



CINDY E. SMEINS, ACP

Candidate for the office of: Area 2 Director

Paralegal, since: 1994

NALA Member, since: 2003

QUALIFICATIONS

EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND: Nettleton College, Sioux Falls, SD

PROFESSIONAL CERTIFICATION/AWARDS: CP in 2003; 5 Advanced Certifications; SDPA Member of the Year 2008 and 2016; NALA Affiliates Award 2012

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES: I am currently serving on NALA's Professional Development Committee. I am a past president of the SD Paralegal Association and currently chair the Professional Development Committee

MEMBERSHIP IN OTHER ASSOCIATIONS: South Dakota Paralegal Association

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS OR COMMENTS: I participated in NALA's Leadership Enhancement and Preparation course in 2009; I facilitated a Leadership Academy for South Dakota Paralegal Association in 2010; and co-facilitated a Leadership Academy for SDPA in 2014-2015

QUESTION RESPONSES

WHY DO YOU WANT TO SERVE ON THE NALA BOARD OF DIRECTORS?

I believe in NALA's mission of providing continuing education and professional development to all paralegals. I like talking with people and working with them to meet their goals. I enjoy mentoring paralegals, helping them with their questions, and guiding them in their career.

WHAT ARE SOME OF YOUR PRIOR BOARD OR SIMILAR LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCES?

I have been a leader in one organization or another since I was nine years old and joined 4-H. As a 4-H member, I held offices in my local club and my county. Through the years I taught many children religious education.

I have been a member of the South Dakota Paralegal Association since 1998, and the National Association of Legal Assistants since 2003. I am currently serving on NALA's Professional Development Committee. I was president of the South Dakota Paralegal Association in 2010 and served on the Executive Committee for over nine years. I am currently serving on SDPA's Professional Development Committee, the Audit Committee, and the Nominations and Elections Committee. I also served as chair and co-chair of the Education Committee for several years. After participating in NALA's LEAP program, I facilitated two leadership academies for the South Dakota Paralegal Association. I have also facilitated several study groups for the CP exam.

WHAT SPECIFIC SKILLS AND STRENGTHS WOULD YOU BRING TO THE BOARD TO HELP NALA MOVE FORWARD?

I have enthusiasm for our profession and strong communication skills. I am dependable and follow through with my commitments. I accept responsibility. I am dedicated. I would not intentionally harm anyone. I am honest and trustworthy. I am a quiet listener but share my thoughts and ideas. I am respectful of others and am patient and kind. One of my personal mantras is, "Always be kind. If you see someone falling behind, walk beside them. If you see someone being ignored, find a way to include them. If someone has been knocked down, lift them up. Always remind people of their worth. Be who you needed when you were going through hard times. Just one small act of kindness could mean the world to someone."

WHAT MAKES NALA'S MISSION MEANINGFUL TO YOU?

I went to college in the early years of the paralegal profession and there wasn't an option for a degree in paralegal studies. I started my career as a legal secretary and wanted more responsibility and opportunities. I was fortunate to have an employer that mentored me and encouraged me to take continuing education classes. I was very happy with my employer and career but ended up moving 200 miles away for my family. I didn't know anyone in my new community and because of my personal standards and not having a paralegal degree felt I had to start over again as a legal secretary and prove myself. I am grateful for the friends I made in the South Dakota Paralegal Association. We supported one another and studied for the NALA CP Exam together. If I had been a NALA Certified Paralegal prior to my move, it would have made a difference in my career. Because of that, I have supported many paralegals by facilitating study groups to help them achieve their goal of becoming a NALA Certified Paralegal. I have also facilitated leadership academies to support and mentor members interested in leadership positions within the South Dakota Paralegal Association.

WHAT DO YOU SEE AS ANY POSSIBLE DISRUPTIVE FORCES IMPACTING NALA?

Because NALA Certification has been so important in my career, I am troubled by any legislation interfering with professional certification and stopping voluntary certification programs. I am also disappointed in underutilization of paralegals. Many attorneys in my state do not utilize paralegals as much as they should. I believe this is probably true everywhere. We have more room to grow as a profession. It concerns me when attorneys don't show respect for our profession and believe they can call any member of their support staff a paralegal and bill for their time. I believe these attorneys need to be more involved in continuing education and professional development of the paralegal profession.

Each candidate was also asked to create a video with their own personal message to voters.
Those videos can be found on the NALA Youtube channel.



NALA - The Paralegal Association