

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,

suffixes, distinguishing between *maybe* and *may be*, *sometime* and *some time*, etc., so that everything I now write comes out clean. It's hard work, but I passed the CRR five years ago.

Four years ago I took a four-day boot camp for CART and broadcast reporting because I thought I wanted to slow down from working as a freelancer to doing CART or broadcast reporting. I soon found out that it's just as hard but in a different way. I didn't have to overhaul my dictionary this time, but I learned to input a good job dictionary before I start a job and make brief forms for the parties' names and subject matter.

There is one thing that all reporters who have 25 years or more experience have in common: When we report now, we can't let our subconscious take over. We have to pay attention to what is being said. The work is just as hard; it's just that the hard work comes in the process of reporting, not in the editing.

*Kimberly Ganz, RMR, CRR  
Okawville, Ill.*

Have I changed my dictionary? My goodness, yes! Since I've been reporting for more than 25 years, I've had to change. I started before computers, conflicts, word boundaries, and writing parentheses for realtime. You didn't need numbers to "come out."

I used to write everything out. Now I find briefs are my friend. I actually keep not only a word list, but a steno list for each particular case. I find when I'm stroking less I have time for more accurate realtime.

In changing my dictionary I find that briefs have to "click" or "look" like the word. The quickest jump I ever made in my writing style was when I took retraining at Green River Community College. I learned how to deal with word boundaries and conflicts. It was not a major overhaul of my writing, but it helped me develop a strategy to improve my writing.

I would highly recommend any type of education a reporter can find, whether it be by seminars, conventions,

returning to school, the JCR, steno swaps, or talking with other reporters about writing.

I am continually amazed at ways others write words, and I try to steal every good idea I find!

*Marcella Wing Maddex, RPR  
Woodinville, Wash.*

## STATE NEWS

# Can One Person Make a Difference?

BY KATHY ZEBERT

I believe that the answer to this question is a resounding, "Yes." I was once told that if you want to see what difference you make in the world, you should put your finger in a glass of water. Of course, if you do that, you'll see no visible difference as

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