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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Local court reporter says live stenographers make happier attorneys and judges
“In this century, digital cannot keep up with steno”

RESTON, Va., Jan. 23, 2023 — Philip Harrelson, RMR, CRR, a member of the National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), the country’s leading organization representing stenographic court reporters, captioners, and legal videographers, in celebration of 2023 Court Reporting & Captioning Week, shared his journey into the court reporting profession and why he believes the use of digital measures in the courtroom cannot replace a live court reporter.

The weeklong event, themed ‘STENO always in my heart,’ brings court reporters, captioners, court reporting firms, schools, and others in the legal industry together to help highlight the many aspects that make court reporting and captioning a viable profession. Those aspects include a quicker entrance into the workforce since no four-year degree is required, good salaries, flexibility, interesting venues, and the increasing demand for more reporters and captioners to meet the growing number of employment opportunities available in the field.

The 2023 event marks the 11th year NCRA has hosted the celebration.

2023 Court Reporting & Captioning Week
February 4-11

NCRA.org/Awareness | DiscoverSteno.org

Harrelson, from Madison, Wis., has been a stenographic court reporter nearly 10 years, and currently works for the U.S. District Court for the Western District Court of Wisconsin. He holds the nationally recognized professional

certifications of Registered Merit Reporter (RMR) and Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR). He earned his court reporting degree from the Madison Area Technical College (MATC) now called Madison College.



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Despite years of hearing that stenographic court reporters and their methods are outdated, Harrelson said that in today's current climate, nothing can replace the value and accuracy of a live court reporter capturing the record, especially the use of digital methods to record the record.

"I'm not going to say 'never.' I mean, in the year 2150, who knows what kind of freaky, Star Wars-like sci-fi nonsense there will be around. But right now, in this century, digital just cannot keep up with a steno," he said.

"As a stenographic court reporter, you're in the room; you're interrupting and clarifying things for the record; you're making notes on names to get spellings for; you're live interpreting mumbles, broken English, stammering, misspeaking – all of those subtle nuances of human speech that can take experience to fully understand. And all of that is being written down live. So as soon as the hearing is over, you already have it all written down, saving hours and hours and hours of tedious typing that a non-steno or non-voice writer would have to do," he added.

"This means faster transcript output, which means happier attorneys, which means happier judges. Attorneys and judges are our best advocates, and I don't think very many of either are interested in slowing down the whole process. I've been hearing I'm going to be replaced with a tape recorder for over 10 years. Hasn't happened yet. Won't happen any time soon," he noted.

Harrelson said he learned about the court reporting profession from his mother who told him about the captioning program they offered at MATC. As it turned out, the college did not offer a captioning anymore, only a judicial reporting program, which he said very much piqued his interest.

"I loved writing on my machine. I still do. And that combined with being in the courtroom and seeing court proceedings play out – I found it all very interesting and fun. I loved the challenge of it all, and getting paid to do it is really just the icing on the cake," he said.

"This career has allowed me to achieve so many life goals – some way earlier than I ever thought possible – and that's due in large part to great financial opportunities. The second is getting the chance to really see the judicial side of things play out in front of you. You really gain a lot of insight into how the judicial system truly works. And third is absolutely the camaraderie amongst colleges and peers. I have made so many great friends through this career," Harrelson added.

He noted that while a lot of hard work and sacrifice goes into getting through school and getting to where you want to be in your career, it was the best thing he ever could have done for himself and his family.



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“I love my job. Even after all this time, I still love my job, and I look forward to going to work – maybe not every day, let’s be honest – but I love my job, and I’m proud of the work that I put into it. There are not many careers that I can think of that offer the kinds of opportunities court reporting do,” he added.

The court reporting and captioning professions offer viable career choices that do not require a four-year college degree and yet offer good salaries, flexible schedules, and interesting venues. There is currently an increasing demand for more reporters and captioners to meet the growing number of employment opportunities available nationwide and abroad. Court reporters and captioners rely on the latest in technology to use stenographic machines to capture the spoken word and translate it into written text in real time. These professionals work both in and out of the courtroom recording legal cases and depositions, providing live captioning of events, and assisting members of the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities with gaining access to information, entertainment, educational opportunities, and more.

To arrange an interview with a working court reporter or captioner, or to learn more about the lucrative and flexible court reporting or captioning professions and the many job opportunities currently available, contact pr@ncra.org.

[About NCRA](#)

The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA) has been internationally recognized for promoting excellence among those who capture and convert the spoken word to text for more than 100 years. NCRA is committed to supporting its more than 12,000 members in achieving the highest level of professional expertise with educational opportunities and industry-recognized court reporting, educator, and videographer certification programs. NCRA impacts legislative issues and the global marketplace through its actively involved membership.

Forbes has named court reporting as one of the best career options that do not require a traditional four-year degree. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the court reporting field is expected to be one of the fastest areas of projected employment growth across all occupations. According to 247/WallSt.com, the court reporting profession ranks sixth out of 25 careers with the lowest unemployment rate, just 0.7 percent. Career information about the court reporting profession—one of the leading career options that do not require a traditional four-year degree—can be found at NCRA DiscoverSteno.org.