></p> <p><b>To donate supplies to the Montgomery County OCY, please visit their Amazon wishlist at:</b></p>
<i>RSVP:</i>	<p>To register please visit:</p> <p><a href="https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlqde2grTljG9G_kHrp54TVGHBE8HLK9L5k">https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZlqde2grTljG9G_kHrp54TVGHBE8HLK9L5k</a></p> <p>For any questions, please contact:</p> <p><b>Jennifer Echikson, Pa.C.P.</b></p> <p><a href="mailto:jechikson@dischellbartle.com">jechikson@dischellbartle.com</a></p>

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## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE JANUARY BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The Board met on January 7, 2021 VIA ZOOM.

The first order of business was the election of Officers. All votes were unanimous and the following were voted in as officers for 2021:

Dana Jorna, Pa.C.P. – President

Tracey L. Barnes, RP, Pa.C.P. — Vice President

Deborah Arbuckle, Pa.C.P. — Secretary

Trista Davis — Treasurer

Chris Greg attended his last Board meeting for MCPA. The Board thanked him for his 8 years of service on the Board and for his service as Treasurer.

Chris will be remaining on the Social Media Committee and Jen Echikson and Karen Manzanares have also volunteered to assist with the Committee. MCPA plans to increase its presence on social media in 2021. If any member wants to help on this committee or has some posting ideas for Social Media, please contact Chris, Jenn or Karen (contact information found at end of Newsletters).

Tracey was happy to report that membership at the end of 2020 stood at 115 members. Increase in Membership and membership participation is an additional goal for MCPA in 2021. MCPA Board members will be reaching out to area paralegal programs to increase student interest. If a MCPA member has a paralegal program that should be contacted, please contact Tracey Barnes or Dana Jorna (contact information found at end of Newsletters).

Nancy Piechota submitted an update regarding the Keystone Alliance. The Keystone Alliance has elected its new officers for 2021. Our own Debbie Long, Pa.C.P., has been elected Secretary. Keystone will now be meeting four times a year, three of which will be via ZOOM. Also, Nancy reported that Lycoming Paralegal Association was formally accepted as a member of the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Associations. Finally Nancy reported that the Keystone Summit originally scheduled for 2020 has been postponed until early 2021 and will be held virtually. Details to follow.

Continued on Next Page.....



Deb Arbuckle reported regarding the status of NFPA. NFPA's Spring Region Meeting is scheduled for April and will be held via ZOOM. Also, NFPA at their 2020 convention amended their bylaws to add a new Board position—President Elect. There are two very qualified candidates and Debbie will be voting on behalf of the Board by January 14th. Have questions about NFPA and its activities, please contact Debbie Arbuckle (contact information found at end of Newsletters).

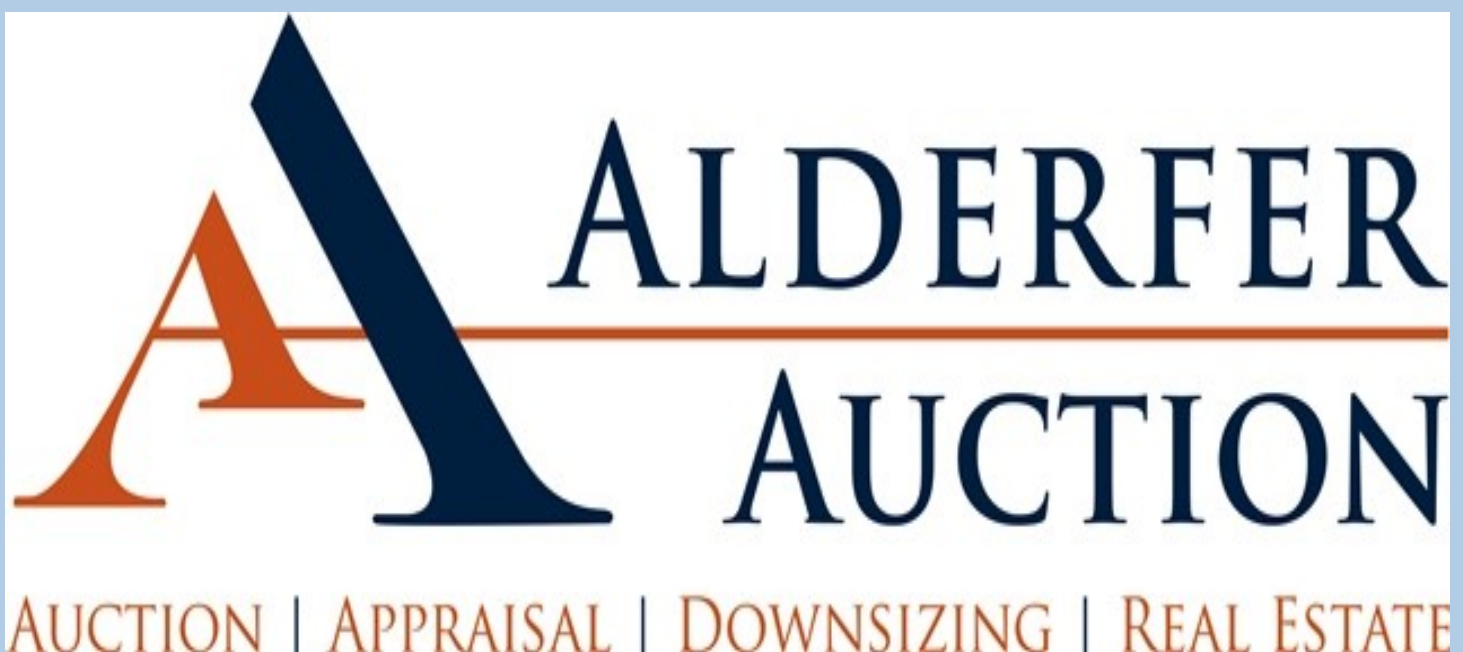
MCPA has purchased its own ZOOM account. Board meetings and CLE's will be conducted using this new account. MCPA committees will also be able to use this account.

It was agreed that Board meetings will continue to be on the first Thursday of every month (except July and August) via ZOOM beginning at 6:15 p.m. All are welcome to attend.

If you have any questions or comments regarding any of the Board items mentioned above, or any items you would like the Board to discuss, please contact Dana Jorna ([djorna@kanepugh.com](mailto:djorna@kanepugh.com)) or any Board Member

**The Board will meet again on February 4, 2021, via ZOOM.**

<b>MARCH 4, 2021</b>	<b>SEPTEMBER 2, 2021</b>
<b>APRIL 1, 2021</b>	<b>OCTOBER 7, 2021</b>
<b>MAY 6, 2021</b>	<b>NOVEMBER 4, 2021</b>
<b>JUNE 4, 2021</b>	<b>DECEMBER 2, 2021</b>





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## The Ghosts of 2020: The Past, the Present and the Future of the Courtroom in the Continuing Age of COVID-19

BY ANN T. GREELEY, PH.D. | JANUARY 4, 2021

I generally agree with the sentiment, “be gone, 2020, you most miserable of years!” (said with a Scrooge-like British accent). We are done with 2020, but what of 2021? Are there some things that we have learned and even improved upon in the legal industry that we can take with us as we move into the new year? What about all the talk of remote voir dire and virtual trials? Perhaps the ghosts who awakened Scrooge in the familiar Dicken’s story have something to offer us after a year like this.

Let’s start by taking a look at Ghost #1, the Ghost of Courtrooms Past.

### The Ghost of Courtrooms Past

Go back before 2020. It all seems somewhat perfect now—courthouses with a full accoutrement of judges and staff; jury waiting areas full of jurors filling out questionnaires; attorneys scurrying with their rolling briefcases and the justice system in all its glory humming along. The Ghost of Courtrooms Past shows us some idyllic scenes, and they look wonderful right now. But do we glorify it all too much? If we are honest, the Ghost might show us that the trial calendars often moved slowly in many parts of the country. Jurors were not always so willing; they tired of the endless sitting and standing in lines, hurry; wait; hurry. The judges and staffs were often overworked, the technology in some courthouses malfunctioned, the benches were hard and the rooms were drafty or hot, or both, during a given day. There were inefficiencies and indeed even inequities, but we really miss those courtrooms now, don’t we! Looking back, we probably took for granted how it all worked. But we must move on...to Ghost #2, Courtrooms of the Present.

### The Ghost of Courtrooms Present

Courtrooms are empty due to COVID-19; doors shuttered, and judges and staff are in their homes, attorneys are in their homes and potential jurors are in their homes. The legal world is dedicated to respecting public safety and social distancing, wearing masks, staying calm and carrying on, but that means empty courthouses. The Ghost of Courtrooms Present shows us that many are already innovating during these dark days. Remote conferences emerge and take the place of in-person hearings; bench trials are being run remotely; remote arbitrations, even in large scale complex matters, take the place of in-person arbitrations. Remote depositions become commonplace.

See page 11.

Litigation support service companies, like U.S. Legal Support, are established technical gurus of online hearings, trials and depositions, guiding attorneys in their quest to conquer technology and put it to its best use. Many attorneys themselves have also become much more technologically savvy.

Remote witness preparation is a natural part of this new remote process, with witnesses from around the country being assisted in their preparation by lawyers and jury consultants without having to leave their homes. Some courts, attorneys and consultants venture into the discussion of jury selection and in some cases the realities of online voir dire and virtual/remote trials are conducted in Texas and Florida. While physical barriers and masks are used to make the in-person courtroom survive to an extent, many find out that the plexiglass shields, masks and required large spaces are more trouble than trying to figure out ways to interview jurors through a virtual voir dire process. DecisionQuest professionals continue to perfect the online mock trial which satisfies the need to study jurors in the venue and to watch them deliberate live, while safely online. Attorneys realize that this is the same jury analysis and solid data that came from the original in-person mock trials, but without the travel and costs.



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Importantly, the jury pool has changed. Fears of COVID-19 are having and will continue to have a big impact on who will serve on a jury, at least in-person, because judges are granting requests to postpone jury duty or excusing jurors who appear for jury duty but are afraid to be there.

Our research indicates that heightened fears of COVID-19 are correlated with attitudes towards litigation, such that those more afraid of infection, and therefore more apt to request postponement or to be excused, also tend to hold more pro-plaintiff attitudes (for example, tend to favor employees over employers and insureds over insurers).

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The result is that those jurors who are likely to survive jury selection for an in-person trial (regardless of method of jury selection) are more likely to hold generally pro-defense attitudes. As such, the jury pool as summoned in the near future will potentially be different than it was before the pandemic. Understanding attitudes about COVID-19 will be even more important in the future.

But we digress, and we need to move on to Ghost #3, the Ghost of Courtrooms of the Future.

### The Ghost of Courtrooms of the Future

In the future, courtrooms are again busy. Judges and litigators realize that things have changed, mostly for the better. The use of remote technologies such as RemoteDepo™ by U.S. Legal Support have been eye-opening. Lawyers and jury consultants will continue to have online meetings with their colleagues, will introduce themselves to new clients and will participate in trainings and webinars without leaving their offices. In-person meetings will continue, but they will be supplemented by remote meetings. Remote depositions will continue and clients will be thankful for lower travel budgets. As for hearings, mediations, bench trials and even arbitrations, some will continue to be conducted remotely because there are many reasons to do so: schedules can more easily be accommodated, experts can be available on less notice and the attorneys from other states do not have to travel for what might be a two-hour hearing. Attorneys have gained technical expertise and are more comfortable using online systems while presenting oral arguments and showing demonstratives on-screen. Thanks to “hot seat operators” and technical experts who configure these hearings and arbitrations, there is considerable expertise to assist after the quarantine.

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Remote voir dire will be given more of a chance to succeed, but it may take a basic understanding of the advantages—for example, in venues where jurors live far apart, this process could make getting a diverse pool of jurors easier and less cumbersome. Remote platforms are being seen as uniquely designed to allow for clear views of jurors (not from the back of the courtroom) and to hear the answers to the voir dire questions. There will be resistance, but less perhaps. Further, online mock trials and focus groups will continue to flourish, though not replacing in-person mock trials, but as equally valid, consistently productive and very cost-effective ways to study jurors.

As far as virtual trials, opinions still vary. Many attorneys do not like the changes involved in virtual trials and some of them have very good reasons—they want to make sure that the jury is representative and not biased by the lack of personal technology (courts need to respond with making devices and broadband available). They want to make sure their clients are fairly represented and not hurt by anything from technical glitches to the lack of ability to directly confront one's accuser. Some objections are not as serious. Some attorneys worry about what jurors will look up on their phones when they are home, but others ask, "do they really have different access than when they use phone on breaks in the courthouse or after a day of trial?" Detractors worry about jurors' attention spans while others point out that a dozing juror is not an uncommon site in an in-person trial. Technology must improve, adjustments must be made and in some matters, namely criminal cases and some complex cases, there may be no choice but an in-person trial. Discussion of this option will continue into the future.

### What the Ghosts Have to Say

In Dickens' novel, the Ghost of the Future shows what will happen if nothing changes. If the legal profession does not continue maximizing technology, surely it will have missed an opportunity to improve our system of justice. The Ghosts of Courtrooms Past, Courtrooms Present and Courtrooms Future are as real as the Ghosts in the world of Dickens' Scrooge. It remains to be seen just how much we will learn from 2020 and how we will be better for it. Here's hoping we wake to a new day with appreciation for the past, an acceptance of our present and looking forward enthusiastically to 2021! Δ





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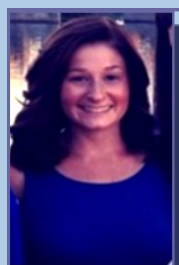
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*Dana is a Litigation Paralegal at the law firm Kane Pugh Knoell Troy & Kramer, LLP. She has been a member of the Montgomery County Paralegal Association since 2013, and a board member since 2018. More recently, she has become the MCPA's Job Bank Coordinator and co-chair of the Community Outreach & Pro Bono committee.*

***Tracey Barnes, Pa.C.P.—Vice President***

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*Tracey is a Paralegal at the law firm of Dischell Bartle & Dooley P.C. in its Lansdale office. She has been an active member since the organizations inception in 1999 and has been a Board Member, Secretary, Treasurer and President. She is currently the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Associations Credentialing Chair. In 2017, she was appointed as the CLE-Associations Co-Coordinator for the National Federation of Paralegal Associations (NFPA).*

***Trista Davis—Treasurer***

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*Trista is an Estates Administration Paralegal at Kozloff Stoudt Attorneys in Wyomissing. She attended Central Pennsylvania College completing the Paralegal Program and graduated in 2009. In 2014, she received her Pa.C.P. certification through the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Association. Trista lives in Douglassville with her husband and son.*

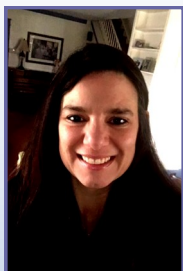
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*Deb is a Paralegal at the law firm Kaplin Stewart Meloff Reiter & Stein in its Blue Bell office. She has been a member of the Montgomery County Paralegal Association since 2003, serving as a board member from 2007 through 2011. Debbie has also co-chaired the MCPA Marketing Committee and currently co-chairs the Pro Bono and Community Outreach Committee. She has served as the primary delegate for the MCPA to the National Federation of Paralegal Associations for 10 years.*

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS****Noreen Messmer, Pa.C.P.**

Noreen is a Paralegal with the law firm of Ford & Buckman, P.C. in Blue Bell and has worked with Sarah Ford, Esquire for over 40 years. She has been a Board member since 2010 and also serves on the Hospitality/Planning Committee. Noreen lives in Blue Bell and is the mother of three and Nana to three granddaughters.

**Lisa Effrig Lagreca**

Lisa is a Municipal Paralegal at the law firm of Dischell Bartle & Dooley P.C. in its Lansdale office. She recently graduated Summa Cum Laude from Bucks County Community College's Paralegal Program and plans to attend Pierce College in the fall. Lisa is a mother of four and grandmother and has been a member of the MCPA since 2018.

**Jennifer L. Echikson, Pa.C.P.**

Jenn is a Family Law Paralegal at the law firm of Dischell Bartle & Dooley P.C. in its Lansdale office. She graduated from Peirce College in 2009 with a Bachelor of Science in Paralegal Studies. She became a certified paralegal through the Keystone Alliance of Paralegal Association in 2015. Jenn is on the planning and outreach committees for the MCPA and is also membership chair of the Family Law Paralegals of Pennsylvania.

**Nancy Piechota, Pa.C.P.**

Nancy is a Paralegal at the law firm of Mannion Prior, LLP in King of Prussia. Nancy also sits on the Board of Directors and also serves as Chair of the Marketing Committee. She lives in Berks County with her husband, Joe and rescue dogs.

**Karen D. Manzanares**

Karen is a Law Clerk for Attorney Michelle A. Fioravanti and recently became a realtor. After graduating from Villanova University she spent 22 years as a law clerk for the Governor's Office, Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) Chief Counsel in King of Prussia.



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