

Spring 2008



On The Record

Houston Court Reporters Association

From The President:

Former U.S. House Speaker Tip O’Neill used to say that “All politics are local politics.” This phrase stresses the importance of local grassroots political organizations. If an organization’s concern and voice are unified, they can push their concerns upward from the local political stage through to the state and then ultimately the national political arena. HCRA is your local, grassroots court reporting association.

In addition to providing an opportunity for the exchange of experiences and opinions through discussion, study, and publications, this year HCRA is focusing on our community at large, by strengthening and fortifying students, freelancers and official reporters and in reaching out to those with whom we work most closely, namely lawyers, through the Houston Bar Association, and the judiciary.

HCRA is cooperating with the Houston Bar Association’s Habitat for Humanity House, initially by soliciting donations (tax deductible, by the way). Once build dates are announced, the HCRA Board encourages everyone to participate in building the home, right next to the HBA lawyers. Just drop by the work site and the Habitat crew will find a task, however small, for you to do. Additionally, there will be a sign-up sheet for those freelance firms who would like to provide coffee, juice and donuts to the Habitat participants.

Another fast-approaching event is the HBA John J. Eikenburg 23rd Law Week Fun Run on Saturday, March 29, 2008. One hundred percent of the proceeds from this Fun Run go to The Center Serving Persons with Mental Retardation, Inc. See the newsletter for more details.

Exciting events are happening in the court reporter arena, as well. In a collaborative effort by HCRA and Official Reporters, we hope to host the First Annual Judges Appreciation Luncheon as a “thank you” to our judges. Additionally, a student seminar is in the works.

Marian Wright Edelman, founder and president of the Children’s Defense Fund, said, “We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.” Although our lives as court reporters are hectic, your participation and voice in HCRA are paramount to your association’s success and viability. Please encourage your fellow court reporters to join and participate in HCRA and its community events.

Dorothy A. Rull, CSR, CRR, CART V
2008 HCRA President

“We cannot live for ourselves alone. Our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results.”

Herman Melville
Author, *Moby Dick*



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2007 HCRA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

Reporter Sites of Interest

CRCB Web Site:
www.crcb.state.tx.us

HCRA Web Site:
www.hcrainfo.com

TCRA Web Site:
www.tcra-online.com

NCRA Web Site:
www.NCRAonline.com

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HCRA
SPRING ASSOCIATION MEETING

Saturday, April 26, 2008
10:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Baba Yega's
2607 Grant
(713)522-0042

“Self-Defense for the Average Joe”

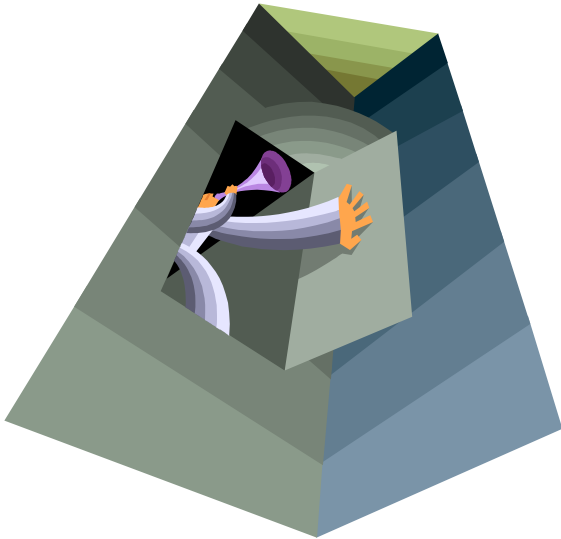
Guest Speaker: Tommy Short, 3rd Degree Black Belt



Learn to protect your most valuable asset - yourself!

You don't have to be a Black Belt to protect yourself on those dark walks back to your car after a long day of writing. You just need to be equipped with knowledge and a few key moves.

Come dressed comfortably, as everyone will be participating. The usual fabulous brunch will be provided.



ANNOUNCEMENTS!!!!

HCRA is focusing on its student community. Student volunteers are encouraged to assist with HCRA meetings and events. Planning is underway for a student seminar, proceeds of which will go toward the creation of one or more student scholarships. Additionally, submission of student-authored articles for the HCRA newsletter is welcome.

At the invitation of the Court Reporting Institute of Houston, Peggy Donnell and I visited Alvin Community College and spoke with the students. The membership drive was held for day students and night students. There was much participation in this event by the staff (who furnished refreshments) and faculty, as well as the students. Not only was it successful, but also tons of fun! It was a joy and a privilege to be standing in front of all the students talking about court reporting and encouraging them -- my favorite thing to do!

I really look forward to being with the students and keeping them informed of the activities of HCRA.

Shirley Baker, CSR
HCRA Vice President

WANTED:

The Secretary seat is still available on our Board. This is a vital seat, of much importance to the membership. In this position, you will take minutes of meetings and actively participate in meetings and events.

If you have ever felt the need to get more involved in your profession, now is the time. This is your call! Please contact Dorothy Rull at (713)436-0094 or at rullcsr@gmail.com.

Hurry! We need you!

Information Compromise and the Risk of Identity Theft: Guidance for Your Business

These days, it is almost impossible to be in business and not collect or hold personally identifying information -- names and addresses, Social Security numbers, credit card numbers, or other account numbers -- about your customers, employees or business partners. If this information falls into the wrong hands, it could put these individuals at risk for identity theft.

Still, not all personal information compromises result in identity theft, and the type of personal information compromised can significantly affect the degree of potential damage. What steps should you take and whom should you contact if personal information is compromised? Although the answers vary from case to case, the following guidance from the Federal Trade Commission can help you make smart, sound decisions.

Check federal and state laws or regulations for any specific requirements for your business.

NOTIFYING LAW ENFORCEMENT

When the compromise could result in harm to a person or business, call your local police department immediately. Report your situation and the potential risk for identity theft. The sooner law enforcement learns about the theft, the more effective they can be. If your local police are not familiar with investigating information compromises, contact the local office of the FBI or the U.S. Secret Service. For incidents involving mail theft, contact the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Check the blue pages of your telephone directory or an online search engine for the number of the nearest field office.

NOTIFYING AFFECTED BUSINESSES

Information compromises can have an impact on businesses other than yours, such as banks or credit issuers. If account access information, say credit card or bank account numbers, has been stolen from you, but you do not maintain the accounts, notify the institution that does so that it can monitor the accounts for fraudulent activity. If you collect or store personal information on behalf of other businesses, notify them of any information compromise, as well.

If names and Social Security numbers have been stolen, you can contact the major credit bureaus for additional information or advice. If the compromise may involve a large group of people, advise the credit bureaus if you are recommending that people request fraud alerts for their files. Your notice to the credit bureaus can facilitate customer assistance.

If the information compromise resulted from the improper posting of personal information on your website, immediately remove the information from your site. Be aware that Internet search engines store information for a period of time. You can contact the search engines to ensure that they do not archive personal information that was posted in error.

NOTIFYING INDIVIDUALS

Generally, early notification to individuals whose personal information has been compromised allows them to take steps to mitigate the misuse of their information. In deciding if notification is warranted, consider the nature of the compromise, the type of information taken, the likelihood of misuse and the potential damage arising from misuse. For example, thieves who have stolen names and Social Security numbers can use this information to cause significant damage to a victim's credit record. Individuals who are notified early can take some steps to prevent or limit any harm.

When notifying individuals, the FTC recommends that you consult with your law enforcement contact about the timing of the notification so it does not impede the investigation and designate a contact person within your organization for releasing information. Give the contact person the latest information about the breach, your response and how individuals should respond. Consider using letter, websites and toll-free numbers as methods of communication with those whose information may have been compromised.

It is important that your notice describes clearly what you know about the compromise and explains what responses may be appropriate for the type of information taken.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

This is general guidance for an organization that has experienced an information compromise. If you would like more individualized guidance, you may contact the FTC at idt-brt@ftc.gov. To file a complaint or to get free information on consumer issues, visit www.ftc.gov or call toll-free, 1-877-FTC-HELP. The FTC enters Internet, telemarketing, identify theft and other fraud-related complaints into Consumer Sentinel, a secure, online database available to hundreds of civil and criminal law enforcement agencies in the U.S. and abroad.

***This information was summarized from an article titled the same at www.ftc.gov/idtheft. More information is available at this site, including a model letter for the compromise of Social Security numbers.

YOU INSPIRE US

By Rose Hernandez

As a student at the Court Reporting Institute of Houston (CRIH), I can't stress enough how inspiring and motivating professional Court Reporters can be. I can remember when I first started school and how thrilling it was for me to attend this notable school which consists of distinguished faculty and supportive, friendly staff. The thought of becoming a future Court Reporter seemed intriguing but yet, challenging. I'll be honest, I knew I had a great interest in this field and it was going to be a lot of work; but I had no idea how much dedication it was going to take.

As a struggling student, I am motivated when "real-live Court Reporters" share their personal experiences. Amazing! Once I hear their encouraging words, I switch from a feeling of overwhelming stress with just "life" itself into a blissful, encouraging mode. It's amazing how our guest speakers are like angels who seem to appear at the right time; and quite frankly, anytime is the right time when you're a student going through pressures of passing tests. There have been many times when family and friends ask, "Have you passed any tests yet?" Which reminds me, what's that saying again? Oh, yeah, "I'll tell you when I've passed a test. Don't ask!" When guest speakers share their fascinating stories as students, including personal struggles and triumphs, this gives me a sense of relief and optimism. The common mantra is, "If I can do it, you can do it too." I have been encouraged to stay focused, committed, and not to compare myself to others.

We have had many honorable guest speakers here in Houston who shared their knowledge as Court Reporters and their personal struggles and experiences as students such as: *Vonda Treat, Shirley Baker, Tammy Adams, Norma Duarte, Carl Browning, Cynthia Berry, Mike Clepper, Art Richardson, Pat Arredondo, Susan Henley*, and many others since our inception.

I strongly believe that the inspiration, encouragement, guidance, and knowledge that Norma Duarte, an Official Court Reporter for the 234th Civil Court, has shared with me during my internship undoubtedly helped me to progress as a 200 speed-level student. It has been a great opportunity and advantageous to have such an experienced Court Reporter to guide me under her gracious wing.

A million thanks to all of the CSRs who visit us and continue to inspire and guide us throughout our experiences as students. Your shared knowledge is essential to our growing needs as future court reporting students, and we continue to look forward to your generous return to our school as guest speakers. Remember, you don't have to be a great orator or motivational speaker. Sometimes all you have to say is "Hang in there, you can do it." Your presence is always needed and appreciated.



"Community cannot long feed on itself, it can only flourish with the coming of others from beyond: their unknown and undiscovered sisters and brothers."

Howard Thurman

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6081

Organization Number

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