

2019 DISTINGUISHED SERVICE AWARD
MISSOURI COURT REPORTERS ASSOCIATION

JENNIFER FATH DUNN

Hello, and Good Evening to all!

On behalf of the MCRA Distinguished Service Award Committee, I am so honored to be standing up here announcing this year's 2019 Distinguished Service Award Honoree.

Where do I begin telling you about this year's Designee? Well, our Designee was born to wonderful parents in Missouri. This couple had been blessed with one darling daughter, and I'm assuming they didn't want her to be an only child. Two years later, another blessing. A beautiful, vivacious sibling. By the way, I've seen some pics and this is one beautiful family!!

The Designee's first steps toward an illustrious court reporting career started at Meramac Community College in '91 where I am told she always sat in the front of the class. While in court reporting school, our Designee would participate in extra "study sessions." These "study sessions" were very arduous and grueling since they were held at the built-in pool of a very hard-working court reporter while this reporter was out taking depositions.

The Designee's participation in MCRA started at the same time as her court reporting career in the early '90s and is still strong, passionate and ongoing today.

Some of you might be too young to remember the much publicized OJ trial with Judge Ito. Our Designee, along with a fellow court reporter, participated as a "Dancing Ito" when MCRA at this time put on skits at convention.

After completing the court reporting curriculum at Meramec College, in 1994, this Designee embarked into a court reporting career, first as a freelance court reporter in St. Louis with the Gore Perry Firm. From Gore Perry the Designee took a position as an official and was assigned to St. Louis City Courts to work with the Honorable Judge Godfrey, and continued to work as an official for the Honorable Julian Bush for 10 years.

In 2004 this Designee left St. Louis City to further her court reporting career and work with the Honorable John Kintz in St. Louis County until September 2010. In November 2010, Judge Thea Sherry was appointed and this Designee was the official court reporter until August 2011.

In August 2011 this Designee decided to go back and work in St. Louis City for the Honorable Rex Burlison. As the official court reporter of this hard working division, the Designee provided daily copy trials with real time. On a daily basis, she would work in trial all day, ~~work~~ be up until 2 or 3 a.m. to provide the attorneys their transcripts, and be back in court on the record at 8 a.m. to start all over again with great vitality.

When I spoke to the Honorable Rex Burlison he stated: "My Official Reporter brightens the day. Always dedicated to the task. I am worry-free because I know she dedicates herself to the task." Another great attribute Judge Burlison stated, "Works hard but is also ready to have fun! I appreciate how "Great" she is, and I realize this when she's not there doing the job."

In the repertoire of real time and daily copy trials, there have been 6 to 8 week long talc powder cases, a 4-week discrimination trial, a daily copy

trial with Monsanto, and recently finished a -- rather short -- 2-week daily copy/real time asbestos trial.

This year's Designee's involvement with NCRA and MCRA is as indistinguishable and parallel to her professional career. Her involvement has spanned and continued from the early '90s up to today.

In 1998, this Designee held the position of Secretary on the MCRA Board, became vice-president in 1999, president-elect in 2000, and President in 2001, and then past-president in 2002.

During this Designee's presidency the MCRA convention was to be held September 14th through 16th, 2001. This was just mere days after 9/11 and the attack on our country. We were all paralyzed, dazed and confused from these horrific events. The very hard decision was made to carry on, and MCRA did just that. Of those who attended this convention, myself included, we were all personally amazed and moved by this Designee's strength. I quote Linda Dattilo: "This Designee was our President and was grace personified. She presided over our convention with a sympathetic and empathetic willingness. We took our cue from her." Let me just also mention she was pregnant and ready to give birth in October of 2001.

Our Designee has been involved in many, many MCRA Committees:

Student Affairs Committee - Where this Designee created the Mentoring Program and Student Sponsorship program, so court reporting students can attend MCRA convention with no cost to them.

Fundraising Committee - Working concession at Cardinal games for Region I MCRA. She has helped plan many, many conventions which is sometimes a thankless, crazy job.

PR Committee – She has attended several Bench/Bar conferences representing MCRA speaking to attorneys on the importance of court reporting and how we're an integral part to legal profession and record.

Taught machine shorthand at Meramec College for 2 years. Represents our profession of court reporting at career fairs.

The most recent passionate act in the furtherance of this profound profession of court reporting, with NCRA and fellow colleagues has been instrumental - starting the A to Z Steno program at St. Charles Community College. In fact, this fall, the community college is starting a court reporting program.

Legislative Committee, where our Designee has traveled to Jeff City to testify many, many times. Was very instrumental in the passage of Rule 14 for mandatory certification of all court reporters in the State of Missouri. Again, another very, very crucial concern for our profession.

During this year's 2019 Court Reporter & Captioning week our Designee, along with other court reporters from across the state, presented real-time reporting to our State representatives and their assistants in the Rotunda.

During past years where there were severe budgetary issues that arose which affected everyone across the State, including court reporters, this Designee participated, along with MCRA's President Faith Olliges, in making many tireless trips to Jefferson City where they would meet with Greg Linhares who at the time was the head of OSCA. The Designee helped establish talking points and strategies to combat the projected job cuts, which could possibly affect the court reporters. At one crucial time during the budgetary crisis this Designee along with another MCRA member recommended to the MCRA Board to consider changing a long-time lobbyist to our current lobbyist. This suggestion and the Board's decision was a tremendous positive step for official court reporters.

When speaking to colleague and friend Tina Givens, this is what she had to say about this year's Designee: "She pushes me to be a better reporter." "She makes me be a better court reporter." "She always tell me, "Yes, we can." She's, "the Ying to my Yang" "She is amazing."

This year's Designee has also been described as an extrovert, the life of the party, gregarious. "She is compassionate about her profession and promoting the future of court reporting."

Along with all of these professional accomplishments, all the daily copy trials, MCRA involvement and participation, the most significant to this Designee is the wonderful, marvelous family she has. She's been married to the man of her dreams and a professional colleague since May of 2000. Together they have two beautiful, talented daughters, Payton and Lauren.

The Designee is always there with love and support for her talented daughter Payton, who is a championship swimmer. You will find the Designee and her hubby not only at swim meets in Missouri but all over the country.

Wait, when not at a swim meet, you can catch this Designee and hubby at the Fabulous Fox Theater or many of the theaters throughout watching her younger, beautiful, talented daughter Lauren singing or acting.

MCRA and honored guests, will you all now please rise and give applause to Jennifer Fath Dunn, as we present her with the 2019 Missouri Court Reporters Association Distinguished Service Award.

Respectfully submitted,
Rozann Brancato, RPR, CCR