

March 2018 Spotlight Member Elena Schneider, CCLS

Our March Spotlight Member is our very own, Elena Schneider, CCLS. Let me tell you a little bit about her. Elena grew up in the small Southeastern Arizona town of Sierra Vista. She said it was a great place to grow up and it was there that she experienced her first introduction to the law. You see, as a teenager in high school Elena broke the law – yes, that’s right – Elena broke a law! She violated the curfew law, as she did not even know her town had a curfew! The town of Sierra Vista does not permit anyone under the age of 16 to be out at night past 10 p.m. Elena’s second brush of the law was when she was rounded up with several other classmates when they caught in the act of underage drinking. What followed became the most memorable moment in her and is likely what shaped her to be the proud rule-follower that she is now. All of her classmates were brought in front of the local judge, Judge Anderson, to plead to the charge of “consumption of alcohol by a minor.” Elena said she remembers the judge explaining that you could plead guilty, not guilty, or “no contest.” She was curious as to what “no contest” meant...as she had never heard that term! When she asked her mother, she nudged her and her only reply was, “You’re pleading guilty!” – which she promptly did. Thank goodness, the judge was lenient and only gave them a small fine and required them to attend a class to learn about the ills of alcohol consumption. That experience definitely molded Elena to follow the straight and narrow – looking back; she said she thinks that really was the beginning of her interest in the legal field.

Elena shared that she has always been very independent, but also very pragmatic. She knew she needed to get a job but she also desired something with room to grow and move up. After a brief stint as an answering service operator, she landed a job with Farmers Insurance, working in their claims department. After 8 years of hard work and mastering every position in the claims office, Elena became the secretary to the Branch Manager. One day she attended a career path seminar at the company’s regional office and discovered that Farmers also had in-house counsel litigation legal offices. The next day, she called the local legal office to ask what exactly a legal secretary does. They explained the duties, told her they had an opening, and asked if she would like to come in for an interview. Elena went to the interview later that week and was offered the job! She accepted and thus began her legal career and she has never looked back.

When asked what motivates her, Elena responded that it is her need to feel useful and to know that she is contributing in a positive way. She puts in a hard day’s work, and then goes home to relax and enjoy life. Elena is passionate about helping people and teaching them new things and sharing her experience. She likes being the support to her attorneys and co-workers and anticipating her attorney’s needs. She feels like she has found the right fit for her skill set and legal work has been extremely enjoyable for her over the years.

What is it like to walk in Elena’s shoes for one workday? To start, Elena’s workday is anything but typical. She likens it to what Forrest Gump’s mom said about life...like a box of chocolates - Elena never knows what she is going to get. It is exactly that variety and fast-paced environment of civil litigation that she really enjoys. Give her a deadline and she will get it done!

For Elena, personally, she said being a member of SCCoLPA has been a positive experience. She has enjoyed volunteering, working with, and getting to know so many wonderful colleagues and friends. Professionally, Elena would say that serving on the board and being more visible in the legal community has been one of the biggest benefits. Her employer has been supportive of her service to the organization and they understand the benefits of being part of a professional association, especially the educational benefits that we receive. In addition to those daily challenges she faces at work, she would say one of the biggest benefits about being a member of SCCoLPA is knowing that there is a vast community of colleagues out there across the state that she can reach out to if she needs help or information or direction, and they are always happy to help. To her, those friendships and connections are priceless.

Please congratulate Elena Schneider, CCLS on being our March Spotlight Member!