



IL

CRA

FALL

2023

www.ilcra.org

ad infinitum

ILLINOIS  
COURT  
REPORTERS  
ASSOCIATION

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## President's Message



I LOVE STENOGRAPHERS AND STENOGRAPHY – the people and the profession! It's two days post-convention, and I'm still high from the experience of this past weekend. ILCRA's 2023 fall convention surpassed my wildest expectations. If you weren't there, I'm sorry. You missed a great time. The energy was so supportive and positive.

As I am reflecting on the convention and enjoying the beautiful Chicago skyline on a September evening, I am watching the "L" trains pass by as they make their journey through the Loop, connecting the southside to the northside to the westside. Like the "L" downtown, ILCRA serves as a connection for stenographers throughout this great state and beyond. We had stenographers attending our 2023 convention from Indiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Florida, District of Columbia, and Texas. The "ILCRA L" reaches far beyond our state borders.

Still, I want more riders on this train. We NEED more riders on this train.

We have enjoyed many years when all we needed to do was to be good stenographers. That train has left the station, metaphorically speaking. Now we are faced with new tasks in addition to being good stenographers: advocacy, client education, and staying tuned to legislative activity.

Never in our history has it been more important to be a member of ILCRA. I realize the audience I am reaching in these remarks has already shown their commitment by being ILCRA members. The first thing I need current members to do is to convince your non-member

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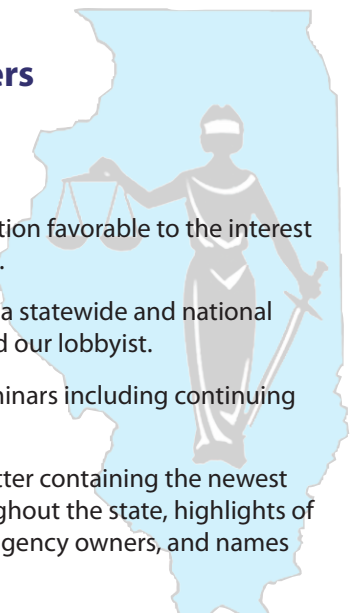
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## What ILCRA Does for Illinois Reporters

- **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.*

## President's Message

continued from front page

colleagues to join us. If you were formerly a member and left us, please, please reconsider coming back to us. We welcome you with open arms. I can't stress how critical it is that we increase our membership.

Second, if you would like to become more involved, please reach out to a board member. Volunteerism is the lifeblood of ILCRA. The board can't do it all. We have begun organizing committees to address membership, education, legislative advocacy, social media, and convention planning. Watch your inbox for committee announcements. If you don't have the time to be involved in a committee, there is a "Donate to ILCRA" button on our homepage. Donating is an acceptable form of involvement and advocacy.

Third, and we talked about this at the convention, the board wants to establish a mentorship program

for students. A conversation I had at the convention with a newer reporter stresses the importance of mentorship. This newer reporter told me how instrumental ILCRA members were in helping her transition from advanced speed classes to becoming a new working professional. Collectively, we have a lot of wisdom and experience to share with students and new professionals like the one I was talking with.

Last, but not least, this is a new ILCRA board. Most of us are relatively new to board service. We are excited! We are pumped! We have ideas! We are committed to you, to stenography, and to ILCRA! Please join us and give us an opportunity to prove it.

Like the "L" in downtown Chicago, my journey to becoming president of ILCRA has been a series of connections. When I got on this

train, my ultimate destination was not an ILCRA presidency, but here I am. My connections have led to this moment. Just like the ride I'm on, your careers are a series of connections. Your lives are a series of connections. These connections led you to be here with me and the rest of the board. Let's take advantage of our connection here in time and accomplish something for the good of stenography.

Please join us as we continue to make connections around this great state and beyond. ILCRA needs each one of you to be involved and engaged in the preservation of stenography in Illinois. ALL ABOARD!!

*President Greg Weiland*

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# 2023 ILCRA DSA Awards

By Melissa Clagg

As you all know, the Distinguish Service Award is presented to an individual for recognition of exceptionally outstanding service or achievement.

Being recognized by your peers is one of the biggest compliments one can receive. Our peers become our family. To have their respect and acknowledgment is priceless.

So many of you are doing your part to promote and preserve the profession. So many of you are struggling to keep up in life's everyday work challenges. So many of you have put in your time and are now enjoying the slower-paced workload... or just plain retired. But through it all, we are all connected. We are all doing – or have done – our part.

I am proud to be a part of the court reporting family – working alongside so many good and hardworking individuals. As last year's recipient, it is now my honor to present this award to one of my peers.

Nominations for the award are submitted each year to the DSA Committee by colleagues who bear witness to this exceptional conduct. Once a decision has been made, it is kept under wraps until this presentation ceremony.

This year's DSA Committee consists of myself and past recipients Rita

Corson and LeAnn Hibler. I want to take a moment to thank Rita and LeAnn for their invaluable help and guidance as I served as this year's Chair.

The recipient of this year's award will now take my place as Chair of the DSA Committee and will serve with LeAnn and myself.

Okay... Enough of the introductory remarks – let's find out a little bit about this year's recipient.

Let me share with you some praises sung about this person through the nomination process...

- To quote John Wayne, "Courage is being scared to death and saddling up anyway." While some of us thrive on pressure and seek out extreme sports, this person does not. They know what they want to accomplish and won't let ANYTHING stand in their way. They're often in the background, competently completing – seemingly effortlessly – whatever tasks they're assigned – and, of course, never turning down any assignment. This person is as steadfast, loyal, accomplished, and talented as the day is long... but never, ever seeks out a limelight or accolade.

- This year's recipient has made it their life's work to engage with students and encourage their growth – not for personal gain or recognition, but because of true passion for helping students succeed.

- This recipient has an altruistic



interest in helping each student they encounter along one of the toughest career paths out there.

- They are selfless as they are talented and brilliant – but, again, not one who advertises that.

- This recipient is particularly unique, in that they do not garner hordes of social media followers, do not boast or broadcast the devotion or the love of steno to the masses.

- This person is old school. Their contributions are such that we may not even recognize how much they do until, God forbid, one day they stop participating.

- This recipient is a support structure, a pillar of stenographic court reporting in Illinois.

- This person has been described as:



- a kind soul
- a sweetheart
- so talented, yet so humble
- never has a harsh word for anyone and is always happy to lend a hand to learn a steno technique or software trick or to loan equipment

■ This recipient has served on the ILCRA board for many years, stepping easily into some very big shoes.

■ This person has also served on the CSR board for years.

■ This recipient has flown under the radar and worked behind the

scenes for decades. In fact, most don't even know the time and dedication this person has selflessly given to students, to the profession, to the state association – not to mention the time they dedicate to practicing for speed and realtime contests.

- In fact, this person has tallied almost 3,000 continuous days of speed practice over 7 years. That's dedication!

■ This recipient mentors students, has served on school advisory boards, and spoken many times at student functions to help educate

and shape our future reporters.

It is an honor and pleasure to present this award to someone admired and revered, someone who has been overlooked for far too long, because this person's nature is not for glory and gain, but for encouragement, support, quiet leadership, and a graceful acceptance of a heartfelt "thank you" as enough.

I gladly announce the 2023 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD goes to...

The one and only... Bernice "Bernie" Radavich!

# S.M.A.R.T. Goals

By **Andrea M. Jent,**  
**RPR, CSR**

I had the privilege and honor of being a presenter at the 2023 Illinois Court Reporters Association Convention in Oakbrook Terrace. This was my first time presenting at an in-person convention. I got my feet wet with presenting via Zoom this spring for our Marathon Convention. To say I was nervous beforehand is an understatement. But once I got started and saw all the warm, smiling faces looking back at me, I felt so supported and was able to relax.

My seminar was entitled “You’re a Steno Warrior! The Key to Success Starts with Physical and Mental Well-Being!” My four main topics were breathing properly, posture, stretching, and physical activity. Everyone in the audience was very engaged and was giving feedback and asking questions; so I had one slide I completely skipped over because of time constraints that I want to talk about now.

S.M.A.R.T. goals are goals that are **Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-based.**

Usually we think of S.M.A.R.T. goals as relating to fitness, but they can relate to almost any area of our life.

Think about starting schooling to become a court reporter. Did you sit down that first day, pull that funny little machine between your legs, and say, “I’m going to write 225 words per minute by next week”? NO! That would be...well, not very S.M.A.R.T. Is it specific and measurable and time-based? Sure. But it’s certainly not attainable and relevant. That’s why they teach court reporting in stages.

It is not very S.M.A.R.T. to set a fitness goal of running a marathon next month if you can’t walk more than a block today. What would be S.M.A.R.T. is to set a goal of walking for 30 minutes five days a week for the next month, and then progressing your goal forward from there.

If you’re still a steno student, your goal this month could be to practice for three hours per day seven days a

week. If you are a working reporter, your goal could be to practice at least 15 minutes per day every day outside of work.

In your personal life, you could set goals like drinking water instead of soda every day this week or bringing your lunch to work 4 days this week instead of eating out.

Don’t set your goal too far out in the future. It’s good to have a big-picture goal, but setting a goal for two years from now makes it harder to get to the finish line and not get discouraged. Break your big goal into smaller, more attainable short-term goals. Running a marathon is a great goal, but make sure your plan for getting there is S.M.A.R.T.

Whether it’s work, schooling, fitness, or just life in general, set your goals using the S.M.A.R.T. method, and you’ll find that you feel more accomplished and have an easier time progressing forward.

# 2023 Realtime and Speed Contests

By Rita Corson

We have a fantastic turnout for our contests this year. We had 11 sit for the realtime contests and 9 for the speed contests. We had some new faces too. Many of you may not be aware but several of my contestants belong to a practice group that practices EVERY DAY ! That are very dedicated to perfecting their amazing skills! They take this contest very seriously, and the committee tries really hard to make these tests fair, yet challenging. There's a balance there.

I personally count every 50 words and make sure there are no more than 70 syllables in each of those sections. Sometimes it may go over 1 or 2 syllables, but other sections have fewer than 70. I bet you didn't know that.

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 Speed Contest. I'm sorry Melanie couldn't join us this year. Maybe next year, Melanie.

As always, I had my three dictators who never say no when I ask them, Judy Lehman, Teresa Ozuna, and Peg Sokalski, and they also stayed late each night and helped grade the tests. Thank you, ladies, for always being there for me. I also had some invaluable help from Laurie Kornmuller and Janine Ferren, who helped me grade tests and monitor the room. Janine came all the way from Indiana to help. I couldn't do this without my great helpers.

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





## Realtime Contest

The Realtime Contest took place Thursday, September 21, 2023. 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 errors on the 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.

These contestants nailed their homophones each and every time! Some of those homophones were mail/male, break/brake, hole/whole, bear/bare/ idle/idol, pair/pare, wave/waive, just to name a few. They never cease to amaze me, and their scores will amaze you. Those daily practices really paid off!

The 180 Lit was about a porn star from the 1980s who was born about 80 miles from Chicago, in Rockford,



Dictators Judy Lehman and Peg Sokalski

Illinois. It told about how she rose to stardom but was shunned by her family for her career choice. The contestants had a lot of laughs after the take with some of the stuff they learned about a famous porn star from Illinois, and our dictators tried really hard not to look at each other and burst out laughing while dictating. Our contestants have some new words to put in their dictionary, like peep show, and koozies, and Penthouse, but a lot of the words in this take were words you don't hear in court every day, so it made this more difficult, I think.

We had two qualifiers in the 180 Literary and they received certificates:

### The 180 wpm Literary:

1. Donna Urlaub, 95.33%
2. With only 19 errors, Judy Walsh, 97.89%

The 200 wpm Testimony was about an elderly man who visited his attorney wanting to change his will, leaving nothing to his daughter and son-in-law. This test has to be written in lower and upper case, which makes it a bit harder. The words "nuclear physicist" came up and my contestants had that in their dictionary. Amazing!! Those contestants with 50 or fewer errors qualified and received certificates:

### The 200 wpm Testimony:

1. Patrick Mahon, 95%
2. Becky Graziano, 95.6%
3. Lorie Kennedy, 95.7%
4. Donna Urlaub with 95.8%



Dictator Teresa Ozuna

5. Coming in third in this section was Greg Weiland with 96%
6. Coming in second was Judy Walsh with 97.1%
7. Coming in first place in this portion of the realtime contest with only 18 errors was Tina Dillon with 98.2%

In order to come up with a first- and second-place winner, the contestants had to have qualified in both the 180 Lit and the 200 Testimony, and we had two contestants that did just that. Our first-place winner also takes home the Bonni Shuttleworth traveling trophy.

Our second-place medal, with an average score of 95.57% went to Donna Urlaub.

Our first-place medalist and the winner of the Realtime Contest and receiving the Bonni Shuttleworth



Speed contestants ready to rock and roll

Realtime traveling trophy with an average score of 97.49% was Judy Walsh. Congratulations, Judy!

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

We next announced the winners of the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest.

## Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest

I had 9 contestants participating in the Gary L. Sonntag Memorial Speed Contest on Friday, September 22, 2023. Each contestant worked very hard to be able to take home the Sally Cochran Speed Contest trophy. I think the contestants were challenged by the material this year, but we have some qualifiers. I admire their hard work and dedication!

The Speed Contest consisted of three takes - 220 wpm Literary, 230

wpm Legal Opinion, and 270 wpm Testimony.

The 220 Lit was about weird laws on our books. You may be breaking one of them and not even know it. Just make sure you don't scare any pigeons in Massachusetts, and don't eavesdrop in Oklahoma and tell what you heard! To qualify, our contestants had to have 55 errors or less, and we had two qualifiers.

Those contestants who qualified were:

### 220 Wpm literary:

1. With 96%, Donna Urlaub
2. With 98.55% and only 16 errors was Lorie Kennedy.

The 230 Legal Opinion was an argument before the Appellate Court of an appeal in an aggravated battery and resisting arrest of a police officer. Legal Opinions are always so hard, but we again had two qualifiers. They could only have 58 or less errors:

### 230 wpm Legal Opinion:

1. With 96.43% Donna Urlaub
2. With 98.96% and only 12 errors was Lorie Kennedy

The 270 Testimony was about a murder that a guy committed after his girlfriend dumped him and shackled up with another man. Kind of gruesome, but that's the stuff we hear in court, right? We had 3 qualifiers who had fewer than 68 errors:

### 270 Testimony:

1. In third place in this section of the speed contest with 95.04% was Amy Doman.
2. In second place in this section of the speed contest with 96% was Donna Urlaub.
3. In first place in this section of the speed contest with 96.89% was Lorie Kennedy.

Again, to be considered for a medal, you have to qualify in all three areas, and we had two that did



Realtime: Donna Urlaub 2nd; Judy Walsh 1st



Speed Contest: Donna Urlaub 2nd; Lorie Kennedy 1st; Amy Doman 3rd

just that. 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 averaged their scores and our second-place medal, with an average score of 96.14% went 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 98.13% was 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 very serious about this, but yet there was a lot of joking around going on after the takes were over. They all get along and there is no animosity when one person wins over

another. They cheer each other on. They are phenomenal writers and phenomenal people!

If you have never attempted a speed contest, why don't you sign up next year? As I said, we have a lot of fun back there. 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.

*Rita Corson  
ILCRA Speed and Realtime Contest  
Chairman*



Left to right: Tina Dillon, Donna Urlaub, Patrick Mahon, Judy Lehman, Greg Weiland, Lorie Kennedy, Amy Doman and Becky Graziano.

# Challenge Yourself

By Lorie Kennedy

Ever thought about participating in a speed contest? We write faster and faster every day. You may just surprise yourself with the results. So hold onto your hats, my friends, things are about to move fast, about 270 words a minute.

The benefits of competing go far beyond the chance at winning a trophy. Competing in a speed contest reignites the flame of motivation we all had back in our testing days of school and that flame allows us to tap into hidden reserves of talent and capabilities many of us are unaware we have. Competitions provide a platform for growth and self-improvement. Competitions promote innovation and encourage creativity. Competitions allow us to break free from our comfort zones.

As you may have guessed by now, I competed in the ILCRA speed contest, and this year I won. I've been participating since 2018. I can still remember the first year I competed. At the end of the test, I was so proud just to have confidence enough to transcribe all three legs. I was a worthy competitor, is what I said to myself. And I was. I placed second that year.

As the years have gone on, I've lost more than I've won; but with each year, I learn new briefs, I hear new material, and I learn something new about myself and my skill. Ultimately, I'm competing with myself, striving to improve my writing with each day of practice in preparation for test day. That's a First Place win in my book.

As recent times have shown, we are privileged in Illinois to have a state association, let alone a state competition. The ILCRA speed competition is organized by Rita

Corson, a true gem in my opinion. The work she puts into preparing the material in a fair, yet competitive, way is more apparent each year. Rita always brings with her a great group of graders and proctors, and I'm lucky to have met each one of them.

The goal started with just one competition. The goal has expanded now to compete every year I'm able to. I've seen and enjoyed all the benefits mentioned above, and probably more not realized yet. So come on out and join the group. The energy is palpable. The camaraderie is heart-warming, and it really is a lot of fun.

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# Seymour L. Wolfe Scholarship



The first annual Seymour L. Wolfe Student Scholarship was presented on Saturday, September 23, 2023, at the ILCRA Convention in Oakbrook Terrace, IL – and the recipient was Michelle Stroehle of Davenport, Iowa, a court reporting student at Black Hawk College in Moline, IL.

The scholarship was created by the families of Seymour Wolfe and his former partner, Fred Rosenberg, to honor Seymour’s legacy to the profession of court reporting as well as to provide financial assistance to students currently aspiring to become court reporters or captioners. Each year ILCRA will present a \$1,000 scholarship award based upon review of essays submitted by students, the subject of which will be determined by the ILCRA Education Committee.

This year the essay subject was “Why are you passionate about the court reporting profession and what have you done to donate back to your community, stenographically and/or within your personal areas of interest.” And Michelle Stroehle hit the nail on the head with her story about wanting to become a court reporter, but not having access to a local educational program – until her stepfather engaged the local community college to consider instituting a program.

Michelle went on to write about how her stepfather advocated for the program, a complicated and extensive process, and once approved came the long wait for State funding. She goes on to tell how COVID-19 put everything on hold and then, finally in 2022 the

first class of students began the program and Michelle is now in the 140/160 speed range.

Seymour Wolfe was a strong advocate for quality court reporting programs. Over many years, he served on numerous advisory committees of local colleges and schools that conducted court reporting programs. He was well known in the court reporting professional community as being a mentor for many students who went on to become successful court reporters and captioners. It is very befitting to recognize Seymour Wolfe’s many contributions to our profession by awarding this scholarship each year to some very deserving court reporting and captioning student.



# Be The CHANGE

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

After two solid nights of some much needed (and longer!) sleep, I think I have finally recovered from our last convention! I know I even admitted to how tired I was during the State of State, but now that I'm able to look back, I wouldn't have traded a moment of my efforts for more R&R.

Anyone who has served for a moment on the board can attest to the constant attention it requires from us. And while it can be overwhelming at times, over the last ten years the reward has always far outweighed the demands.

What I love about board service is it's not the kind of tired you feel from sitting in an office all day, or the kind that creeps in during the third hour-long show of your favorite current binge. It's the kind that comes from giving everything you have to something that you truly care so much about, and that's where the reward is.

There has been a constant undercurrent of anxiety – very similar to what I experienced while I freelanced; a low hum in the background, telling me I have pages to finish, the work was never actually complete. As I would send one job out the door, another was coming, and the carousel would go round and round.

The ILCRA board is very similar. There are at least three irons in the fire at all times; not including when

a curve ball Senate bill is thrown our way at the 11th hour, and we have to assemble the troops to launch a defense. Once one task is complete, another is patiently awaiting its turn for attention. Lots of planning and discussing and preparing that is going on behind the scenes, almost constantly.

But anxiety isn't always a bad thing. It can be the driving force that pushes us to achieve, to succeed, to go farther than what we tell ourselves is possible. Board service is challenging, demanding, just plain needy, and it's time consuming.

It's also rewarding. I have networked with people all across the state that I may otherwise have never met. I have learned how to work more effectively with a group. I have been afforded leadership training. I met my best friend through board service.

As I write this, I can't help but notice all of the rewards have to do with people and connections, and that is as true as it is self-evident. The people I have had the pleasure of serving with from year to year have made every effort worthwhile. There were people who believed in me long before I ever believed in myself. There were people who exercised patience with me while I messed things up but learned.

Because of their examples, I have taken that same approach to board service, and it has become one of the greatest things I have done with my life. It is a true act of selflessness in lot of ways. You may know our

names and faces, but there's very few "perks" to volunteering for this kind of thing. Hopefully, you're like me and you just get to meet some of the most talented, intelligent, motivated reporters in the state when you come on board; and the energy of outreach, protection, advocacy, and education becomes contagious.

We all know Gandhi said, "be the change..." It's so cliché nowadays I don't even have to finish the quote. But do we even really know what it means? Could it mean being an ILCRA member when everyone around you doesn't see the value? Could it be volunteering for committees or region rep positions when everyone is claiming they're too busy? Could it be attending career days, or pairing up with a court reporting buddy to host an A to Z? What is the change you want to see in the court reporting world, and how do you create that change?

I'm always grateful for the few days of rest that comes after conventions, but I know very soon we are firing up that carousel of duties and responsibilities again. I invite it. Let's go! Because I envision our state with an intact CSR Act, an annual proclamation from the governor during Court Reporting & Captioning Week, more students in the five brick-and-mortar schools that call Illinois home, and every reporter in Illinois working a little closer together to achieve our collective goal: guard the profession so that we may guard the record.

## 2023 -2024 ILCRA Member Dues Increase Passes Unanimously at Conference

During ILCRA's board meeting on Thursday, September 21, 2023, a motion was made, and passed unanimously, to bring a dues increase proposal before the voting membership at the business meeting to be held Saturday morning, September 23, 2023. The current dues of \$110 have not increased for more than a decade.

At the Saturday morning business meeting, a motion proposing a dues increase was made and seconded, and a short discussion ensued among voting members. A justification for this increase was presented by Georgia Northway, Immediate Past President, and Isaiah Roberts, Region 2 Freelance Representative.

After discussion, a vote was called, and the attending membership **unanimously** voted to increase annual dues from \$110 to \$150. The effective date of the increase will be the individual member's next membership renewal date.

Please note that only Professional members' dues have increased. Student, Associate, and Retiree memberships will remain at their current respective levels.

## YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE! *Spread the word!*

Encourage someone you know to explore court reporting, captioning, and CART as a career. Ensuring that qualified reporters are in the field is the only way to protect the profession and to fight digital technologies from taking over our industry.

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*\*NCRA Certified*

# Hey, Brewers Fans = H\*BZ

By Kathryn A. Thomas, RDR, CRC, CSR-IL

By the time you read this, the 2023 Major League Baseball season is almost completed, and you may have made it to American Family Field to catch the Brew Crew in action. Looking over towards the foul poles, you notice that the announcements, videos, and other pre-game and between-inning events are indeed captioned!

For the past few seasons those captions have usually been produced by yours truly down here in Caseyville, Illinois (a suburb of St. Louis, Missouri), in my little home office. During the school year I do mostly academic CART with a few college stadium games here and there, but when it's summer I'm all about baseball.

## 1. Bratwurst PWR\*URS (or, before the season)

How did I get here? I caption for Good Sport Captioning, which provides in-stadium captioning for several venues across the country. Before the season begins, we get our game assignments, and I put everything on my Google calendar. We test the captioning soon before the first game to ensure everything still connects properly. I use either Skype or Google voice to call their direct audio line, connected to the PA system.

## 2. Polish Sausage PHR\*SZ (before the game)

I practice every day for at least 15 minutes, both high-speed and realtime. Keeping my fingers sharp and conditioned is a MUST -- after all, professional athletes practice their craft in order to stay sharp, and we should practice as well. Our job is more physically demanding than the public realizes. The extra speed comes in handy when captioning the Johnsonville Famous Racing Sausage Race or the Crazy Cap Shuffle! There's

only 90 seconds between innings, so the words flow quickly, and so too should my fingers.

## 3. Italian Sausage \*EULT/SAUPBLG (pre-pregame)

Prep. How do I keep track of all the names? I use CaseCat/BCS, so all my Brewers games are in the American Family Field case, and the American Family Field case is in my Stadium Captioning case. Sometimes American Family Field hosts other events besides baseball, so in that case dictionary I have briefs for American Family Field-specific and Milwaukee-specific terms, such as Sargento (SA\*EUG), Miller Lite (PHAO\*EULT) or Drew Burgoyne (TKRAO\*UB).

All teams have their own job dictionary, and to keep them straight I name them year of last use, the three-letter acronym denoting the league, and the team name. Last year the Brewers were "2022 MLB Milwaukee Brewers." The year of last use helps remind me if I've updated it for this season or not. This season I had to move Brent Suter (B\*S) and Brad Boxberger (BRAD/BO\*BGS) to other teams, and add in the new guys.

A non-baseball, non-American Family Field example would be "2019 WBB U of Tennessee," showing that the last time I worked a women's college basketball where the Lady Vols played was 2019, so if I run across them again, I'll have some updating to do.

I'm big on briefing. I'm HUGE on briefing. I continually strive to write shorter and shorter -- as fast as speech happens when there's a limited time to talk, there's not much time to stroke things out. To the point where I brief fairly steno-simple names like Travis Shaw (TR\*FS), because the opening roster announcement goes by quickly. If I have a multi-stroke word or name and mistroke the last stroke, it's far easier to erase ONE stroke than it is to erase FOUR strokes.





#### 4. Hot Dog HOTD (in-game)

How do I keep up with what's going on? The producers send me the scripts and runs of show beforehand so I can enter them into my script file. I keep those files open so I know what's coming up. Also, I have a chat window open so they can reach me quickly if there's a captioning problem or a change in plans, and through this they also send me names of the Junior Announcer, the contestant for the cap shuffle, the final jackpot of the fifty-fifty drawing, pitching changes, and other information I need to know.

I use MLB.com to keep an eye on the score so I know how we're doing. I do not normally watch the game online, but occasionally it'll be a free Game of the Day on YouTube or ESPN+, and then I'll have it on my backup computer with the sound muted. I want only the PA system in my ears!

To keep abreast of interesting plays and commentary, I'll pull up the game day thread on <https://www.reddit.com/r/Brewers/> and watch the discussion. Occasionally someone posts a picture from their seat and my captions are visible!

#### 5. Chorizo KHO\*RZ (exciting things that have happened)

So many cool things have happened in the course of this gig... from captioning the three-year-old play-ball kid who joyfully yelled "BALL!!!" instead of "Play ball!" to writing the Hero of the Game and thinking about the veteran and their family who are likely watching the captions to absorb every word about their loved one. And when Bob Uecker speaks to the crowd in attendance, it's not just a pleasure to bring his words to text -- it's an absolute honor.

Then there was also the time when I saw my 100%

indoor cat Abraham dragging a dead baby bunny past my office. I dashed out during a pause and found him eating it in the guest room. After the game, I cleaned up the leftovers and wondered where he got it from. The mystery remains unsolved.

Baseball is near and dear to my heart. Full disclosure: I grew up a Cubs fan. (My mom had a poster of Ryne Sandberg in the laundry room.) When I moved to the greater St. Louis area, I started cheering for the Cardinals. Now that I'm doing stadium captioning and especially since being assigned to the Brewers a few years ago, the Brew Crew found their way into my heart. Steno is an amazing profession that can take us from the deposition room to Bernie's slide.

Fans, thanks for coming out to today's article. Our friends at ILCRA remind everyone to please drive home safely.

*This article previously ran in the Wisconsin Court Reporters Association's newsletter with slight edits.*

*Kathryn A. Thomas, RDR, CRC, CSR-IL, is a captioner based in Caseyville, Illinois, and the greater St. Louis metro region. She began her career in 1998 as a deposition reporter in Southern Illinois, then transitioned to captioning around 2010. She is Past President of the Illinois Court Reporters Association and a member of the National Court Reporters Association.*

# It's Never Too Late To Brag On The 2022 ILCRA Distinguished Service Award Recipient!

By LeAnn M. Hibler,  
CSR, RMR, CRC

Receiving the DSA award is quite an honor. I would bet anyone who has been nominated and awarded it in the past would say they did not set out to receive it. They just loved this profession and couldn't help but give back to it in some way, shape or form. And even though this article is a year overdue, I still think bragging on last year's winner is important and the right thing to do!

I was the honored recipient of the DSA in 2021, and it was my responsibility to head the 2022 DSA Committee which included Rita Corson and Nancy Seppi. I love that the DSA winner is kept a secret until it is presented at the Nancy Davis Awards Luncheon on Saturday during the annual convention. We sneak in the recipient's family and friends to witness the surprise. It's a great time!

But let me get back to the 2022 DSA Recipient!

I found out this person was not able to attend due to – you guessed it – volunteering on behalf of our profession at a career day. I had to

let the cat out of the bag and call the recipient, but I had a plan and I was so happy I was still able to make a surprise out of it!

I'd like to share some of the comments that were stated in the nomination form. See if you can figure out who it is before you get to the end!

■ ■ ■

The Nominee started as an official court reporter for the State of Illinois in August of 1987, and retired in January of 2021, after more than 33 years of service to the state. Aside from being a top-notch court reporter, Certified Realtime Reporter, and a true leader as the supervisor in Champaign County for many years, the Nominee has a passion for educating others about the profession of court reporting and has volunteered countless hours preparing for and presenting at many educational sessions about the profession.

As a supervisor here (in Champaign County), the Nominee advocated for all of us, worked very hard to keep up-to-date on new technology in our profession, and if the Nominee didn't have an answer, they would find it. No question was too dumb.

Knowing the need for more court reporters, the Nominee worked with at least three of the Court Specialists on steno theory and speed. Two of the Specialists have passed the "Part-A" officialship examination due to the training.

The Nominee was a presenter at the 2019 New Judge seminar and also the 2020 Judicial Education Conference to help judges learn more about how they can help the court reporter make a good record.

During the first summer of the pandemic, the Nominee also served as a presenter on the Administrative Office of the Illinois Court's session on remote hearings from the court reporters' perspective. This session provided many technology tips for court reporters attending hearings through Zoom and/or taking hearings where there was a mix of remote attendees and in-person

After retirement, the Nominee was asked by Court Reporting Services to begin leading the First Steps program due to their passion for education and recruitment.

■ ■ ■

And with that, I'd like to present the 2022 Illinois Court Reporters Association Distinguished Service



# Thank You To All The 2023 ILCRA Conference Sponsors!

The ILCRA Board of Directors wishes to formally thank our sponsors of the 2023 Fall Conference for their appreciated support.

Award Winner MELISSA CLAGG!!!  
(Cheers and Applause!)

I mean, wow! And now she is on a mission to recruit, recruit, recruit!

In closing, I'd like to share some of Melissa's remarks as she accepted the award:

"I'd like to give thanks to ILCRA, but I must also give them credit for the path that's brought me here today. Years ago, I had the opportunity to serve on the ILCRA board as a region representative, and then on two committees: The Officials Committee and the Student Scholarship Committee. That service allowed me a behind-the-scenes look at how hard ILCRA works for its members and the court reporting community. It was through those experiences that helped me to develop a voice and a desire to advocate for reporters and the profession in whatever role I found myself in. For that, I thank you, ILCRA.

While I have that voice that you have given me, the confidence I have, I will continue to advocate and fight for this profession. It's not dying on my watch!"

Thank you for all you do, Melissa Clagg! Congratulations!

## Conference Sponsors

Platinum Level: Lexitas and U.S. Legal Support  
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## Speed and Realtime Contest

Donna Urlaub and Melanie Humphrey-Sonntag

## President's Reception

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Gold Level: Kathryn Thomas, Donna Urlaub, Nicole Hurst, Patrick Mahon, Margaret Sokalski, and Nancy Bistany  
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Last but certainly not least, a special thanks to our Vendor Partners Paszkiewicz Litigation Services, Stenograph, and Roxy & Lola.

***Thank you, one and all, from the 2023-2025 ILCRA Board of Directors. Your continued support means the world to us!***



**ILCRA  
Conference  
2023**



# Testimonials from Attendees at 2023 ILCRA Conference

## Recharge

■ We often find ourselves needing a recharge in life -- a respite from our daily routine. It could come in the form of a vacation or as simple as a dinner with friends. This past weekend I experienced a recharge in our great profession at our ILCRA conference. It meets every year in September, alternating between Chicago and Springfield. It never disappoints!

These are some of the highlights:

- Meeting new friends and visiting with the old ones (that we seldom have time for)
- Learning new tips and tricks on software (you're bound to come away with a few)

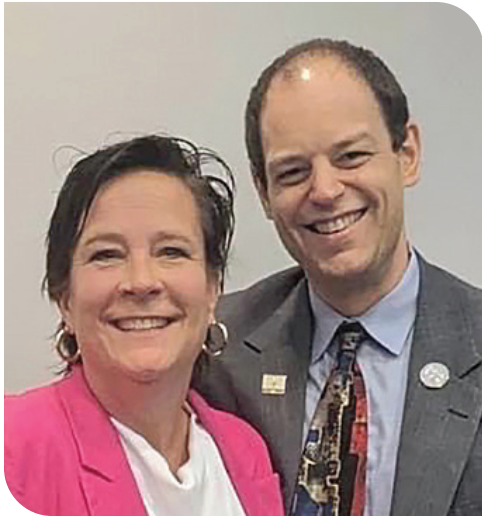
- Learning new life skills (yes, how many of us are comfortable with public speaking)
- Hearing cool work assignments my colleagues have been on (super inspiring!)
- Participating (or not) in real-time and speed contests and seeing the results
- Staying abreast of the issues before our profession (There's A LOT to say on this one)

Referring to the last bullet point, like never before, we need to pay attention to the issues before us. If you haven't heard, our CSR is in crisis mode! The call to action that our ILCRA organization has sent emails about is nothing short of a

cry for help from all of us. I can't stress this enough. The digital reporting groups (aka as fake court reporters) are working very hard to not only hold themselves out as us but replace us as the official record. It takes time, money and a lot of strategy to fight these groups and preserve our stenographic licensure. If you value our profession, please join the fight. You can donate your time, your money, or both. A great way to start is by paying your dues and attending the conferences. You won't be sorry. It's time well spent. I feel recharged and inspired by being with my fellow court reporters and captioners. It makes me want to do better. I hope reading this will inspire you to do the same!

*Tina Dillion*





■ This was the first time I had ever attended a convention. I am a newer professional and was so excited to meet people face to face who I have built connections with on social media and the 100-Day Practice Group.

ILCRA's convention was the perfect way for me to do that. I was a little nervous walking in, but that quickly subsided when I saw Greg's and Kathryn's smiling faces as I walked in the room. I was right where I needed to be!

ILCRA then put on a lineup of speakers that did not disappoint! I got to hear and learn from some of the best of the best. There is a lot of information that can be learned outside of these rooms, but hearing from our lobbyist was a highlight that I would have never come across if I hadn't been at the convention. I learned a lot from it and have a deeper appreciation for what goes on behind the scenes.

I am really happy to be an ILCRA member, and going to the convention assured me I will remain

a member for life and continue to show up for this amazing profession of ours. Thanks again, ILCRA!

**Holly Koch, RPR, IL CSR**

■ I just returned from our 2023 ILCRA Convention, an event that I have been thrilled to attend for the last few years. In both 2021 and 2022, I was a student and scholarship recipient, and this was my first year attending as a professional. While the lineup is always solid, this year's seminars were absolutely fantastic. I learned so much about our profession, from the legislation and issues affecting our jobs to large venue captioning and more. I saw so much passion and expertise infused into each and every presentation. As I sit at home, recovering from my best attempts to fake extroversion for an entire weekend, I am still blown away by this organization and the people who comprise it.

When I sit and think about all that ILCRA and the annual conventions have brought into my life in just three short years, it becomes such an easy decision to continue to



renew my membership every year. From day one, I had a room full of mentors and idols that instantly welcomed me into this profession. This year was no different. I was immediately greeted with sound advice for my newbie struggles and encouragement to keep pushing myself.

It is quite evident that I have surrounded myself with people who want this profession to thrive. I have returned from this year's convention with positivity about our future and a renewed interest in being a part of the forward momentum. If you weren't able to attend this time around, you missed a really great weekend. Bring a friend, bring a student, and join me next time!

**Sara M. Sapp, RSR, CCR-WA**

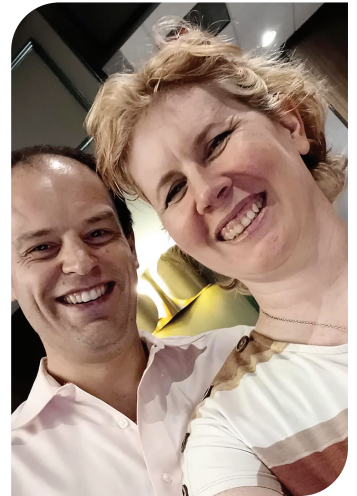
■ This past weekend I attended my first ILCRA state conference. It was fantastic! The sessions had value to me in my professional career and even my life outside of reporting. All the presenters were captivating. And as far as software training, it's always great to receive



some training while at a conference. On top of all the things learned while at the conference, the friendships made and strengthened are something that can only happen at an in-person conference – and every ILCRA member I spoke with was welcoming and friendly. I call our national conferences “family reunions” because it’s the only time we see many of our colleagues. I look forward to returning to next year’s ILCRA conference for a “mini family reunion”!

***Janine Ferren, RMR, CRR, CSR***

**Join us next year in September 2024 in the Chicagoland area. Stay tuned for more details coming soon.**



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ad infinitum

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