

features a Scrabble talent show. "One year, one guy sang the Star Spangled Banner using all the acceptable two-letter words, AA, AB, AD, AE, AG, AH, AI," he said. (These are words?)

Interest in Scrabble has grown in recent years, Jeremy adds. Stefan Fatsis' *New York Times* best-selling book, *Word Freak*, (Jeremy has a cameo role in it) may become a movie. Also, ESPN has telecast major events. "But people don't realize how much work goes into being a top player," he says. "Studying two- and three-letter words and the J, Q, X, and Z words are basic necessities. To

become a top player, you need to learn all 120,000 words in the dictionary backwards and forwards. Pick up *Everything Scrabble* by John Williams, play computer games, and play better players," he explains. And, just like court reporting he encourages others to "get a mentor." Jeremy may be partial to mentors because his wife, Jacky, is an educational administrator in charge of a mentoring program in the New York City schools.

Jeremy has met another reporter and a scopist through Scrabble, but his favorite opponents are attorneys. And he

was not shy about describing his feelings: "I LOVE BEATING ATTORNEYS," Jeremy wrote in all caps in an e-mail. "I mean REALLY CRUSHING THEM."

If you would like to learn more about Scrabble, visit the National Scrabble Association's Web site at [www.scrabble-assoc.com](http://www.scrabble-assoc.com).

*Aimée Suhie, B.A., LSR, RPR, New Fairfield, Conn.*

## Q&amp;A

## The Benefits of Volunteering

BY CARLY ISAAC

**W**e asked several reporters who volunteer why they do it and how volunteering actually benefited them.

Take, for example, Mary Ann Ride-nour, RPR, of Charleston, S.C. A court reporter for 14 years, she owns a freelance agency and employs five reporters who are assigned to jobs across South Carolina. She has served as president of her state's association and also served on the board of directors for eight years.

She says that, in order to expand her business, she has had to work on her information-sharing skills with other reporters in order to learn from them. One of the most helpful choices she made was to participate in NCRA's Boot Camp and leadership training several years ago. It helped her step out and become more confident as a leader and speaker.

Ridenour believes that her experience with NCRA has helped her branch out in other areas in the community. She has also served on the board of the local school's PTA and has also served in junior league, which is a group of women who volunteer for community organizations such as United Way.

Her volunteer experience involved lots of fundraising activities for her state association. She was in charge of planning and executing several events. At first she didn't know why she was serv-



### GROW YOUR FUTURE WISELY

As a law professional, you know that growing your future wisely isn't just choosing the right plan for your firm—it's also choosing the right resource. So when you're ready for retirement planning, choose the program created by lawyers for lawyers, and run by experts.

**ABA Retirement Funds** has been providing tax qualified plans such as 401(k)s for over 40 years. Today, our program offers full service solutions including plan administration, investment flexibility and advice. You just couldn't make a wiser choice for your future.



### LEARN HOW YOU CAN GROW YOUR FUTURE WISELY

Call an ABA Retirement Funds Consultant at 1-800-826-8901 [www.abaretirement.com](http://www.abaretirement.com)



For a copy of the Prospectus with more complete information, including charges and expenses associated with the Program, or to speak to a Program consultant, call (800) 826-8901, or visit [www.abaretirement.com](http://www.abaretirement.com) or write ABA Retirement Funds P.O. Box 5142 • Boston, MA 02206-5142 • [abaretirement@citistreetonline.com](mailto:abaretirement@citistreetonline.com). Be sure to read the Prospectus carefully before you invest or send money. 02.2006

ing in that role — until recently. A friend of her teenage son has cystic fibrosis and needs a liver transplant. Several friends and family members are working to support his cause and she has taken on the fundraising responsibilities. Her work with the state association has given her lots of fundraising ideas, as well as the leadership training she received and the experience of working with so many different personalities.

“I feel like the years I volunteered with the profession are paying off — sort of like this is my higher calling. At times it was challenging to enjoy my fundraising activities, but I learned a lot of things in that role that are helping me to raise money for our friend,” she says.

Another example is Tori Pittman, RDR, of Wake Forest, N.C., who has been a court reporter since 1999. She says her volunteer activities with NCRA and her state association forced her to push herself out of her comfort zone, especially lobbying to politicians. However, she was able to step out and persuade her legislator to sign on the Federal Initiative Bill the first time she spoke with him.

Volunteering for her is rewarding because she is helping fellow reporters. She enjoys being the representative if they don't have as much time as she does to devote to furthering the profession outside of her job duties.

“I've learned so much about the profession and how to be the *best* reporter I can be; it's made me appreciate my networking system of friends throughout the country,” she says. “It spurs me on to educate others in our profession and the attorneys, judges, and paralegals who we work with to further their understanding of court reporting. Hopefully with that knowledge they will be able to respect our unique skills even more.”

Debby Oakleaf, RPR, Baldwin City, Kan., has been a court reporter for more than 20 years and has volunteered with the Kansas state association, particularly with the legislative committee. She says, the NCRA Boot Camp “was a wonderful opportunity for me to learn and to meet legislators. It is starting to pay off here in Kansas as we are trying to get appropriation money for the new court reporting program at Butler Community College.”

One of her most notable volunteering positions to date was serving on the Advisory Committee on Court Reporting in Kansas. The committee consisted of four court reporters, two district court judges, one appellate judge, and several chief clerks and court administrators. They investigate many aspects of court reporting, including the recent shortage in the state. Among the topics they discussed were paperless writers and courts requiring notes to be filed, and allowing voice writers to take the state certification test. They also looked at sound recording equipment and the possibility of hiring a court monitor to operate the equipment. This committee reviews these topics and submits their recommendations to the state CSR board, then to the state supreme court. These issues are not being reviewed because there is dissatisfaction, but simply because there is a shortage of reporters in the state and they thought it best to review these topics that affect court reporting.

“It's easy to assume that those who work in the legal field will understand court reporting,” she says. “Bringing in a reporter who demonstrated realtime was very impressive to the committee. It helped them understand what we are talking about when we say that realtime is an exceptional service and that we should be compensated accordingly.”

*Carly Isaac is NCRA's Marketing and Communications Assistant.*

## Changing Your Dictionary

### PART II

**T**his month we present more answers to the questions, “Have you changed your dictionary significantly since you graduated? How do you approach changing the way you write?”

My dictionary has definitely changed. I've added lots of briefs and constantly shorten the way I'm writing. I keep a running log of problem words and use a briefing software program to look up briefs for those words and then stroke

each one at least once and enter them into my dictionary. I then practice that list, time permitting, before every job.

*Alisa Smith, RPR  
Avondale, Ariz.*

My dictionary has changed immensely! That was evident to me when I had to transcribe a hearing from seven years ago before I was doing realtime for almost everything.

Changing the way I write has become routine for me. When I hear about a new idea, I try it. If it works for me, I keep it. If it does not work, I discard it. One never knows what minor — or major — change will make the job easier.

*Mary B. Burzynski, RPR  
Gilman, Wis.*

I have changed my dictionary drastically since I was in school (1974). We were not even taught long vowels! I incorporated those early on. Over the years I have added many, many brief forms. Since beginning realtime, my dictionary has changed even more, to eliminate the numerous conflicts throughout my writing theory.

*Barbara Cash, RDR  
Paris, Ill.*

Since I have been reporting for 30 years, I have changed everything in my dictionary. I don't remember the theory that I was taught in school, but I didn't learn long vowels. It's possible to report without using long vowels, having passed the Illinois CSR, RPR, RMR, but I would never recommend it.

When I first went on computer in 1983, I saw how incompatible my style of writing was. I started slowly with adding the long vowels. Over the next 10 years, I overhauled my dictionary to be more compatible with computers by getting rid of conflicts.

Next came realtime writing. I didn't have any conflicts, but I had word boundary problems and stacking with my suffixes. I didn't want to advertise my services as a realtime writer without being certified, so I bought the realtime writing tapes and started overhauling my dictionary again. For six months I spent two hours each morning going over the realtime writing booklet and changing my dictionary again by adding prefixes,