

Natalie James
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Mrs. Leslie-Hayes
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Service Project Final

The person I interviewed was Stephanie James, my mother. She has short, peppered, curly hair that reaches just below her ears, with stray strands always hanging in front of her brown eyes if she is working hard. Stephanie is a talented woman, with years of experience in baking, legal research, and sewing. We took the interview at my house, while my mother sat on my bed and ate a cupcake in pajamas. It was not a professional interview, but I suppose that is the environment in our house. We are very laid back and casual. In the interview, we discussed her job as a paralegal and legal secretary, working at a law firm in Point Richmond. It was full of interesting facts and new information I had never heard of before.

The first thing we talked about was what she did for a job. Stephanie is a legal secretary and paralegal, working in a law firm. She went into her new job knowing that she would be doing a variety of things such as day to day operations, bookkeeping, paralegal and notary. Aside from daily tasks like getting the mail, stocking the copiers and printers or changing the tape for the data backup, she does legal research for her job as a legal secretary and paralegal. Eight years ago, her boss launched a campaign called Montana Matters. Stephanie started working on the organization at once. When I asked her to summarize Montana Matters in one sentence, she replied with, "Montana Matters is a fundraising campaign working with the National Wildlife Federation and the Montana Natural History Museum, funding programs that benefit kids."

The second question I had for her was about how she got her job. Stephanie never actually decided to become a paralegal. While she was working realized she had the skill and ability to do the job, and it became important in her legal secretary work. Instead of going to a paralegal school, Stephanie worked two years under an attorney who then certified that she could be a paralegal, endorsing her for the job. It might seem like the learning process was simple for her, but it was very hard because she had to learn many rules and regulations for her to become a legal secretary. Interestingly enough, Stephanie never once had the thought of becoming a lawyer on her mind while she was learning. Stephanie says she never wanted to become a lawyer because, "I don't care for lawyers very much and I'm really not into arguing." Stephanie isn't perfect, but she has had plenty of experience in her career, 15 years to be exact. She started working for the same law firm she works for today in 2002! Even though she has had years of practice, Stephanie is still not an expert on difficult clients, (or difficult people in general). She said, "Just when you think you've got one handled another one pops up with a different craziness."

The last couple of questions I asked her were on the general opinion she had of her career. Stephanie does enjoy her job, but there are some downsides, the biggest being how stressful it is. Stephanie's boss is an older gentleman who isn't very knowledgeable about modern technology and has very "old school" ideas and ways he does things. Stephanie explained, that even though her work in the office might be over, her day isn't necessarily done, "It's like being on call." Despite the downsides, there are good things about her job. Even amazing, you could say! Stephanie's favorite part of her job is the flexibility. She could take her daughter, me, to work every day for the first two years of my life. I had a crib under her desk,

and everyone was ok about it. Stephanie laughed, “Clients have known her now for 13 years.” Another fantastic thing about her job is the community fundraising and philanthropy her boss, being very generous, does. Being in this career field and the law firm has given Stephanie the opportunity to help others with Montana Matters and working out lawsuits.

I chose to interview Stephanie because she is indeed an extraordinary, fascinating person. I was curious to know more about her job and what she does considering I still come to work with her very often. Stephanie has undoubtedly influenced me in many ways, and not just because she’s my mom! She is very hardworking and passionate about what she does, and hopefully one day I’ll be able to work in a law office as well. I tend to like the atmosphere, and her office has made me fall in love with law work, but it isn’t always as easy as it seems to be. Stephanie has had bad days; everyone does, but she still presses on. Instead of mourning over the problem she jumps into action and tries to find another possible outcome or answer to it, not giving up on it. I would love to have that skill and be calm in times of peril. I’d need it if I wanted to be in the line of career she is in, as well. Stephanie is so much more than just a mom; she is a legal secretary, doing so much more than you could ever believe.