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NCRA member shares her career journey for 2023 Court Reporting & Captioning Week:
For local CART provider and freelance court reporter, it's an adventure every day

RESTON, Va., Jan. 25, 2023 — Renee Russo, RPR, CRR, is a CART* captioner from Pompton Plains, N.J., and 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 NCRA’s 2023 Court Reporting & Captioning Week, and in an effort to spread the word about this viable, flexible, and lucrative career path, Russo is sharing her story about the places her career has taken her.

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.

NCRA 2023 Court Reporting & Captioning Week
February 4-11
NCRA.org/Awareness | DiscoverSteno.org

Russo, who holds the nationally recognized professional certifications of Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) and Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR), has been a court reporter since 1986. In 1991, she began working as a



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CART (Communication Access Realtime Translation) captioner and says this experience has led to some of her most memorable jobs sites, including: The United Nations, a six-hour wedding, a comedy club, the State of the City address for New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, and a technical college where she had to leave her machine behind during a bomb scare.

“Our profession is an adventure every day,” Russo said. “Being prepared, ready, and vigilant are the qualities we need for success and character-building. Satisfaction is the reward. I love what I do. The valuable knowledge and life experiences I have been given and shared with other reporters and mentoring students. Giving back is how we all improve every day. Much gratitude to this profession. Give time. We are all human. Enjoy, and go for it!”

Russo said she first learned about the stenographic court reporting and captioning profession during a presentation from two court reporting schools in her high school typing class. She said the school representatives talked about how court reporting was a lucrative and independent contractor career.

“I chose the school furthest from my home because they seemed more progressive: ‘computer compatible’ theory. A high school friend and I carpoled to school every day. We had a business dress code four days per week and Fridays were dress-down days. Nail clipper on the wall at school to remind us to keep our nails short to write better,” she added.

As for providing captions for the State of the City address for New York Mayor Bill de Blasio, Russo said she was both honored and excited – and needed to breathe.

“There were two CART providers, which I did not know until arrival: One for display, one for captioned transcript online. We arrived two hours early to go through security and set up. I also carried my backup equipment into the theatre. At stage right was a very small space for us to work in. Audio was not the best. We shared information to be consistent. When the event was over, she left, and I worked on my transcript for the final to be turned in. Stressful but accomplished,” she recalled.

Russo said most of her assignments were given to her by her mentor, the founder of CART in New Jersey, NCRA member Woody Waga, FAPR, RMR, CRR, who is now retired. One such assignment was an Indian wedding that lasted for six hours. “It was a beautiful, large, celebratory event. Red roses and gold everywhere. Dress changes by the bride. I moved my equipment from vows to toast. It was an amazing experience.”

Another memorable assignment she cited was at Caroline’s on Broadway comedy club in New York. “Again, very small venue, difficult tech setup, and fun. Great to laugh at work — unlike while writing as a court reporter with no facial expressions,” she noted.



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Other assignments that stick in her mind as not-so-fun include a bomb scare while on a job at a technical college many, many years ago. Russo said everyone had to evacuate, and she could not take my equipment with her. When she returned to the classroom her computer was gone.

There was also the job working in a private high school where the student she was providing CART for was embarrassed because she had to follow him to class. “It was difficult for me moving my equipment in small, crowded hallways every 35 minutes through the day, and my computer received a virus from student emails.”

To encourage others to join the profession she loves so much, Russo said she would advise them to understand that the profession is a business, and they should learn about the business end as much as the skills needed to succeed.

“CART and court reporting are almost two polar opposites, but our writing skill keeps them together. Our profession is an adventure every day. Being prepared, ready, and vigilant are the qualities we need for success and character-building, and satisfaction is the reward,” she 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.

**Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) converts the spoken word into instant text. This service is generally for hard of hearing persons who are not familiar with American Sign Language (ASL) and who need spoken words translated into printed English in a realtime format.*

CART Captioners work in classrooms, at performances, for seminars or corporate presentations. The realtime text can be shown on numerous state-of-the-art display devices, including laptop screen, television screen, LCD projection screen, or LED message display signs. Some people have even transmitted realtime feeds to the newest technologies, including Google Glasses. These



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display options offer the ultimate in flexibility, from a laptop for a single student to a large LED display sign for thousands at a live performance.

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.