

Review: A Student Rates the NCRA Convention

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by [April Frederick](#)

From seminars about live captioning Coachella to an inspiring keynote speech from Erin Brockovich; from high tea with professional speakers to speed dating with working reporters; from a Diamonds and Denim Gala to casual drinks at the hotel bar— every single minute of the conference was informative, enriching, fun, and inspiring.

My journey to becoming a court reporter began about two years ago. After getting the all-clear from my oncologist to return to work, and my daughter entering school full-time, it was time for me to decide what I wanted to do with my free time and second lease on life. I usually generate a chuckle when I tell the story of how I decided on the career of court reporting. Having pursued a degree in art after graduating from high school, I knew I would have to go back to school for something practical if I wanted to have a good-paying job. My second passion was always the criminal justice system and, to make a long story short, my husband brought up the idea of becoming a sketch artist in the courtroom. I quickly dismissed that idea but felt he may have been on to something. It was his next suggestion that changed my life. "What about becoming one of those "typic" people?" The lightbulb immediately came on and I knew he had hit the nail on the head.



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I am fortunate enough to have been able to attend my theory classes in a brick-and-mortar school, and it was my being on campus that opened the door to forming personal relationships with the faculty and my classmates. It drew me into becoming involved with my school's Captioning and Court Reporting (CCR) Club. The main purpose of our club is to facilitate students in attending professional enrichment events. It was through the CCR Club that I first learned about Ohio Court Reporters Association (OCRA) and NCRA conferences. I attended the OCRA conference, which was conveniently located near where I live in Parma, Ohio, in March of this year. The experience was invaluable to me and many of the working reporters I was networking with [there](#) suggested I attend the NCRA conference this year. I knew I would do whatever it took to attend. Miraculously, the conference was scheduled during my break from school and before my kids had to be back in their school. The timing was perfect, and the flight was booked.

The day I left for Denver, I was excited and nervous. I was not sure how different it would be as a student attending a national conference as opposed to a local one. Also, when I attended my state conference, I was one of many students from my school attending. This time, I was all by myself. I knew I had two faculty members attending, but I also knew they had educator seminars to attend, and I would have to rely on myself to navigate the convention center and socialize with strangers. In other words, I had to put my big girl pants on.

As soon as I stepped into the welcome area of the convention, I was greeted by a working reporter who exclaimed, "Yay! Another student!" I was whisked over to the registration table, all my nerves had vanished, and I felt completely at home. I cannot tell you how many professionals I engaged with during my three days at the convention, but I can tell you that I felt complete support and acceptance from everyone I had the pleasure of meeting. I have so many business cards that I need to invest in a Rolodex to fit them all.

In addition to having been accepted by the working professionals and attending seminars geared more toward them, I also attended ones geared strictly for students. The student events were some of my favorites because of the gracious and open nature of the speakers at those events. It also allowed me to meet other students from all over the United States and abroad and feel comfort in being able to talk to someone who can relate, right now, to what I am going through with school.