

# NALTEA

National Association of Land Title Examiners and Abstractors

In this issue:

## Message from the President

**Message from the President**  
*Front Cover*

**Wendi Lawson See - A  
Candidate for the NALTEA Board  
of Directors**

*Page 2*

**The First NALTEA Title Camp -  
Myrtle Beach, South Carolina**

*Page 2*

**Public Relations Committee  
Update**

*Page 2*

**NALTEA Responds to Forbes  
Article "Inside America's Richest  
Insurance Racket"**

*Page 3*

**Run for the Board!**

*Page 4*

**NALTEA Membership Update**

*Page 4*

Wanda Steudel, President  
Email: [president@naltea.org](mailto:president@naltea.org)

We all know that the industry is changing. In my opinion, it certainly is not for the better. More and more, our clients are requesting less and less in their search requests. There are some that are just requesting proof of ownership and a credit report in order to approve a loan for the borrower. More and more, searches are being done by unqualified people, both in the courthouses and online. These people have no idea what they are looking at. All they know is that they have a list of things that they are suppose to look for. If they find these items good, if they don't, that's okay, too.

Just this month *Forbes Magazine* came out with an article stating that title insurance is unnecessary. Thanks to Pat Scott, NALTEA has a written response regarding this. We have also declared our opposition to indiscriminate posting of records online. Earlier this year, Pat Scott and I traveled to Lansing, Michigan at the request of the Michigan Association of Registrar of Deeds, to speak out against the bulk sale of county records.

Our Education Committee, consisting of four members, is working tirelessly to bring together a valid certification program for abstractors. Each month we try to get a newsletter out to our membership letting you know what is happening within NALTEA and the industry as a whole. Robert Franco does this practically single-handed. Our Planning and Events Committee also with four members, have to work all year long to plan our annual conference held in January. This year we have also sponsored a "Title Camp" in Myrtle Beach. We are hoping to be able to offer this concept in other areas of the country in the future.

Due to the down turn in business, there are many abstractors that have had to scale back or have gotten out of the business altogether. NALTEA has had several members that did not send in their dues to continue their membership. They

have stated that they just can't afford it. And, I can understand this. We all have to do what we have to in order to take care of our selves and our families.

One of the reasons that I joined NALTEA in the first place was, I felt that abstractors needed a voice in the industry. Although I think that we have accomplished quite a bit, there is so much more that could be done. In order to accomplish any of our goals, we need members!! Not only do we need the monies that are provided through our dues, we need manpower! In the 2 1/2 years that we have been an organization, there have been at any given time only 15-20 people at most, actually listed as working for NALTEA either on the board or as a committee member. Most times there are much fewer actually working. We have to do better then this. This organization can only be as successful as our members make it. We need more members and we need more volunteers. We cannot have a very loud voice in the industry with 10 or 15 people talking.

If each one of you brought just one person into this organization, we would double our membership. I have heard abstractors say that they don't want others in their area to know about NALTEA. They feel they would be helping their competition. I think that is time to put that thinking aside. Although I agree that other abstractors have an impact on your personal business, others are making the larger impact in our industry. Our clients, particularly the vendor management companies, large title companies, and the underwriters, are, in my opinion, undermining the industry everyday. For the most part, it has become a game of playing percentages. They are constantly taking shortcuts in order to boost their profit margin. It seems that the only person in the industry that cares about the integrity of the search process, is the ethical abstractor. Being an ethical well-trained abstractor is what NALTEA is all about. We need to be able to get this message out to the rest of the industry and

### Contact:

NALTEA  
10024 Office Center Avenue  
Suite 100  
St. Louis, MO 63128

E-mail: [info@naltea.org](mailto:info@naltea.org)

(President's Message... continued from front cover)

to the consumer. In order to be able to do this we need people. If you do nothing else for this organization, tell someone else about us and try to convince him or her that they need to join. We have to come together & work for ourselves. NO ONE ELSE IS GOING TO CARE.

## Wendi Lawson See - A Candidate for the NALTEA Board of Directors

Wendi Lawson See is a candidate for board member of NALTEA. She began her career in real estate law over nine years ago in Virginia, as a title abstractor for a local title company, continuing until her move to South Carolina in late 2004. With the encouragement of her prior employer, she decided to become a freelance abstractor, opening LowCountry Title Examinations LLC, in February of 2005. The firm quickly became known in the fourteen counties it covered for its highly professional, accurate reporting, and aptitude for complicated heirs' property research, allowing the company to grow to six employees by August of 2006.

As a board member of NALTEA, Ms. See plans to promote abstracting as a profession worthy of respect. She is especially passionate about the education and potential certification of title abstractors through NALTEA. She is eager to expand the influence of NALTEA, not only on a national level, but in regions, states and eventually, localities—through membership incentives, educational events and answering the question of many cash-starved free-lancers of “What’s in it for me if I join?” She desires to use her position to encourage members to feel worthy of vigorous collection of monies owed to them and to feel unwavering confidence when turning down clients who demand unreasonable search parameters and indecent pricing.

Ms. See lives just outside of Charleston, South Carolina, with her husband, Stacy and her three boxers: Jo-E, Buddy and Sugar. She and her husband are the Low Country representatives for Blue Ridge Boxer Rescue and usually have two or three foster boxers who are recovering from illness, starvation or abuse so they may be adopted to a loving family forever .

## The First NALTEA Title Camp - Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

Lynn Hammett, Board Member  
Email: vlhammett@yahoo.com

The first ever Title Camp, sponsored by NALTEA, was held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina at the Hampton Inn Hollywood at the Beach Resort on October 21, 2006. Attendance by paralegals, title abstractors and examiners from North Carolina, South Carolina and Iowa underlined the differences in markets and title processes for each state, but also highlighted many similarities.

The group focused on a number of topics, chief

among which were online records and education and certification in the industry. Discussions were heated at times when opposing views of online records were debated among the group. Jan Forster, a staunch advocate for the removal of public records from the Internet, expressed the view that deeds, mortgages and other documents containing personal information and signatures should not be available for viewing across the globe. “I view this as an issue of national security” said Ms. Forster. The group was in agreement that availability of online records allowed the title abstractor flexibility and was essential to productivity, although from a privacy standpoint was not advantageous to consumers in general. The view that online records would cause the industry and the title abstractor to become obsolete while records for American consumers could be researched offshore in India or other foreign countries was also expressed. Toni Shepherd from USLand Title suggested that online records were here to stay and the answer was not to remove them from Internet sources, but to regulate their usage.

Education and certification was a hot topic with strong support for certification of abstractors on a national basis. Lynn Hammett of NALTEA provided an update to the group on the organization’s progress in the certification process. “It is the hope that strong certification guidelines through NALTEA will be recognized by the states and adopted for state certification.” Ms. Hammett further commented that requiring certified title abstractors to search public records would return the professional qualities that once dominated the field.

A number of abstractors expressed strong opposition to unreasonable turnaround times expected by national clients. Wendy See compared unreasonable expectations to the rise in claims experienced by title insurance companies in recent years.

Other topics included the problems of late and non-paying clients, diversification ideas, establishing regional associations or state charters through NALTEA, and insurance matters.

## Public Relations Committee Update

Pat Scott, Board Member  
Email: publicrelations@naltea.org

It has been a busy time for the PR committee. We have mailed off a response, from the abstractor’s point of view, to *Forbes Magazine’s* recent article bashing the entire title industry [“Inside America’s Richest Insurance Racket” November 13, 2006]. We continue our ongoing membership drive with a new and improved recruitment flyer. And, we are beginning a new promotion to make sure that no abstractor is left behind. Read on for details of the “Bring In Three, Get Yours Free” promotion.

### **Bring in Three, Get Yours Free!**

Among the reasons most cited by independent abstractors for declining to join NALTEA is a lack of funds. It is a valid concern. While the annual dues for

membership to NALTEA are significantly lower than most other title industry associations, it can be argued that the other associations cater more to companies that generate a larger portion of the fees in title transactions.

There is now a solution for those who are unable to afford the dues. Simply convince three of your industry peers of NALTEA's value and send in the completed promotion form with your own membership/renewal application. Look for the "Bring In Three, Get Yours Free" promotion form on NALTEA's website at <http://www.naltea.org>.

As soon as the third membership is sealed, the recruiting party will enjoy the full benefits of NALTEA membership, dues free, for one year. With the annual conference fast approaching, this is an excellent time to chat us up to your friends in the business.

### **Help Promote NALTEA**

The PR Committee has placed the finishing touches on a new promotional flyer as part of our membership drive. You can find a link to the flyer at the Public Relations page on NALTEA's Website. Haven't been there lately? The address is <http://www.naltea.org>. We ask that each member print out and deliver a copy to all clerks' and recorders' offices that will allow for posting in view of local abstractors. The more you promote NALTEA, the better NALTEA can promote you and your business.

While you are on the Website, check out the new, restructured members directory. It is now searchable by state. The PR Committee is in the process of creating a press release to inform interested parties of the site where they can find the best abstractors around – NALTEA abstractors.

As always, the PR Committee welcomes your comments and suggestions. New ideas are always welcome here. Send us your constructive comments via email to [publicrelations@naltea.org](mailto:publicrelations@naltea.org). Or, better yet, join the committee to make a real impact on the future of your association -- and your industry. If you would like to find out more about this exciting opportunity, we can be found at the Bahia Resort Hotel, in sunny San Diego, from January 12<sup>th</sup> through 14<sup>th</sup>. See you there!

## **NALTEA Responds to Forbes Article "Inside America's Richest Insurance Racket"**

The directors and officers of The National Association of Land Title Examiners and Abstractors (NALTEA) find much to disagree with in our reading of reporter Scott Wooley's dim view of the title insurance industry [Inside America's Richest Insurance Racket" November 13, 2006].

With a broad stroke of his brush, intent on convincing his readers that title insurance is "outdated" and "largely unneeded," Mr. Wooley demonstrates his failure to achieve a fundamental understanding of the industry and its purpose. Ignorance of the value of title insurance is forgivable, as the subject does not emerge very often in most people's routines. It is harder to ignore

when a reporter shares his ridiculous indictment of the entire industry in such a highly respected publication as Forbes.

Title insurance reaches far beyond the validity of a deed. There are a number of events that can affect the condition of title, even in a short period of time. When a homeowner purchases title insurance in connection with the refinancing of a mortgage loan, it is for the lender's protection. Although there may be an "utter absence of any new risk in the deed" since the last refinance, there may well be new liens – be they voluntary or involuntary -- which will affect a lender's ability to recoup losses, should the homeowner fail to repay the loan.

Twice in the article, the claim is made that 'online automation has...reduced errors'. Technology has certainly added convenience and efficiency, but we have seen no evidence that errors are reduced by technology. In fact, the opposite is probably true. Records indexed with computer technology may be permanently misplaced with a single typographical error. Automated programs are only as good as the information entered. As they say, "garbage in, garbage out".

Whether the records are indexed with pencil-in-hand or placed on line for the world to access, there is no substitute for a thorough search of the public record by an experienced, local professional who is familiar with the local standards and practices. It is the effort expended prior to the issuance of a title policy -- the identification of title defects and resulting curative action -- that keeps the claims rates low. It is NALTEA's position that more attention should be given to this important part of the process.

Placing records online, automating the process and conducting business from foreign countries will all serve to add efficiency for the title insurers. This will occur at the expense of the industry's integrity, and that of the public records. The emphasis appears to be shifting from a proactive, curative approach, to a more risk-tolerant approach, which prefers insuring over minor risks to repairing the defect.

The increasing incidence of real estate-related fraud is another issue that makes title insurance all the more important in today's world. It is not unreasonable to argue that a thief can get far more accomplished with all of the information he needs, including your signature, at his fingertips, than he would if he had to travel to your local courthouse for the same information.

NALTEA was founded in June 2004 when several title examiners and abstractors recognized the need for unifying the industry's members into their own national organization. NALTEA members are working to improve the standards of this important aspect of the title industry, and of the industry as a whole. To learn more about NALTEA, visit the organization's Web site at [www.naltea.org](http://www.naltea.org).

Officers and Board of Directors  
The National Association of Land Title Examiners and Abstractors

## Run for the Board!

There are two board of director positions up for election this year. Rick Martinez and Wanda Steudel both have terms expiring in January. So far, Wendi Lawson See has thrown her hat in the ring and we are still looking for more candidates. If you are interested in taking on the challenge of guiding NALTEA through the next two years, e-mail [info@naltea.org](mailto:info@naltea.org).

Being on the board of directors of NALTEA is tough, but rewarding. As an all volunteer association it takes a lot of work to keep things moving. Often times the board has to roll up their sleeves and do a lot of the work themselves.

Each board member acts as a liaison between the board and one of the committees. They have the responsibility of keeping their committee on track and helping them get the resources they need from the board.

Board meetings are typically held once per month via conference call. Meetings are usually held the third Tuesday of the month at 6:00 PM and last for up to two hours. Special meetings are called when necessary and communication via e-mail helps fill in the gaps.

During the various meetings, each board member reports the progress of their committee and the board provides feedback. When issues get to the point where board approval is required, a vote is called for and a majority will pass the issue. Lately, issues that have been discussed have included approving speakers for the upcoming conference, approving the new membership campaign, certification standards, and press releases.

NALTEA can use all the help it can get. If you are interested in volunteering to serve on the NALTEA board of directors, I would encourage you to run for a position this January in San Diego. The satisfaction of helping your fellow abstractors, and being involved in the only national association dedicated to the title abstracting and examining field, is incredibly rewarding. Though it is a lot of work, a two year position on the board is a worthwhile endeavor.

E-mail your interest to [info@naltea.org](mailto:info@naltea.org)—the elections will be held at the San Diego Conference.

## NALTEA Membership Update

Nikky Eisenhuth, Committee Chairperson  
Email: [membership@naltea.org](mailto:membership@naltea.org)

NALTEA welcomes the following new members.

Lindsey Research, Ltd. Carol D. Lindsey	Circleville, OH
SearchTec Mechelle Pagan	Columbia, SC
Malinda Griffin	Laurens, SC

NALTEA currently has 89 active members. The Public Relations Committee is launching its membership drive: Bring in Three, Get Yours Free! Lets all see what we can do to help the membership drive be a successful one.

You can help by spreading the word about NALTEA and encouraging your colleagues to join. The membership committee and the public relations committee are currently working on a joint membership drive to boost membership. If you know someone that may be interested in becoming a member please e-mail [membership@naltea.org](mailto:membership@naltea.org) and someone will contact them with a membership application.

**NALTEA Members can use their membership number as a coupon code for 50% off of Subscriptions to Source of Title, and 10% off of enhanced listings.**

\*\*\*\*\* **GET REGISTERED TODAY!** \*\*\*\*\*

**NALTEA 2007 Annual Conference**  
*Challenges Facing Abstractors Today*  
*January 12 –14, 2007*  
*Bahia Resort Hotel • San Diego, CA*

See [www.naltea.org](http://www.naltea.org) for details and a registration form.