

Certification Matters

Interview with Tom Garner Award Recipient, Kay Redburn

By TBLS Staff



On February 14, Kay Redburn was recognized with the 2014 Tom Garner Award. Established in 2002, the Tom Garner Award is presented annually to a volunteer who has made significant contributions to TBLS' Board Certification program. TBLS recently interviewed Redburn to get her thoughts on being honored with the award and the paralegal Board Certification program. Certification Matters is proud to present the following Q&A.



TBLS: What was it like receiving the Tom Garner Award?

Redburn: Receiving the Tom Garner Award is the highlight of my 30-year career. When TBLS Executive Director Gary McNeil told me I was this year's recipient, I became speechless, which doesn't happen often. I have volunteered with TBLS since the paralegal Board Certification program was established 20 years ago and I appreciate the dedication and commitment of everyone at TBLS and their hard work to grow the program. Without their efforts, and the efforts of all of the other volunteers, we wouldn't be able to support the concept of Board Certification for paralegals today.

TBLS: Describe your experience as a Board Certified paralegal.

Redburn: I've been Board Certified in Family Law for 10 years, and was part of the original exam committee that wrote and graded the first paralegal certification test in Family Law. I was on that committee from 1994 to 2000 but was required to step down from the committee for three years before I was eligible to take the exam myself. I passed the exam in 2003 and am proud to still be Board Certified today.

TBLS: What drove you to be part of the paralegal Board Certification program?

Redburn: I was on the State Bar of Texas' Standing Committee on Paralegals when the whole idea formed. When the test became a reality, I jumped at the chance to help write and grade the exam in Family Law. Currently in Texas, there is





Certification Matters

no minimum standard to be employed as a paralegal, other than you must work under the direct supervision of a licensed attorney. Attorneys are free to classify any non-lawyer employee as a paralegal without regard to education or experience.

Board Certification demonstrates advanced competency. Paralegals looking for a job can tell employers they are Board Certified and it instantly lends credibility to their abilities and experiences. Attorneys recognize what Board Certification means because Board Certified attorneys had to go through a similar rigorous process administered by TBLS. Being Board Certified takes time, commitment and hard work. It's not an exam that one can just walk in and take without extensive preparation.



TBLS: What does the TBLS anniversary of paralegal Board Certification mean to you?

Redburn: I am proud and pleased that this program has been around and successful for the last 20 years. At first we didn't know how successful it was going to be and if we were going to have continued interest from the paralegal community. We took a gamble, and in return it demonstrated its value to the legal industry and public.

Board Certification benefits the public as it serves as a guideline to people seeking the services of an attorney and the legal team. It's a personal goal of mine to help in whatever way I can to promote Board Certification for paralegals. One of the joys of this process is working with TBLS. Throughout my profession, I've had the honor to work with a lot of professional organizations, but TBLS is a cut above. They are committed, fun, and willing to do what it takes to make the program a success. The whole concept is something I wanted to be involved with from the beginning, and it's heartwarming to see that after 20 years, it's still going strong.

TBLS: What are your thoughts on TBLS launching a new website for paralegal certification?

Redburn: Easy access to information is important to paralegals, and this website will not only provide that, but will also help Board Certified paralegals brand themselves. In addition, it'll be easier for firms and attorneys to identify qualified paralegals. The more paralegals can market their Board Certification, the better. I can't wait for the website to launch!

TBLS PARALEGAL BOARD CERTIFICATION FILING PERIOD IS OPEN – FILING DEADLINE IS MAY 12, 2014.

This year's certification applications are currently available. Please visit "[Paralegal Certification](#)" to request a form in one of the following Paralegal Specialty Areas: Bankruptcy, Civil Trial, Personal Injury Trial, Family, Estate Planning & Probate, and Real Estate. Contact TBLS' Denise Schumann at Denise.Schumann@Texasbar.com with any inquiries.

