



# THE VOLUNTEER REPORTER

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Cumberland County Courthouse - Crossville, Tennessee  
Photo Courtesy of Lynette Mueller

## IN THE NEWS

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# TCRA BOARD'S MESSAGE

## 2020: Lessons Learned and New Perspectives

Court reporting is an amazing profession, and it has been good to all of us. But it is also a profession that, candidly, often means its time constraints impacts our family and those we love and cherish. We are busy, busy, busy all the time. We get in our groove and roll with it.

But then, early 2020 life as we knew it came to a screeching halt because of the pandemic. Phones stopped ringing, assignments canceled, courts closed, and we became glued to news reports, doing our best to learn quickly how to keep ourselves and our loved ones safe. Silence of that nature can be pretty darn scary. But court reporters are resourceful folk. We always rise to a challenge. After all, we are not people who sit on the sidelines. So, after cleaning cabinets and organizing closets, we got busy honing our skills, speeding-building again, learning new remote platforms and educating our clients how to use them. And our wonderful TCRA Convention Committee spent untold hours learning the necessary skills to bring our convention into our homes. Then they assisted other state associations in order to do the same. Talk about teamwork and dedication to our profession!

In this fast-paced profession, it is easy to forget to stop and smell the roses. We forget how to enjoy life. It is sad it has taken a pandemic for us to hit the pause button and, hopefully, reset our lives. Now that we are somewhat back to work and once again crazy busy, let us not forget the lessons this pandemic has taught us. Most of all, let us not let our guard down. We are not out of the woods just yet. But this time around we have learned to be more resourceful. We are better prepared. We know what to let go of and what to focus on.

While it's certainly important to put food on the table, it's just as important to feed our heart and souls, and remember to appreciate the family, friends and connections we have all made. Those are the things that sustain us and are our lifeline when things get hard.

So, as we close out this year, we challenge you to not forget the little things that brought you gratitude and happiness this chaotic year. That could mean extra quality time with close family and friends, technology making FaceTime and Zoom possible, and having a job that allows you to work remotely.

Here are some other nuggets of wisdom we have learned along the way:

- Always keep extra toilet paper, bleach and sanitizing wipes on hand. Hoarding isn't just for reality TV anymore. If you've never stalked these items on Amazon, you haven't lived life to the fullest yet!
- Keep your home library stocked with a few good books and board games. It'll keep you busy while your kids are sucking up all the data that YOU pay for while on every electronic device they can get their hands on.
- You either LOVE or HATE Zoom at this point. You're either basking in the glow of never having to leave your house or you're praying for divine intervention to get you out of your house.
- The quality of your breath inside your mask has become of utmost importance. Some of us have learned we're not as sweet in that department as we once thought.
- Last but not least, as 2020 closes out -- anything goes!! That includes decorating for Christmas as early as you wanted to bring a little extra joy into your life.

Remember to be kind, gentle and caring. Hold close the connections you have made. Know that you matter to the world, and that you are never alone to shoulder whatever burdens you may have. We all walk together.

We will see you next year, our friends. What a glorious reunion we will have!

**Happy New Year? Yes, please!**

# CONVENTION COMMITTEE



April Lassiter-Benson, LCR, CSR  
TCRA Vice President  
Convention Committee Chair

Hold on to your straw hats - we're gaining ground with preparations for the 2021 TCRA Convention! Get your sandals dusted off and get ready to enjoy a convention full of adventure! ALL roads lead to Margaritaville Resort in Gatlinburg, TN on May 13 - 15, 2021, for TCRA's 2021 Convention FINAL DESTINATION!

Gatlinburg is a mountainous town in Eastern Tennessee and is known for its sprawling 520,000-acre Great Smoky Mountains National Park! Many of its key attractions offer sweeping views of the neighboring park, including the 407-ft. Space Needle observation tower, as well as a Sky Lift - a 2.1-mile aerial cable car that journeys from Downtown to the popular amusement park and ski resort, Ober Gatlinburg. Convention attendees are sure to have an experience like none other. Worried about leaving the kiddos and hubby or wife at home? No worries. We've got you covered! With accommodating family suites; this location is ideal for creating the most memorable vacation for your family!

TCRA's 2021 Convention theme of "Each One, Reach One" is a clarion call to ALL reporters - in doing our part to reach a student/A to Z participant/court reporting candidate, in an effort to secure this wonderful profession we ALL love! It is **IMPERATIVE** that each and every court reporter do their due diligence in reaching SOMEONE, in an effort to save this once-thriving profession. This can be had by sharing information regarding the A to Z Program and Project Steno with potential prospects.

I'm thrilled that we're close to narrowing down seminar speakers, and with the help of collaborative thinking from TCRA membership, I believe we can make this convention an even momentous one! What are some of the topics you, as a reporter, would like to be covered at this year's upcoming convention? Our goal is to set YOU up for success! And so, we'd like to know what topics you would like to tackle. We all know how segregated, working solo can be, with little to no guidance or camaraderie partnership for those that have assumed the role of a sole proprietorship. This is one example that comes to mind when brainstorming topics. This is sure to be a stellar convention and we NEED YOU, TCRA Membership, to weigh in with your thoughts and ideas as to how you would like TCRA 2021 Convention to look!

So, COME ON, don't be shy.....put your thinking caps on and get ready to raise your margarita glasses, as this convention is sure to be one to remember!!!! Stay tuned for upcoming developments!!!!

In Service,  
April Lassiter-Benson, TCRA 2020-2021 Vice President



## EDUCATION COMMITTEE



Sarah Motley, LCR  
TCRA Past President  
Education Committee Chair

Needless to say, it's crazy to think that we are almost at the end of 2020. As we all know, this year has been beyond challenging for so many of us for so many different reasons. With that said, the Education Committee is thinking ahead of what we can accomplish this year as far as providing meaningful education about our profession to new and existing reporters in the year 2021.

The Education Committee is currently working in conjunction with the Convention Committee, brainstorming speakers and content for our upcoming convention in Gatlinburg next year. If you have any ideas, or if you have any requests or suggestions for speakers and content, please reach out to our administrator. We always want to hear from you and know your interests so that we can meet your needs.

## FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE



Katherine Gale, RPR, LCR, CSR  
TCRA Middle Director  
Fundraising Committee Co-Chair

Wow, the legal professionals are making up for lost time these days and it's making it even more apparent that we need more court reporters! The fundraising committee decided that every single one of us can do our part in promoting our profession by wearing cute shirts and masks that say something about court reporting on them, we can all be walking billboards! So keep an eye out for your opportunity to help in this effort by buying a shirt and mask, or two, in the near future!



# LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE



Misty Brigham, LCR  
TCRA President  
Legislative Committee Chair



January 2021 begins a new two-year legislative cycle. That means new bills filed from January 2021 and 2022 will need to be passed in their entirety before close of General Assembly in 2022.

As you are aware, TNCRA is always on alert for legislation which may impact our profession. To that end, we are building the committee currently, and will be examining lobbyist avenues.

If you or someone you know has legislative experience and/or might be interested in serving on the committee, please email us at [administrator@tncra.com](mailto:administrator@tncra.com).

We look forward to once again working for you!

Misty Brigham,  
TCRA President 2020-2021

# MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



Tina Summers, LCR  
TCRA Western Director  
Membership Committee Chair



Janis McMaster, LCR  
TCRA Western Director  
Membership Committee Co-Chair

Happy Fall...even though it still feels like summer in the Western District!

The discussion of having a meet-and-greet with the reporters from criminal court here in Shelby County to get them introduced to the TNCRA is still ongoing. Nothing has transpired yet. Between school starting, a positive CV-19 case reported at 201 and some reporters having to be quarantined, limited access to spaces to have such a meet-up, there just hasn't been a chance yet. There are still talks with our liaison trying to get something set up with those reporters. Even though we'd love to do an in-person gathering, if all else fails, maybe we can host a Zoom happy hour. We'll keep trying to get something set up!

<b>Total members:</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>Professional:</b>	<b>174</b>
<b>Associate:</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Student:</b>	<b>3</b>

[Join or Renew your membership today](#)

# NOMINATING COMMITTEE



Sarah Motley, LCR  
TCRA Past President  
Nominating Committee Chair



Hard to believe we are already over the halfway point of November. We are still fielding nominees for the 2021-2022 TCRA Board. Every year, we are finding new, eager, and creative members, and we hope to keep that trend going. We need people with a passion for the reporting career with fresh ideas and opinions for Tennessee court reporters. If you would be interested and excited to serve on the Board - or if you know of anyone you would like to nominate - please reach out to us!

# SCHOLARSHIP/MENTORING COMMITTEE



Carol West, LCR, CCR  
TCRA Eastern Director  
Scholarship/Mentoring Committee Chair

I was point person and organized a small group of board members to represent TCRA during the TN School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute that was held in Murfreesboro, TN, at the Embassy Suites Hotel & Convention Center on September 13-15, 2020.



In another report to our administrator to be published in the next newsletter, I summarized TCRA's involvement at this event and how our association could be affected by becoming more involved with these school counselors.

I have a Zoom remote court reporting as a career presentation scheduled on October 28, 2020, for a home-schooled group of students and their counselor.

I have just today received an e-mail from a prospective court reporting student, and she has requested more information about our profession. I plan to respond immediately to her request for further information.

# STUDENT CORNER

## Written Knowledge Tests move online

September 24, 2020 by [NCRA](#)

NCRA is excited to announce candidates will soon be able to take our Written Knowledge Tests from the comfort of the location you choose. Starting with our October 2020 Written Knowledge Tests, all WKTs will be given online through Pearson Vue four times a year (January, April, July, October). That's right! It's now possible to take your Written Knowledge Test online through Pearson Vue. The next registration period is Dec. 1-31 for the Jan. 7-21, 2021, testing period.

Member feedback requesting online options and the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions for in-person opportunities for testing solidified NCRA's Certification and Testing team's plans to expedite changes to the administration of our Written Knowledge Tests.

Candidates will continue to register with NCRA for their test and receive a con-firmation email within three business days of registering that will include scheduling instructions for the test.

Candidates will schedule their test through [www.pearsonvue.com/ncra](http://www.pearsonvue.com/ncra) and log on at their scheduled date and time within our testing window to take their test. Candidates will take their multiple-choice exam online while monitored by Pearson Vue proctors.

"COVID-19 has us expediting several initiatives we had planned for 2021. By switching to online testing, we will be able to offer all WKTs giving candidates more opportunities to test throughout the year," said Cynthia Bruce Andrews, NCRA Senior Director of Education and Certification. "The online testing instructions are a little different than the Skills Test; therefore, candidates are encouraged to read the instructions thoroughly," she added.

"I believe NCRA's decision to move the RDR, RPR, CLVS, and CRC tests fully online will result in more people earning those certifications," said Brook Nunn, RPR, CRR, CRC, a captioner from Boise, Idaho.

"Simply put, it's just more convenient. If we can take the Skills Tests online, the Written Tests should be even more straightforward. This is a win for everyone!" she added.

Technology requirements and full directions for the new online testing are available at [NCRA.org/wkt](http://NCRA.org/wkt). NCRA will continue to send all official results within four weeks of the close of our testing window via the email address on file with NCRA.

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### Resources:

[Analyze your notes](#)

[RPR Level Practice Dictation](#)

[180-240 WPM Takes](#)

[Audio/Video Playback Speed Controller for Chrome](#)



# TNSCALI 2020

Misty Brigham, Kristin Burke, and Carol West, all current board members of TCRA, manned a TCRA information table at the TN School Counselor and Administrator Leadership Institute on September 13-15, 2020, at the Embassy Suites Hotel and Convention Center in Murfreesboro. The purpose of our visit was to set up a sign-up station, chat, and provide information about the court reporter profession to the school guidance counselors as the counselors stopped by our table during their classroom breaks. We were greeted with much curiosity about the court reporting/captioning profession and enjoyed the counselors' positive feedback.

Our TCRA table was visited by many school counselors during these couple days, and approximately 50 counselors signed information sheets requesting to be contacted by TCRA for perhaps a Zoom remote or an in-person meeting between a court reporter and a group of students. Carol West has scheduled a Zoom remote meeting on October 28, 2020, with a home-schooled group of students and their counselor and will be providing a 20-minute court reporting career presentation and answering any questions students may have.

E-mail contact is being established with all counselors who signed the list, and we look forward for the opportunity to further showcase our profession.

More questions about our TCRA visit to Murfreesboro and SCALI? Please contact me by e-mail or telephone.

I know I also speak for Misty and Kristin when I say how much we enjoyed speaking to the guidance counselors and how proud we were to represent our profession and TCRA.

Spread the word, friends!  
Carol West



# BREAST CANCER AWARENESS



Paulette Schultz, survivor and warrior, battled an aggressive form of breast cancer while her husband, my father, was recovering from a debilitating stroke. They don't make them any tougher, and I'm proud to call her "Mom."

~ Kristin Burke



I am a thankful and blessed breast cancer survivor, the first time in 2000, and the second time in 2012-2014. I love to volunteer for the annual Tennessee Breast Cancer Coalition golf tournament held at Hermitage Golf Course. The mission of TBCC is to be the foremost advocate and provider for Tennesseans facing breast cancer through individual assistance, education, and legislative action. 100 percent of the proceeds stay in the state of Tennessee. The attached pic a few of the volunteers and myself with Holly Thompson, WSMV Channel 4, who is a wonderful spokesperson for TBCC.

~ Teri Campbell

# VETERANS DAY

The officers and members of Tennessee Court Reporters Association wish to express our humble and heartfelt gratitude to each and every man and woman who has served or is currently serving in our military. Please view our video tribute [here](#).



CSM Josh Morgan  
Son of Marilyn Morgan



Robert Driscoll, US Navy (Ret)  
Brother of Karyn Menck



Larry & Jane Phipps, US Army (Ret)  
Nephew of Deborah West



SSG Steven Lane Moore (Ret)  
Father of Stephanie Branim



CPT Gregory Weatherford  
Son of Sheryl Weatherford



Brian Dexter Burke, USAF (Ret)  
Husband of Kristin Burke

# RED TAPE, RULES, AND REGULATIONS

**Court reporter licenses in Tennessee** are now administered by the [Tennessee Department of Commerce and Insurance's Division of Regulatory Boards](#). All questions regarding licenses should be directed to that office.

TDCI's contact information has changed. Please contact Katie Long at TDCI with any concerns or questions at (615) 741-3449 or by email at [Katie.Long@TN.gov](mailto:Katie.Long@TN.gov).



## Tennessee Board of Court Reporting

Stephanie Branim  
Korian Neal  
Marilyn Morgan  
Ken Mansfield  
Brandon Pettes  
Judge John Rambo (not pictured)

## Announcements

The recording of the Court Reporter Board Meeting Rule-Making Hearing of September 25, 2020, is available for viewing [here](#).

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### TENNESSEE SUPREME COURT ISSUES NEW ORDER RELATED TO COURT OPERATIONS DURING COVID-19

November 17, 2020

In response to the increased number of COVID-19 cases in the state, the Tennessee Supreme Court issued an Order today designed to protect all of the participants in the judicial system and the public at large while keeping the courts open and accessible to carry out essential constitutional functions and time-sensitive proceedings. This is the Court's sixth order related to the pandemic since it declared a state of emergency for the judicial branch on March 13, 2020.

Today's Order suspends jury trials from November 23, 2020 through January 31, 2021, unless an exemption is granted by the Chief Justice. Jury trials were previously suspended from March 13 – July 3, 2020. In addition, the Order directs judicial districts to revisit and strictly adhere to their previously approved reopening plans; reiterates that the Court's July 9 Order mandating face coverings for all persons who enter the courthouse for court-related business is still in full effect; encourages video conferencing whenever possible; reminds judges and attorneys that they have an ethical obligation to comply with Court Orders and the reopening plans drafted by the judicial districts; and prohibits anyone with COVID-19 from participating in an in-person proceeding. In addition, the Order directs judges to schedule and conduct in-person hearings in a manner that minimizes wait times in courthouse hallways, which often have limited space for social distancing. Read the Order [here](#).

# TCRA BOARD ANNOUNCEMENTS



Jennifer Checuga, LCR, RPR  
TCRA Middle Director



## MEET OUR MIDDLE DIRECTOR, JENNIFER CHECUGA

I, like many reporters, fell into this career by stumbling upon it. While studying to become a German teacher, I ran into a girl with a machine, and it changed my life.

After graduating from Triton Community College and passing my Illinois CSR in 1991, I was off on what would become the best career I could have chosen. I started out working in Chicago for McCorkle Court Reporting. I've always loved the fact that I was able to always be with different people in different places for my job. That's still one of the best things about this career choice for me. Every day is a completely new experience, and I feel like I learn something new each time. With this career, I was able to work for the State as an official and also teach at Triton Community College for a semester. While raising our three children, this was a career that I could work as much or as little as I wanted to so I could spend as much time with them as I could.

The flexibility is another perk. After spending my whole life in the Chicago area, my husband and I thought it was time for something new. I took my RPR in 2013 so I would be able to move when we were ready. We came down to Nashville April of 2015. We left with no jobs, just a lot of faith. Upon coming to Nashville, I immediately found a home with Elite Reporting Services and have been there ever since.

I've also been fortunate enough that my family decided to make Tennessee their home as well. We have a son, Devin, and wonderful daughter-in-law, Jenny, who also works with Elite as a videographer, and who are making us grandparents to our first grandson. Our daughter, Michelle, is taking her RPR exams right now to start her amazing career, and I'm looking forward to her working with me and finally having someone to talk "briefs" with. Our youngest, Kate, is at UT and hopefully will finish and continue on to her career choice of being a dentist.

I'm excited now to be part of the TCRA and give back to the court reporting community as best I can. I love my court reporting family and am looking forward to getting to know more of you as the years go on.



# VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

## COMMITTEES

Our committees are the lifeblood of our association. Check out the committees listed below and contact us at [administrator@tnkra.com](mailto:administrator@tnkra.com) if you are ready to step up. Click [here](#) for a description of each committee's responsibilities.

### CONVENTION

April Lassiter-Benson, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke  
Denise Gonzalez  
Georgette Arena  
Lynn Terrell

### EDUCATION

Sarah Motley, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke  
Kathy Samson

### FUNDRAISING

Katherine Gale, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke  
Kim Davidson  
Shana Crawford  
Joy Kennedy

### MEMBERSHIP

Tina Summers, Chair  
Janis McMaster, Co-Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke

### NEWSLETTER/SOCIAL MEDIA

Kristin Burke, Chair  
Misty Brigham

### SCHOLARSHIP/MENTORING

Carol West, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke  
Janet Tilley

### LEGISLATIVE

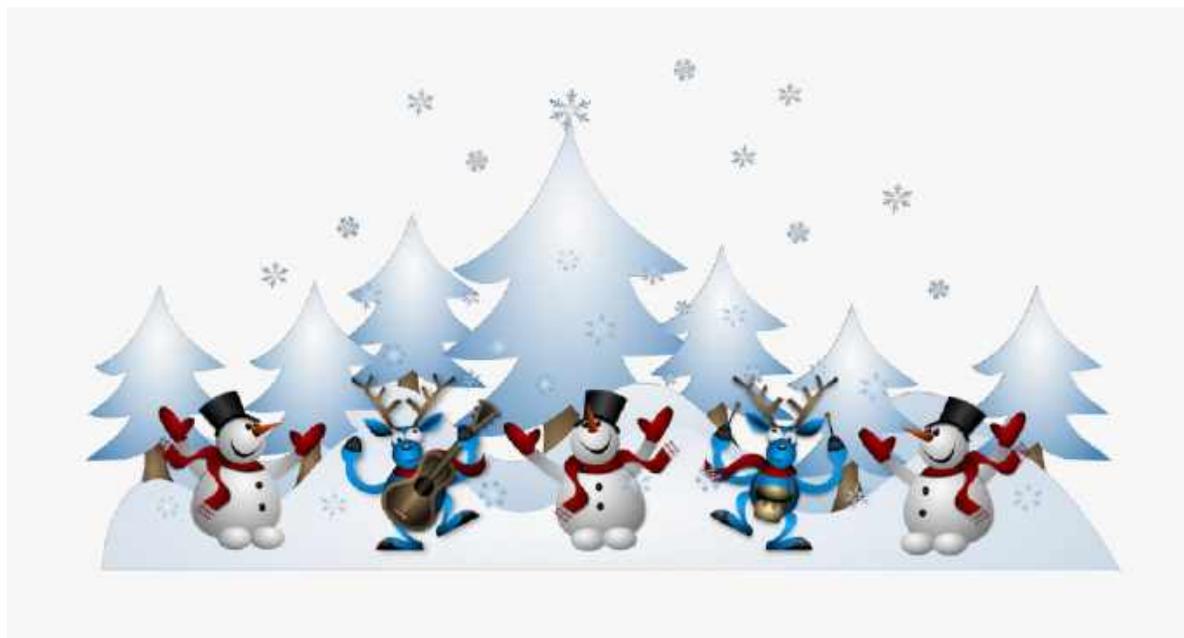
Misty Brigham, Chair  
Kristin Burke  
Sarah Motley

### BYLAWS/P&P

Kristin Burke, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Sarah Motley

### NOMINATING

Sarah Motley, Chair  
Misty Brigham  
Kristin Burke  
Dana Webb  
Amber Thompson



# 2020-2021 TCRA OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

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**Kristin Burke, LCR**  
 TCRA President-Elect  
 Newsletter and Social Media Committee Chair

The Volunteer Reporter is a publication produced quarterly for members of TCRA and other interested parties and is dedicated to the improvement of our profession and to provide a link between TCRA and its members.

Letters for the newsletter are welcomed and will be printed according to space availability. The Newsletter Committee reserves the right to edit letters according to space and formatting requirements or as ethics require, so long as the original meaning remains intact. Additionally, research articles may be written to earn TCRA CEU credits. Author must submit online and receive approval of such in order to earn CEUs. Contact the Newsletter and Social Media Committee for details.

Submission and advertising deadline is 15 days before publication date. Material received after deadline will be held for next issue.

Statement of fact, opinion, and all advertisements are made on the responsibility of the author and do not imply endorsement on the part of TCRA or its officers. Reprint rights are granted to all NCRA-affiliated publications, with appropriate attribution.

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DECEMBER	JANUARY	FEBRUARY
7 Pearl Harbor Day	1 New Year's Day	6-13 Court Reporting and Captioning Week
24 Christmas Eve 25 Christmas Day	18 Martin Luther King Day	14 Valentine's Day
31 New Year's Eve		15 Presidents' Day