



NALTEA

The National Association of Land
Title Examiners and Abstractors

Message from the President

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As I write this article, I cannot believe that the 2008 NALTEA Conference is over and that we are already well into this new year! It was a pleasure to see some familiar faces in New Orleans and I was equally pleased to meet some new attendees & members. I feel that this year's conference was one of the more interestingly informative ones to date, albeit ever evolving. It is a very good thing that we, abstractors, tend to be flexible to unforeseen change. I arrived in New Orleans late Friday afternoon to find a message from Jeff Schurman/ Director TAVMA, whom was to be our first speaker of the conference, expressing sincere regrets for not being able to make it at all, as he was stuck in Pittsburgh. Unfortunately, poor weather conditions across the county caused many attendees major headaches in making their way to New Orleans. For those that made it, I would say it was well worth their effort.

A very special thank you goes out to Jeanne Johnson/Jeanne Johnson & Associates for immediately jumping in, that very evening, and re-working her review class to cover the vacancy in our agenda. Thanks to the efforts of Wanda Steudel and Dave & Jan Vogeler, we were able to provide revised agendas to everyone that morning. As it turned out, Jeanne probably could have used even more time! Her review classes were well prepared and very informative, even

for the "old timers" in the room. As a matter-of-fact, everyone stayed for the entire class rather than breaking off into round table discussion. A tremendous amount of material was covered and everyone walked away with a bit more knowledge. That is a credit to Jeanne, her preparation and her wealth of knowledge.

All of our speakers were incredibly flexible with our ever-changing agenda and just went with the flow. Thank you Matt Monson, Esq. / Pajares & Schexnaydre, Debbie & Chuck Thibodeaux / TENSTAR Corporation and Eric Batz / TSS Software Corporation. The attendees were equally patient with me and I thank you all.

It was very exciting to be able to administer the NALTEA certification test. Once the tests were graded, NALTEA was very pleased to be able to offer designations under both the NALTEA Certified Abstractor and NALTEA Master Abstractor levels. Congratulations to all.

Looking forward to the year ahead, I see great strides being made in our association's growth. We welcome Jan Vogeler to our Board of Directors, Vikki Moffitt as our Vice President and Jill Kissell as our new Secretary. We are excited to get started on the many tasks that lay ahead. We hope to be able to offer more benefits to our membership this year and hope that you encourage others to join us. We hope to be able to serve you well.

Conference Report

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The National Association of Land Title Examiners and Abstractors held its annual conference in New Orleans, Louisiana from January 18 – January 20, 2008. Despite poor weather and harrowing traveling conditions, approximately 40 title professionals traveled to the Crescent City to attend the association's fourth annual conference where they discussed the challenges and issues they face in today's turbulent housing market. This year's conference was held at the Chateau LeMoynes, a historic hotel in the heart of the city's French quarter.

Mary Mitchel, the association's president, opened the first day's session by thanking all of the attendees for their presence and outlined some of the association's accomplishments over the past year and since its inception.

"We have seen interest from media and government officials that we hadn't gotten in previous years," Mitchel said. "It's up to us to continue to spread the word and get more people aware of NALTEA. I think we're breaking new ground."

In stressing the role of the association, Mitchel also pointed out that the Education Committee had completed the certification test and would be rolling it out to conference attendees who wished to take it on the second day of the conference.

After Mitchel's presentation, representatives of the association's various committees spoke to the group. They outlined various initiatives and programs that have been implemented or are in their development stages. One of the greatest developments the association had made was the finalization of its certification test, which offers two levels of certification for title examiners. These certifications, a basic certification designation and a master certification designation, are two industry firsts and the association believes that these designations will give their members greater credibility to clients seeking qualified examiners and abstractors.

The test, which was administered on the second day, was taken by 17 of the conference attendees and the results reflected the fact that examiners with greater experience scored higher than those who had been practicing for fewer years. When asked about the test, many of those who took it said it was challenging but representative of the information they should possess to do their jobs well. Lynn Hammett, the chair of the education committee, indicated that the association hopes to have national testing centers in place by the end of 2008 in order to allow more members to take the test than simply those who are able to attend the association's yearly conferences.

In addition to the certification test, the conference

attendees who were members of NALTEA voted upon the individuals they wanted to see join the board of the association. Three positions, one belonging to Tim Lunn, one belonging to Patrick Scott and one belonging to Hammett, were open. Jan Vogeler, the chairperson of the events committee, Arlene Nelson, a new member of NALTEA and a title examiner, and Hammett and Scott each said they would be interested in assuming the roles.

On the second day of the conference, members elected Vogeler, Hammett and Scott to fill the three open seats on the board. The board also selected Mitchel to retain her position as president; Vikki Moffitt to serve as vice president; Wanda Steudel to retain her role as treasurer; and Jill Kissell to serve as secretary for 2008.

Amid the standard business of elections and certification testing, several presenters also spoke at the conference. Due to weather issues, Jeffrey Schurman, the executive director of the Title Vendor Management Association, was unable to attend the conference. Thus, Jeanne Johnson, an experienced title examiner and an educational speaker, presented a detailed and insightful analysis of the art of abstracting and title examination. Johnson's session was highly enjoyed by all and very informative for those who planned on taking the certification test on the second day of the conference.

Eric Batz, a representative from TSS, also spoke at the conference about his company's product software that is built and devised specifically for professionals running both small and large offices in the title insurance business. TSS is a leading developer of software for real estate title, settlement, and abstracting companies, such as its flagship product TitleExpress, a title and settlement software system.

Matt Monson, an attorney with Pajares & Schexnaydre Attorneys-at-Law, a law firm in Louisiana, also spoke at the conference. Upon confronting a complex title insurance issue, Monson contacted NALTEA and, with the help of Robert Franco, the association's out-going vice president, was better able to understand and respond to his client's title dilemma.

Debbie and Chuck Thibodeaux, representing TENSTAR Corporation, also presented at the conference. They talked about the unique manner in which real estate and title insurance operate in their state because Louisiana is the only state in the country that practices under the terms and guidelines of Napoleonic Code. Chuck also spoke about the greater liberties and responsibilities that Notaries Public have in the state versus the roles they play in other states.

The conference, which coincided with the start of the city's Mardi Gras celebration, was widely heralded by attendees as one of the most informative and enjoyable events that the association has held to date. Although unseasonably cool temperatures blasted the city, those who attended the conference expressed

hope and many a renewed belief in the association and the direction it is taking in the industry on behalf of its members and the ideas they possess.

Public Relations Update

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The Public Relations Committee last met via conference call on Friday, February 8. The focus of the meeting was to prepare for our presence at the Mortgage Bankers Association's National Mortgage Servicing Conference & Expo. The conference is scheduled for February 26-29 in New Orleans. The American Legal & Financial Network (AFN) has generously provided NALTEA with booth space at the expo and a ticket to the event. Committee member Michael Lanin, of DRN Title Search, will represent NALTEA at the conference.

The committee is creating a color brochure to distribute at the MBA conference and at future events. The brochure is intended to increase NALTEA's visibility to the greater real estate finance industry and to convey the importance of the local, competent, abstractor in all real estate-related transactions.

Additional projects in progress include: Distributing a press release to industry associations, publications, government entities and bloggers touting NALTEA's certification program, and; joint efforts with the Membership Committee to reach as many individual abstractors as possible with information about NALTEA and an invitation to join. We anticipate a considerable boost in membership numbers as the membership drive progresses.

The PR Committee has a sizable agenda for 2008. More volunteers to serve on the committee will translate to faster realization of our short-term goals: Increased industry recognition and higher membership numbers. Those interested in serving on the committee may contact us at publicrelations@naltea.org.

Abstractors Certified by NALTEA

Pat Scott

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The National Association of Land Title Examiners and Abstractors (NALTEA) extends congratulations to

the first group of abstractors to attain certified status under NALTEA's recently unveiled certification process.

Since its inception in 2004, NALTEA has worked to devise a process to identify those industry professionals who merit recognition as being highly competent and knowledgeable in the field of title abstracting.

The initial requirement for certification, a test of general industry knowledge, was administered on January 20, 2008, at the association's conference in New Orleans, Louisiana.

NALTEA has provided for two levels of certification. The NALTEA Certified Abstractor (NCA) has earned a score of 75% to 89% on the initial exam, followed by continuing education requirements to maintain the designation. The NALTEA Master Abstractor (NMA) has earned 90% or greater on the initial exam, and will provide references and a commercial title search for verification of accuracy.

Approximately 63% of those taking the exam earned a passing grade. The numbers correspond closely to industry experience. Of those with four to eight years of experience, none passed the test. Of those with nine to fifteen years of experience, 50% passed the test. For those with 16 to 25 years of experience, 80% passed the test. Of those with over 25 years of experience, 100% passed the test.

NALTEA recognizes the following individuals as certified under the new process:

- **Tina Beltran, NCA** - Oklahoma Abstract Company of Lawton, Inc.
- **Robert Gallant, NMA** - Independent Title Services, Inc.
- **Lynn Hammett, NMA** - Capitol Title and Research Services, Inc.
- **Jeanne Johnson, NMA** - Jeanne Johnson & Associates
- **Jill Kissell, NMA** - A-1 Abstract & Research, LLC
- **Timothy Lunn, NCA**
- **Mary Mitchel, NMA** - AccuSearch Company
- **Vikki Moffitt, NCA** - Southern Abstract Services, LLC
- **Edward Rainen, NCA** - Rainen Law Office PC
- **Quannah Rhodes, NCA** - Infotrack Information Services, Inc.
- **Patricia Roberts, NCA** - Mid-Mississippi Abstract Co., LLC
- **Dave Vogeler, NCA** - Abstract Title Consultants
- **Carol Walker, NCA** - Walker and Walker

All of NALTEA's first Master Abstractors have over 20 years experience in the field of abstracting. Four of the five have been in the industry for more than 25 years.

Rob Gallant, NMA and **Jill Kissell, NMA**, each planted their roots in real estate over 25 years ago. Kissell began working with a real estate attorney in 1980 in Des Moines, Iowa, where she helped develop

Iowa's first probate manual. The manual was used as a reference tool for lawyers. Says Kissell about the test, "I found it incredibly difficult and was actually concerned that I might not even pass it. I was pleasantly surprised to learn that I had earned a Master designation..."

Gallant, a 29-year industry veteran, got his first taste of abstracting work at the age of 15. He remarks, "My father was a real estate attorney who ran a lot of real estate titles. I was cheap labor for him...". Gallant joined his current company, Independent Title Services, full time in 1979.

NALTEA's Education Committee - Lynn Hammett, Jeanne Johnson and Mary Mitchel - dedicated countless hours of research to assemble over 250 possible exam questions. The test consists of 100 questions chosen at random from those available. The committee is now working on making the test available to members at testing centers nation wide.

NALTEA has extended invitations to many title industry organizations to appoint a representative to rate the test and help to establish the NALTEA certification as the industry standard of abstracting excellence. More invitations are forthcoming to industry experts and government agencies. The association's Education Committee is continuing work on regional exams - anticipated as an evolution of the general knowledge test into a hybrid of universal and state-specific knowledge tests.

NALTEA was founded in June 2004 when several committed and dedicated title examiners and abstractors recognized the need for unifying the industry's members into their own national organization. NALTEA was the first organization developed to address the needs and concerns of those working in an often-overlooked arena of the real estate industry. Through its efforts, NALTEA members are improving their services and their products through extended marketability and improved industry standards. To learn more about NALTEA, visit the organization's Web site at <http://www.naltea.org/>.

Meet NALTEA's New Vice President

Vikki J. Moffitt is the newest Vice-President of NALTEA. She is the owner of Southern Abstract Services, LLC and has been involved with our organization since 2005. She began her career in real estate in Arkansas in 1986 as a REALTOR and holds licenses in Arkansas and Georgia presently. She has worked for local attorneys in Arkansas and Virginia prior to moving to Georgia. Vikki holds a Paralegal Degree, Business Law Degree and a Bachelor of Science Degree in Political Science-Pre Law.

Southern Abstract Services, LLC covers an area of over 293 counties and allows Vikki and her employees to see the vast differences among the states and counties in which they work. This was a contributing

factor for becoming a member of NATEA and supporting the goals and ideas of having an organization to support local abstractors. Noting that our profession is worthy of respect within the industry and that there are many avenues to pursue through a national organization such as NALTEA.

As vice president of NALTEA, Vikki plans to promote and encourage local abstractors and examiners to join forces with NALTEA to have a larger voice in the title industry. Vikki is one of the first members of NALTEA to hold the NCA designation having set for the exam in New Orleans this past January. She believes it is a positive step in a broad recognition among the title industry and will encourage professional standards nationwide. She will also be the board liaison with the publication/benefits committee. Doug Gallant is working extremely hard in preparing an e-newsletter which will also direct members to the NALTEA website.

Vikki lives in LaGrange, Georgia, with her husband Ronnie. They have a nineteen year old son Tyler who keeps the family busy and on the go with his college baseball team.

We hope you enjoy the new format of the NALTEA Newsletter. Please send any comments to benefits@NALTEA.org

Attention: The NALTEA Members' Only Section of the Web site has been updated. The 'Resources' page now contains a list of recommended reading that includes a list of books that may help with your preparation for the certification test. It also includes a link to an outline for a study guide.

You can request a password directly from the Web site and access the members' only information that is currently available. We will continue to update that section of the site as new information becomes available.