



THE SURGICAL ASSISTANT

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2015 ASA NATIONAL ELECTIONS

Beginning September 1, 2015, ASA active members (whose membership does not expire before October 4, 2015), will be able to cast their ballots for the offices of president, vice president, treasurer and two board of director positions.

For the first time, voting will be held online and accessed through the ASA website using the active member's member number to confirm voting eligibility.

Previously, candidates have been elected through live ballot at the ASA yearly meetings. While the process was lively and energetic, too many

ASA members were not able to have their voices heard. Last year at the ASA Annual Meeting in Denver, an amendment to the bylaws was passed enabling voting to move to an online platform. At the same time, another amendment was adopted that moved the ASA Annual Meeting to its own independent schedule and also extended the terms of office of the president, vice president and treasurer and two directors to accommodate fall elections.

Another first was the development of the ASA Nomination and Leadership

continued on page 2...

CANDIDATE QUESTIONS (responses posted online)

QUESTION #1: Should the surgical assisting associations unify to promote their career field and provide a unified voice for legislature?

QUESTION #2: Do we need a standard of educational requirements as an association?

QUESTION #3: What is an acceptable level of commitment to the Association to be a representative on the Board for the Association?

QUESTION #4: How do you handle conflict when you are challenged during a board meeting or general business meeting, and how would you defuse this issue?

QUESTION #5: Should a candidate sitting for the surgical assistant examination be required to attend a nationally accredited program?



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- Export journal entries using the portal to create billing documents
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...continued from page 1

Committee. ASA is very grateful to Jeff Bidwell, CSFA, CSA, chair; Robert Bush, CSFA; Deborah Klaudt, CSFA and Fred Schaefer, CSFA-OS for their commitment and creativity. This committee was tasked with talking with ASA members to encourage them to consider stepping forward to run for office or volunteering to serve on a committee. This committee also reviewed prospective candidates and developed five candidate questions that each would answer (see side bar).

All candidates have cleared the ASA Credentials Committee and have been declared eligible to run for their announced offices.

Because voting will occur online and opens before the Nashville meeting, each candidate was requested to create their own video that would help personalize them



2015 ASA Candidates for Office

Once you have cast your ballot, your vote cannot be changed.

Please sign in

Email address
Password
Sign In

to their voting audience. These videos are posted on the individual candidate pages below their candidate statements. Please "meet" each candidate and get to know your future leaders.

Since Facebook is such an integral component of the ASA community, the ASA leadership is developing a new group exclusively for ASA members. This page will focus on members asking questions of the ASA candidates and their responses. Access to the group will be open for one week only to ASA active members and is anticipated to be available in August.

ASA is hoping that members will become engaged and active in the voting process—this organization wants to hear your voices!



EARN UP TO 13.75 CONTINUING EDUCATION CREDITS AT THE 2015 ASA ANNUAL MEETING

OCTOBER 2-3, 2015

HOLIDAY INN VANDERBILT

ALL CSTs, CSFAs, CSAs AND SA-Cs ARE INVITED.

ASA MEETING AGENDA

FRIDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2015

7–11 AM or NOON–4 PM (choose one) **4 CEs**

Live Animal Laparoscopic Lab

(with support from Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting and Covidien/Medtronic)

12 Participants Maximum Each Session

Agenda:

This course is designed for beginning and experience practitioners to gain a better understanding of laparoscopic assisting. We will be utilizing various laparoscopic staplers, suturing devices, and instrumentation while performing surgical procedures on live animals.

ASA dues paying members have registration priority until August 1.

Must register for the Nashville meeting. Participants should wear scrubs.

NOON–4 PM CSFA Exam Prep Workshop

Chris Keegan, CST, MS, and ASA Board Members

Agenda:

- I. Introductions and Instructions
- II. Learning Styles
 - A. Learning style quiz results
 - B. How to study and fit your style
- III. The CSFA Exam
 - A. Basic components
 - B. How it's developed
 - C. Test taking strategies
- IV. Review of the basics
 - A. Medical Terminology
 - B. Pharmacology/Micro
 - C. Surgical Anatomy
- V. Practice Exam

5:15–6:15 PM **ASA Business Session**

6:30–7:45 PM **Keynote Address** **1.25 CEs**

7:45–9 PM **Reception**

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2015

7:45–8 AM **Welcome** **8.5 CEs**

8–9:50 AM

Tell Me Something I Don't Know

ASA Board Members and Participants Breakouts

10–11:25 AM

How the CMS Order Entry Rule Could Impact the Surgical Assisting Profession

Donald A Balasa, JD, MBA

Chief Executive Officer, Legal Counsel

American Association of Medical Assistants

11:25 AM–NOON **ASA Business Session 2**

NOON–1 PM

Lunch (sponsored by NBSTSA)



1–1:50 PM **Guidelines for Legal Depositions**

Catherine Sparkman, JD

2–2:50 PM **Traveling as a Surgical Assistant**

Mark Polson, CSA

3–3:50 PM **Tennessee Legislative Update**

Holly McDaniel

4:10–5 PM **Pearls of Billing**

David Bartczak, CSA, OPA-C, LSA

5–5:50 PM **Caring for the Caretaker**

Bill Price, SA-C

Attendance is limited to 150. Confirmation will be emailed at least 20 days prior to the meeting. Onsite registration will be available on a space-available basis. All cancellations must be received in writing by October 1, 2015. **Accommodations:** 2613 West End Avenue, Nashville, Tennessee 37203. 615-327-4707. Refer to the code ASU to obtain the discounted rate. **Rates:** \$165/night for Wednesday and Thursday; \$199/night for Friday and Saturday, single or double occupancy. **Reservations deadline** is August 23, 2015. Room block is limited.

2015 ASA ANNUAL MEETING FEES (Includes Friday reception and keynote, Saturday Ed sessions and lunch).

Mail to: ASA, 6 W Dry Creek Cir, Ste 200, Littleton, CO 80120, 303-694-9130, www.surgicalassistant.org

Date _____ Member/Cert No. _____

Name (please print) _____

Circle title: CST CSFA CSA SA-C Other

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home phone _____

Work phone _____

Email _____

Credit card billing address (if same as above, leave blank)

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

2015 ASA Nashville Meeting	ASA Member:	\$275
	ASA Student* Member:	\$175
	Nonmember:	\$300

Live Animal Laparoscopic Lab (choose one)

Note: Labs are held at the Meridian Institute of Surgical Assisting, 1507 County Hospital Road, Nashville, 37128. Transportation is included.

<input type="checkbox"/> Morning: 7–11 am	ASA Member:	\$375
<input type="checkbox"/> Afternoon: Noon–4 pm	Nonmember:	\$400

ASA dues paying members have priority registration until August 1. Nonmember registration after August 1.

CSFA Exam Prep Workshop Must be registered for Nashville meeting.	ASA Member:	\$50
	Nonmember:	\$75

*Currently enrolled in CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program

Money Order/check enclosed for \$ _____
(No purchase orders accepted)

VISA MC AmEx

Name on Card _____

No _____ Expiration Date _____

Total amount charged \$ _____

Signature _____

SURGICAL ASSISTING CREDENTIALS—A COMPARISON

Title	Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA)	Certified Surgical Assistant (CSA)
Organization	National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) www.nbstsa.org	National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA) www.csaexam.com
Accreditation, Testing Agencies and Sponsorship	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Accredited by the National Commission for Certifying Agencies (NCCA), the accreditation body of the Institute for Credentialing Excellence (ICE) Examination developed in conjunction with, and administered by, Applied Measurement Professionals (AMP) Sponsored by the American College of Surgeons (ACS) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Not accredited by NCCA Exam administered by NCCA but not developed by NCCA Not sponsored by ACS
Exam Fee	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolled students in CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program: Gold Student Exam Bundle – \$237 (includes examination – \$160, membership – \$35, study guide – \$35 and \$7 shipping); or Graduates of CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting programs with ASA/AST membership: \$160; or nonmembers: \$260 CST Candidates with Currency, CSA and/or SA-C candidates with currency, military candidates with ASA/AST membership: \$190; or nonmembers: \$290. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$450 Total (\$100 Application Fee; \$100 Exam Fee; \$100 SA-C; \$150 for SA-C; Departed SA-C; \$50 for approved SA education) \$250 Total (\$50 Application Fee; \$200 Exam Fee for the last 12 months); Act \$200 Total (\$25 student membership; \$175 Exam Fee for members of Approved
Eligibility and Length of Certification	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate of a CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting program (includes eight CAAHEP programs); or CST with 200 documented cases as a surgical assistant (75 in general surgery; 75 in one specific specialty area and 50 distributed in any additional specialty area) Graduate of a military training program in surgical technology, whether it was before, during or after having CAAHEP accreditation, with 200 clinical cases as a surgical first assistant within four years prior to when the application is received. Length of certification: 4 years 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Graduate of an NCCSA Physician (US or foreign) with 200 hours as a surgical assistant Military discharged with 200 hours of training that demonstrates emphasis on 125 cases Military discharged less than 4 years with 200 hours that demonstrates emphasis on 125 cases Skills affidavit must be s
Recertification Fee and Requirements	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> \$50 every 4 years and 75 CE credits. Retake and pass the CSFA national certifying examination through the NBSTSA. ASA/AST member: \$399; or nonmember: \$499 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> NSAA Members – Main NSAA & ACS Members NSAA Nonmembers – 5
Analysis	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Enrolled students in CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting programs can test for \$237 which includes the examination, one year of ASA membership and the CSFA Study Guide; Graduates of CAAHEP-accredited surgical assisting programs who are members of ASA or AST can test for \$160, requiring \$80 membership for a total of \$240; nonmembers can test for \$290. CST Candidates with currency, CSA and/or SA-C candidates with currency, military candidates with ASA/AST membership: \$190, requiring \$80 membership for a total of \$270; or nonmembers: \$290. <p>For each option, there are no other required fees. The renewal fee at the end of four years is \$50. After the renewal of certification, there are no other costs to maintain the certification until the next renewal. The NBSTSA certification requirement is the lowest at 75 Continuing Education Credits that must be earned over the four-year cycle.</p>	<p>The options available to the membership requirement</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> MD/DO; PA-C; NP; RN; Accredited and NCCSA (months): \$250. Active M Note: the NSAA membership is maintained, or it will be For most others, the cost of application) and \$300 a (\$450+\$300+\$300+\$300) For NSAA members, which is reduced to \$250 (\$200 a 4-year period is \$1150 the NSAA members to represents another \$50 period. For non NSAA members

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

PRESIDENT



**KATHLEEN DUFFY,
CSFA, CSA**

KAD Surgical
Assisting, Inc
Port St Lucie, Florida

Professional Involvement

ASA Billing and Reimbursement Taskforce Chair 2012–present;
ASA Secretary 2012–2014;
ASA Board of Directors 2010–2012.
ASA Founding Member 2010 to present.

Candidate Statement

My name is Kathy Duffy, and I am a surgical assistant. I have a solo surgical assisting practice straddling Broward and Palm Beach counties in South Florida. I have been certified as a surgical assistant by both the National Board of Surgical Technology

and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA) and the National Commission for Certification of Surgical Assistants (NCCSA). I have been actively involved with the Association of Surgical Assistants as a member of the Ad Hoc Committee (later ASA Board of Directors) by AST, as an appointed board member of the ASA and elected Secretary from 2012 to 2014 and serve as chair of the ASA Billing and Reimbursement Taskforce.

The mission of ASA is to bring surgical assistants into an organization that will collectively determine the future of the surgical assistant profession. ASA is off to a phenomenal start. Since its inception June 1, 2010, ASA has accomplished more than ever thought possible in such a short amount of time. Bylaws have been adopted, board members and executive board members have been elected, and committees have been formed.

ASA published the third edition of the Core Curriculum for Surgical Assisting and developed

the first billing and reimbursement primer for surgical assistants. These milestones help the profession reinforce the national credibility of our profession and assist new surgical assistants navigate the hurdles.

ASA is actively involved in the legislative efforts on the state level and underwrote its first success as an organization in Virginia. There are educational opportunities never before available to the surgical assistant; and this year ASA holds its inaugural independent Annual Business Meeting in Nashville. All this has been achieved by surgical assistants volunteering their time to help get this organization off the ground. This is only the beginning.

My vision for ASA is simple: to continue on the road less traveled; to grow the membership base by encouraging all surgical assistants to join the organization; to show the members that ASA is not just an inert organization that asks for money and doesn't give anything back. ASA needs to continue to

provide top quality educational opportunities to all surgical assistants. We need to develop a plan to get involved and to help guide testing requirements and educational standards for our profession. We also need to educate our membership to the realities of the processes involved in legislative efforts and the timeline required by such efforts. But most importantly, we need to tell the world our story loud enough so that when someone hears "surgical assistant" they know exactly who we are!!

I would like to continue the work of ASA by running for the office of president. My ASA board experience has prepared me for the duties and responsibilities of that position. As an independent surgical assistant, I understand the needs of the profession and will do my best to represent all surgical assistants. I would appreciate your support in my decision to run for President of the Association of Surgical Assistants.

Thank you for your consideration.

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

VICE PRESIDENT



**GREG SALMON,
CSFA, CSA**

Meridian Institute
of Surgical Assisting
Murfreesboro,
Tennessee

Professional Involvement

ASA Treasurer
2013–present;
ASA Billing and
Reimbursement Taskforce
2012–present;
ASA Board of Directors
2010–2013.
ASA Founding Member
2010 to present.

Candidate Statement

It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as treasurer during these past four years. Since the very first elections were held, I have had the pleasure to see an organization

that many of us had long awaited, finally come to fruition. I have had the pleasure of seeing the ideas from our members and members on the board become reality. I have had the opportunity to witness what can be accomplished when dedicated individuals come together and work toward common goals and aspirations. In the last four years, we have grown our membership, exceeding everyone's expectations. It has been gratifying to see the commitment of our members in making the ASA something to be proud of and knowing that as a member, your voice will be heard!

As your treasurer, I have had the opportunity to serve you on this board. I have helped to implement educational and policy decisions that have strengthened our organization while insuring that we have remained fiscally responsible. ASA is now financially viable, which will begin to open the door for improved educational events and will also allow us to pursue legislation

to strengthen and protect our profession.

Our profession is quite different than other professions and includes a diverse group of individuals from all over the country. Frequently, we are faced with difficult challenges as we pursue our dream. As the treasurer for the ASA Board of Directors, I believe that we have begun to identify and develop ways to help reduce the challenges that we meet on a daily basis.

We have updated the job description, and are currently developing policy on Standards of Practice which will provide surgical assistants across the nation with the tools that will support and give added direction for the profession.

ASA has provided educational opportunities geared to the surgical assistant that were almost non-existent years ago. We have offered robotics and cadaver labs, simulated surgery, wound closure as well as successful educational cruises that provided exceptional opportunities for networking. It is

imperative that we continue to develop new, cutting edge ways to provide continuing education for our members.

The past four years have given me the opportunity to directly impact our profession as a board member. After years of hard work our organization is beginning to stand firmly on a solid foundation. I have the experience and first-hand knowledge that will allow me to continue to provide the direction and promote strength and direction for every member. I ask for your vote for Vice President to continue to lead our organization while making the best informed decisions for each and every member.

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

TREASURER



**JODIE WOODS,
CSFA**

St Alphonsus
Regional
Medical Center
Eagle, Idaho

Professional Involvement

ASA Board of Directors
2013-present.
ASA Founding Member
2010 to present.

Candidate Statement

My name is Jodie Woods
and I am a surgical first

assistant in Boise Idaho,
I am a candidate for the
position of ASA Treasurer.

I was certified as a sur-
gical technologist in 1992.
After working in that field
for many years, I wanted
to further my career and
pursue a credential in sur-
gical assisting. I received
my certification from
the NBSTSA in 2003 and
have carried this title with
great pride. After becom-
ing a CSFA, I have special-
ized in orthopaedics.

I am currently serv-
ing on the ASA Board
of Directors. During my
term, we have been able to
make incredible advanc-
es in legislation and are
continuing our fight to
receive recognition in
every state. We have also
facilitated, in conjunction
with the NSAA, a nation-
al registry for credential

verification for both
CSFAs and CSAs.

I have also created an
exam prep workshop to
provide support for those
who are preparing for
their certification in our
field. I am also proud to be
getting ready for our first
ever independent annual
ASA meeting in Nashville
in October. I have been
privileged to participate
in these accomplishments
and I am so excited to par-
ticipate in the growth of
our profession.

I have been active in our
profession for many years.
I was an item writer for
the Orthopaedic special-
ty exam, I have also served
two terms on the NBSTSA
exam review commit-
tee. I finished my last term
in 2012. Since that time,
I have continued to be
involved by attending and

participating in item writ-
ing meetings.

I would be privileged to
serve as your ASA treasur-
er. I believe I bring many
years of experience and a
desire to see our nation-
al organization grow and
achieve legislative recog-
nition and financial inde-
pendence. I know we are
all incredibly proud of our
profession, and we want to
see our organization con-
tinue to grow and expand.
I would like to continue to
be an integral part of this
in the future.

Thank you so for con-
sidering me for the posi-
tion of treasurer.

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (VOTE FOR TWO)



**COREY HINTON,
CSFA**

Northwest
Medical Center
Tucson, Arizona

Professional Involvement

ASA Member 2012 to present.

Candidate Statement

My name is Corey Hinton, I am running for ASA board of directors, and I would love to have your vote. I have been a member of AST since 1992 and served on the Board of Directors for both the Arizona (2010-2011) and Tennessee (2000-2003) state assemblies. In addition, I held offices on the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting, including Board

of Director (2003-2005) and Vice President (2004-2005) and also was Chair of the CSFA Exam Review Committee (1993-2003).

I have worked in the field of surgery since 1987 and have found it to be my life's work. This profession has allowed me to be a part of a healing art that has saved, enhanced, and prolonged the life of thousands of people from coast to coast. The career has not been without challenges and set backs as well. The fight for our place in the operating room has been met with opposition from nurses, administrators, and even other surgical tech/assistants. Still with the drive and determination of organizations like ASA and many other unnamed champions of this profession, we are surviving and gaining the respect and compensation that is deserved.

Now that the field of surgical assisting has grown by leaps and bounds, more and more surgical techs are seeing the field as a professional option, with the surgical tech schools encouraging it as the next step in a first class career. With the

trends in the medical field leaning toward more cost effective ways to meet the healthcare demands of the public, surgical assistants and other allied health professions will continue to grow in the next few years and I am excited to be a part of the ASA which is on the forefront of supporting those that are willing to organize and be a leader in providing a valuable service.

Going forward ASA has a lot of work ahead and I hope to help meet these challenges with the leadership of the members of the board. The ASA has set a great foundation for the future of surgical assisting and the new board members will have large shoes to fill. If I am elected to the office, I plan to continue the great work of the previous board and add to the great legacy they have left behind.

First, I want to continue to reach out to other organizations that are involved in surgical assisting by finding common agenda items to promote the profession. Second, I would like to find a more

permanent revenue stream for the organization to stay viable.

Finally, education of the surgical assistant must be paramount going forward to standardize the training, to clearly define what is a surgical assistant's role in the operating room.

In closing, the field is wide open for the surgical assistant, but we must have a plan and a determined passion for what we do at ASA. I am willing to accept the challenge of moving the ASA forward while preserving the past successes... Once again thank you for your vote.

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS (CONTINUED)



SHANNON SMITH, CSFA
Evansville, Indiana

Professional Involvement

ASA Board of Directors 2013-2015; ASA Education and Professional Standards Committee 2011-2013. ASA Founding Member 2010 to present.

Candidate Statement

Hello, my name is Shannon E Smith. I hold the credential of Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA) through the National Board of Surgical Technology and Surgical Assisting (NBSTSA).

I am currently the Program Chair of Surgical Services at Tallahassee Community College. Prior to accepting this position,

I worked as an adjunct, and then later, Assistant Coordinator of Surgical Services at Gulf Coast State College teaching surgical assisting.

I am proud to say I am a Founding Member of ASA. I was appointed to the Education Committee 2011-2013 prior to being elected to the Board. I have served as a Board of Director for the Florida State Assembly of the Association of Surgical Technologists (2010-2012) and was re-elected 2014-present. In 2011, I served as a delegate for the Florida State Assembly at the National Conference in Grapevine, Texas. In addition to being a Certified Surgical First Assistant (CSFA), I am a Certified Surgical Technologist (CST) and hold a Bachelor's Degree in Health Science. Wanting to continue my education, I am currently working on my Master's Degree in Health Science with a concentration in Higher Education.

I have had the privilege of serving as your Board of Director for the past two years. During my time on the Board, we have made

great progress for our association and the profession of surgical assisting. We have increased our membership numbers and worked with other organizations to bring all surgical assistants together as one. In an effort to achieve recognition for our profession and promote safe patient outcomes, we have worked tirelessly with state legislators and lobbyists to pass legislation that would allow only those holding the proper credential to work in the role of the surgical assistant. During my tenure, we have also begun hosting educational workshops with topics relevant to you, the surgical assistant! This is a huge step, and one I am very proud we made!

Our organization has made great strides, but we are still very young. As we continue to grow and form our pathway, we need dedicated, competent, and well-informed leadership.

As a member of the board of directors, I pledge to continue to commit myself to the advancement of our profession and organization. I pledge to serve our members with the dedication,

passion, and professionalism they so rightly deserve.

Making a difference has always been my passion and desire; it is why I began my career in the operating room 26 years ago. It is with this same passion and desire that I ask your consideration in re-electing me as your Board of Director.



CHRISTINA TUCHSEN, CSFA, LSA
San Antonio Surgical Assistants
San Antonio, Texas

Professional Involvement

ASA Billing and Reimbursement Taskforce 2012-present; ASA Membership Committee 2011-2012. Founded Texas Surgical Assistant

2015 ASA CANDIDATES

Association. ASA
Founding Member 2010 to
present.

Candidate Statement

I am thrilled to announce my candidacy for board of director with a clear and positive goal of advancing the surgical assistant profession. My record demonstrates the consistent and principled leadership within the surgical assistant community. I am a founding member of the Association of Surgical Assistants (ASA). I also have been involved in the ASA Membership Committee, and the ASA Billing and Reimbursement Taskforce. In the interest of education, I have provided numerous presentations at multiple ASA conferences that focuses on business marketing, medical coding, medical ethics and legal issues involving surgical assistants. I am also proud that I can contribute more than 22 years of surgical experience, including 12 years of military experience, and six years of professional business development and medical billing experience.

True leadership requires both a compelling future vision and an ability to inspire and motivate across diverse constituencies. Surgical assistants need to fundamentally change the mindset of state legislators to ensure that each state recognizes our profession and provides the best possible care for our patients. As a board of director, I am eager to take on big issues and work with all different groups to find solutions. We need people in elected office who are willing to explore big ideas and who can talk, discuss, and debate those ideas and come to a reasoned, compromised position that will benefit our surgical assistant community. This is what I want to do. I want to do better by you, the people who elect me, and even the people who voted for the other candidates. I want to see that every surgical assistant has the opportunity to succeed nationwide. We are not at that point yet, and while it may take a while to change that, ASA is the organization leading the way!

The common element in all of the above is this: I am deeply passionate about the transformative value of our surgical assistant profession. Please consider me to be your next ASA board of director.



CRYSTAL WARNER, CSA

Warner Institute
for Surgical
Excellence
Gulf Breeze,
Florida

Professional Involvement

ASA Core Curriculum
Committee 2012-2013.
ASA Member 2012 to
present.

Candidate Statement

I would like the opportunity to serve on the ASA board of directors. Over

the past five years, I have had the joy and privilege of serving on various committees, including the ASA Core Curriculum Revision Committee; AST CE-Review Committee and the NBSTSA Job Task Analysis; CSFA Job Description; CST Exam Item Writing; and CST Practice Exam Review. I have also taken a leadership role in the AST Alabama State Assembly as the vice president.

I assist in the operating room at a level I trauma center, and I am also an educator, so I have first-hand knowledge of the diverse needs of our members. My knowledge and experience in business, and my involvement as a member qualify me to provide responsive leadership on the board of directors.

I can ensure you that I will always represent you with confidence, competence, integrity and passion for the surgical assisting profession.

I would appreciate the opportunity to serve you and to be your voice on the board of directors.

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE DETAILS

MARK POLSON, CSA

GOOD RECORDKEEPING

One of the things, that you will find time consuming is constantly filling out applications, skills checklists, and work history. Previously, I recommended that certain documents be readily available. The same holds true for a generic skills checklist and a case history showing at least one year of experience.

Now you are going to start fielding phone calls from recruiters. If you have mentioned on your resume that you use to work as a surgical technologist, be prepared to be called, or emailed more often than not to be offered a position as a surgical technologist. Be cautious regarding how you respond to the recruiter. Just like any former or current employer, don't burn bridges.

The recruiter is going to ask you several questions, to evaluate you; and you should be doing the same with him/her. Always, and I do mean always, ask any questions you feel are important and take notes. After the initial phone interview, the recruiter, will ask you to fill out one of their

applications, usually online. In addition, you need to submit a skills checklist. Verify if your own checklist is acceptable and whether it can be transmitted by fax with the other required documentation. Sometimes, recruiters will allow it; sometimes they don't. If you have these documents scanned, you can send them via email.

This will be the first of at least several times that you do this. Like I said earlier, there are many agencies out there, and not all of them deal with surgical assistants. So you need to find several agencies which work with surgical assistants. Here is a helpful hint—keep a list. I use a spreadsheet to do this. On this same spreadsheet, I also keep the expiration dates for my physicals, PPD, and CPR cards, as a reminder to always know when it is necessary to send out updated versions.

Besides my professional information on this spreadsheet, I also include the name and number of the recruiter I initially contacted. Don't be surprised

when calling back after some time, if the same recruiter is no longer there. Using a spreadsheet is a helpful resource that allows you to keep in contact with a recruiter who might have forgotten you.

So, you have done your part. Now it is up to the recruiter to follow through. If that happens, a nurse manager will call you. Now, here is the most important piece of advice I can give you. You need to sell yourself. However, don't become a car salesman and always be honest about your skill and experience. I cannot express this issue enough. There have been several times, when I have been called in to replace someone who over sold themselves and then couldn't deliver. As a friend, who owned his own staffing agency, use to say "Under promise and over deliver."

After the phone interview, and presuming it has gone well, you will be offered a position. This is where it gets interesting and challenging, because, you are doing this to make money,



but you need to remember, that your recruiter also has to make money.

I have a friend, who at one time owned his own staffing agency. He started his company out of his apartment, and financed it with credit cards. Now I say at one time, because he was so successful, that his company was purchased by a larger staffing company. While the buyout wasn't what he called "Kiss my A**" money, he was able to pay off all his debt, and buy himself a Maserati. The new owners retained his services, with a nice salary, so that he could continue to do what he was successful at, finding OR personnel.

So, my friend, was always honest with me, when I would ask questions about staffing. He was the first, to as I say it, "let me look behind the curtain." He taught me things like "S.U.I." and "S.I.T." Those stand for State Unemployment Insurance, and State Income Tax. These are important to remember, because when working outside your home state, or home of record.

Let me give you an example of why this is important. I am currently in Ohio, because Ohio does not have reciprocity with Virginia, my home of record, so I pay Ohio State Income Tax. When my contract ends, if I don't have another one lined up, or have to wait, I can file for unemployment, which I will have to do in the State of Ohio.

Now, if I was working in Maryland, which has reciprocity with Virginia, I would pay Virginia State Income, and if necessary, I would file unemployment in Virginia. If this seems a bit confusing to you, you are not alone, it is confusing to most. And let us not forget the distance rule. From my understanding, it means that in order to be a "true" traveler, you must be

working 50 miles or more from your home of record. This allows you to take the offered housing, or housing subsidy. Be careful on this one, I have seen travelers burned on this, by taking the housing subsidy, and then being fired, and having to repay it. (Be sure to verify with your agency and potential employer.)

Yes, fellow travelers, you can be fired, and yes, you will be held accountable for money owed, such as advances, which are almost a thing of the past, and housing allowance, if you did not make it past your initial 30 days. So, be cautious, in your financial dealings. Hopefully that gave you a little insight, and hopefully this will give you a little more.

Pay rate? I will give you an example of what I mean and how it works. After the phone interview, I was offered the position. When my recruiter called, and told me I had the position, the first question I asked, "What is the rate?" What was the hourly rate I had to work with? I was told \$40 an hour. Now some of you are saying wow. And some of you are saying that is too low. I will tell you, that for me, it was just right. The \$40/hour rate, was broken down like this—I took \$20 an hour to be taxable, meaning I am taxed on \$800 per week. The remaining \$800 is nontaxable. Out of that \$800, I pay for my housing (which works out to \$380 per week), the balance goes into my pocket as what is commonly referred to as "per diem", meaning what it takes for me to live on a daily basis away from my home of record. Do some research, see what the cost of gas, groceries etc are for the area you considering.

My overtime rate, is less than \$60 per hour. Why is that you ask, if my rate is \$40 per hour? As I mentioned earlier, your recruiter has to earn

money as well. So, here is the first look behind the curtain. If my rate is \$40 per hour, the agency is not, and I cannot stress this point enough, is not billing \$80 dollars an hour. You have no idea, the amount of times I have heard a fellow traveler, tell me that the agency was making as much per hour as they were paying me. This is the biggest myth in the industry.

Agencies' profits lie in volume. The more workers that they can bill for, the more they make. An agency is given a flat hourly rate, so if I am given \$40 to work with, then the agency may be billing as much as \$50 dollars an hour. That \$10 hourly difference accounts for all their overhead and other costs involved in keeping you working.

Let us not forget, call pay. If you are required to take call, make sure it is enough to make you happy or content to give up eight hours or more of your life, to sit around and wait on the phone call that may or may not come. Ask for something reasonable, usually five dollars an hour.

So, the final point I will make on this installment is this, if the money isn't right for you, be honest, and tell the recruiter, that you can't accept that, and walk away. However, if you do accept what is offered, don't gripe and complain when you get your paycheck. Always keep this thought in mind, if it is not what you expected, it is only for 13 weeks.

On the next installment, we will talk about hitting the open road...

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