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Paralegal offers a new twist on a traditional job

By Angie Jeffrey

NEWS-TIMES CORRESPONDENT

Paralegal Laura Hunt stumbled upon her career by accident.

"I originally went to nursing school at WestConn for about a year, right out of high school in 1996, but I didn't really like it," said Hunt, now 27.

Nine years ago, the Brookfield woman decided to pursue other avenues and began looking for a job. She quickly found one with Brian Cotter, an attorney in Danbury.

"I just happened to get a job with a lawyer. I started working with Brian and ended up loving it," Hunt said.

"I loved learning about the history of law and it was just so interesting to me. I enjoyed it so much that I ended up going back to school and that was my focus, justice and law," Hunt said.

"In the beginning it was challenging because it was all so new, but slowly Brian taught me and plus I was so interested in it that I spent a lot of time on my own studying, too," Hunt said.

Since the majority of Cotter's work revolved around real estate, that became Hunt's specialty as well. "Being that real estate fluctuates so much, things are a little slow right now, especially compared to last year at this time," Hunt said.

Seeing how involved Hunt was becoming in the field, Cotter decided to put Hunt through WestConn.

She went part-time and graduated magna cum laude this spring with a bachelor's of science in justice and law.

As her graduation date drew near, Hunt began thinking about the possibility of going out on her own.

"I wanted something more challenging and I thought about law school, but at this point (and that might change) I don't really want to go back to school right now. Plus, I love what I do. I enjoy being a paralegal," Hunt said.

In January, Hunt decided to go ahead with her plan and open her own business as a freelance paralegal. Although the idea isn't a new one, it isn't very common either.

"I like the idea of being my own boss, plus I'm a control freak," Hunt said with a laugh.

In March, Hunt called about two dozen lawyers that she knew fairly well, sat down with each of them and explained what she was going to be doing.

"I wanted to get some input from them and see if they thought it was even a good idea for me to try. They were all really positive about it and said it was a good idea," said Hunt, who then sent 100 letters to area attorneys to tell about the services she'd be offering.

Although Hunt knows things may be slow at first, she feels confident her services will be needed. She has already freelanced for an attorney in Westport and two others in Danbury.

"It works for people who already have a paralegal or for those who don't. People want to take vacations, or people are going to be sick. Sometimes they might just need extra help when they're really busy," Hunt said.

Hunt added due to a fluctuating real estate market, people may only need extra help at certain times of the year.

"It's difficult to justify hiring someone just because you get busy for a while and then in a couple of months you may not be," Hunt said.

In May, Hunt set up her new office, a small space at 152 Deer Hill Ave. in Danbury.

Although she considered working from home, she quickly decided it would be better to keep the two separate. "Plus in an emergency situation, 10 or 15 minutes is a long time to get here," she said.

Hunt still works part-time with Cotter and spends the rest of her time on her own business. "I wasn't sure what to expect, but Brian has actually been very, very supportive of me," Hunt said. Hopefully down the road, I will be doing this full time and I will be very busy."

Hunt lives in Brookfield with her husband Matt Hunt, Bethel High School's boy's junior varsity baseball coach.

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To contact Hunt for paralegal services, call (203) 313-0350 or log onto her Web site at: www.professionalparalegalservicesofct.com.



The News-Times/Carol Kaliff

Laura Hunt of Brookfield has opened her own freelance paralegal business on Deer Hill Road in Danbury.