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Heidi C. Thomas honored with NCRA 2023 Distinguished Service Award
A captioner from Kennesaw, Ga., becomes 62nd to earn the national award

RESTON, Va., July 31, 2023 — The National Court Reporters Association (NCRA), the country's leading organization representing stenographic court reporters, captioners, and legal videographers, today bestowed its highest honor, the 2023 Distinguished Service Award (DSA), on Heidi C. Thomas, FAPR, RDR, CRR, CRC, a captioner and CART provider from Kennesaw, Ga. Thomas was honored at a special awards ceremony held at the 2023 NCRA Conference & Expo taking place July 27-30, at the Hyatt Regency Houston Downtown in Houston, Texas.

The NCRA DSA recognizes the distinguished work and service by an individual member for the benefit of the court reporting and captioning professions, including service to NCRA as a member, a committee member, a director, or an officer of the Association. Other displays of distinguished work include contributing to the *JCR*, the official membership magazine, service to a state or local court reporting association, or service in the field of public relations or public affairs. Award winners are nominated by their peers and are recognized each year at the NCRA Conference & Expo.

Thomas has been a court reporter since 1978, and a broadcast and CART captioner since 1989. She holds the nationally recognized professional certifications of Registered Diplomate Reporter (RDR), Certified Realtime Reporter (CRR), and Certified Realtime Captioner (CRC). She is also a Fellow of the Academy of Professional Reporters (FAPR).

She provides onsite and remote CART and broadcast captioning for local, state, regional, national, and international conferences, conventions, and seminars, as well as in classroom and business settings.

At the national level, Thomas is a past NCRA Director. She also served for six years on the NCRA Realtime Certification Committee, which developed the Certified CART Provider (CCP) and Certified Broadcast Captioner (CBC) certifications. She was also part of the team that developed the Certified Realtime Captioner (CRC) certification, which combined the CBC and CCP. Thomas

CONTACT:
Annemarie Roketenetz
aroketenetz@ncra.org
703-969-6363

National Court Reporters Association
12355 Sunrise Valley Drive, Suite 610
Reston, VA 20191-3492

Tel: 703-556-6272 • Fax: 703-391-0629
800-272-NCRA (6272) • *NCRA.org*

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also served as a member of the NCRA Captioning Regulation and Captioning Committees, the 10X10 Campaign Council, the Captioning Community of Interest, the CART Community of Interest, and the CART Ethics Committee. She has also served on NCRA's Communications & Outreach Board Subcommittee, the Contests, Realtime Certification, and Nominating Committees, and the Student Community of Interest. Since 2008, she has been a member of NCRA's Council of the Academy of Professional Reporters (CAPR), which deals with certification and education issues, and has served for many years on the faculty/training staff of NCRA.

At the state level, Thomas is a former Director and past Secretary of the Georgia Shorthand Reporters Association (GSRA), and former member of the Board of Court Reporting for the State of Georgia. She has also served as a presenter at the national and at the state level.

Among her career highlights have been captioning the 2013 Visit of his Holiness the XID Dalali Lama in Lithuania, the 1996 Paralympics, the 2000 Summer Olympics, and conferences in nearly a dozen countries.

Thomas was nominated for the 2023 NCRA DSA by a number of her peers, including Lisa Johnston, RMR, CRR, CRC, a CART captioner from Melbourne, Fla. Johnston wrote in her nomination application that Thomas is always willing to share what she knows with other captioners for the betterment of the assignment and the client. "Heidi deserves the DSA because she gives tirelessly of herself, she wants the deaf and hard-of-hearing community to have the best possible quality captions, and really cares about what she does," Johnston said.

"Heidi is well-known within NCRA and around her state association for her service and volunteerism," added Kim Falgiani, RDR, CRC, CRR, a CART and broadcast captioner from Warren, Ohio, who also nominated Thomas for the Award. "Mentoring and training new court reporters, CART providers, and captioners is a necessary task for the continuation of our profession. Heidi has never hesitated to step up and contribute to that development and training of our next generation, " she added.

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.

If you're looking for a career that is on the cutting edge of technology, offers the opportunity for work at home or abroad, like to write, enjoy helping others, and are fast with your fingers, then the fields of court reporting and captioning are careers you can explore at *NCRA/discoversteno.org.*

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The NCRA A to Z® Intro to Steno Machine Shorthand program, a free online six-week introductory course, lets participants see if a career in court reporting or captioning would be a good choice for them. The program is an introduction to stenographic theory and provides participants with the opportunity to learn the basics of writing on a steno machine. There is no charge to take the course, but participants are required to have access to a steno machine or an iPad they can use to download the iStenoPad app.

To arrange an interview with a working court reporter, captioner, legal videographer, or a current court reporting student, 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. NCRA's STRONG Committee promotes stenographic captioning and court reporting as the best means to maintain the accuracy of the record. One of its missions is to combat false proclamations that digital and automatic speech recognition (ASR) methods of capturing the spoken word are equal to superior to stenographic means and/or that these methods are less expensive.

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.