

## *“Why I Chose Court Reporting”*

By: Kelli Lardy

Honestly, I had no idea what a court reporter was until I was almost 30 years old. After high school, I moved away from Day County chasing my dreams of becoming a rockstar. I went on to play in a handful of heavy metal bands in Seattle, WA; Des Moines, IA; and



Minneapolis, MN. I always told myself that if I hadn't made it big by my 30s that it was time to pursue something else. At that point, I was playing in one of my favorite bands of my music career, a technical death metal group in Minneapolis. I also worked full-time in a cubicle at Best Buy Corporate where I'd spend most of my days competing in Facebook typing races and sharing my top speeds.

My sister commented to me that she thought I'd make a good court reporter with my fast typing skills. My first thought was that it sounded really boring and not something that I would be interested in at all. Her words must have resonated with me because I spent about a year researching court reporting careers and school options. I decided to take the plunge. I kept my full-time job while attending school full-time at Anoka Technical College just north of Minneapolis. I was one proud graduate in May of 2013 after just two years of school.

I fell in love with the stenograph machine right away! It was like learning a new language on a new instrument. You start slow and then you just get faster and faster. I loved the challenge and competition in school, always trying to be the first student to pass the speed tests and move on to the next level.

My first job was with a freelance firm in Downtown, Minneapolis. After three years freelancing around the Twin Cities, I met my husband and moved back to South Dakota. I freelanced here until an official court reporter position opened in Watertown. I spent almost five years in the Third Circuit and then freelanced again for the first year after my son was born. I was so happy when the Fifth Circuit recently posted an opening for an official reporter that was closer to home for me. I'm beyond grateful to be working for UJS. I've worked for great judges and met some wonderful people along the way.

My favorite part of this job is hearing the interesting cases and having a front row seat to all the action in court. I take great pride in doing the best job I can while capturing a verbatim record. I'm so thankful to have found a career where my unique skills can best be utilized.