

# Iowa Rehabilitation Association Newsletter 4th Quarter 2008

Suzanne Paulson, Editor

## NRA President's Message



Thanks IRA for Your Hospitality and  
Congratulations on Your Growth

It was a pleasure attending the Iowa Rehabilitation Association's annual conference October 8-10 in Council Bluffs. I enjoyed seeing familiar faces and meeting so many new folks, both from Iowa and Nebraska. Tammera Rogers' keynote on creativity, and the other various sessions were great! Congratulations on hosting such a fine conference!

NRA is a member association that promotes ethical, effective and state of the art practice in rehabilitation with the goal of personal and economic independence of persons with disabilities. We do this by advocating on Capitol Hill for favorable public policy, legislation and judicial interpretations. The work done by Iowa's own Ellen Sokolowski, as a member of NRA's national Governmental Affairs Committee, continues to be a key part of this effort.

We also achieve our NRA mission by providing information to our members through publications like the *Journal of Rehabilitation*, *Contemporary Rehab*, and e-mail alerts like the *Washington Wire*. We also offer conferences and teleseminars to our members. The work of NRA's chapters and divisions is a critical

component in accomplishing the mission, in their respective states and nationally. Chapters like the Iowa Rehabilitation Association are the heart and soul of the NRA.

It was a pleasure to attend the annual IRA Chapter Meeting and I was impressed to hear that IRA this year added around ten new members. My hat is off to the IRA for this accomplishment. It is all the more noteworthy given these challenging economic times! In addition, thanks to their enjoyable participation in the IRA conference in Council Bluffs, some the Nebraska folks expressed the interest in reactivating their own chapter.

As your national president, it has been an honor and privilege to attend many state conferences across the nation. IRA members should be proud to be part of such a dynamic chapter. Your leadership is strong, with folks like John, Harlietta, Matt, Rosie, Victoria, Marcia, Roger, Ellen and others too numerous to mention. Your dedication to excellence is apparent and you certainly enjoy one another's company! Thanks again for a great time! And thanks for choosing to be part of the National Rehabilitation Association.

Ray Feroz  
2008 NRA President

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### ***Take a Chance on Success – We Did & It Worked!***

I just reviewed the evaluations from the annual training conference, "Take a Chance on Success", held in Council Bluffs. We received great reviews; lots of ideas were generated for topics at future training conferences, and we managed to network with people from Iowa and Nebraska along the way!

From the keynote speaker asking us to sit on our "judgment" to allow room for creative thinking and problem solving to the closing speaker giving us new perspectives on change, we gained insight, information, and ideas.

Over 100 individuals enjoyed our awards luncheon where the IRA Achievement Award winner and the recipient of the Chuck Wood Memorial Award presented to an Iowan in recognition of achieving independence brought tears to our eyes with their courage and willingness to keep trying. Additionally, we recognized three of our own members who have provided outstanding service. These success stories remind us all of why we are in this profession and why we are members of this great organization!

Another success was achieved as we increased membership during September and continued to add several new members at the conference.

And speaking of successes, I am pleased to report that several members of IRA volunteered to work next year on committees including the newest idea generated at the annual meeting: to investigate a service project aimed toward youth. If you did not get asked to work or did not have an opportunity to volunteer, contact me immediately. I have volunteer positions for "understudies" to key committee chairs such as legislative, membership and awards. This is a great way to try something new and have the safety net of a mentor! My email is harlietta@marshallnet.com and that is the most reliable way to reach me. I don't want anyone to feel left out!

***Harlietta Helland--2009 President***

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### **Youth Service Project to be Considered by IRA Board**

At the annual meeting held on October 8 in Council Bluffs, the membership inquired about IRA starting a service project directed toward youth. This project can be directed to youth with disabilities or youth training to serve people with disabilities. A subcommittee (of the awards committee) to look into this and report recommendations to the board has been appointed. Donna Daniel agreed to be chair. Members include Matt Bruinekool, Lois Staff, Marcia Gracey and Rosie Thierer. Once Treasurer Rosie Thierer knows our financial

situation following the training conference, the subcommittee will begin working on proposals to present to the board. If you want to provide ideas or input, contact a member of the subcommittee.

***Harlietta Helland--2009-President***

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Life Member Profile

By Tim Gracey

**Orville Townsend** is the supervisor of the Iowa City Office for Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation. He started in 1973, as an evaluator in the Oakdale office working for Mayta Bird and Bebe Ballentyne, moved to the Iowa City Office as a counselor, then promoted to supervisor. He attended an IRA training conference and joined NRA, and in 1976 signed up for life membership which required elevated payments for five years, but has clearly paid off.

Orv saw membership and involvement in NRA and the state chapter as part of his commitment to the profession. He recognized NRA's lobbying efforts were instrumental in preserving the public VR program which was under attack years ago and still undergoes periodic attack. Orville says he benefited from the opportunity to meet peers and colleagues from other parts of the state, both in public and private sectors, which helped avoid tunnel vision.

Orville has served in many capacities in IRA including President, and encourages his staff to join and become involved. IRA has greatly benefited from Orv's record of service for over three decades, and even more so from the ongoing service of the individuals he has recruited into the association. **Thank you OT.**

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## 2008 AWARDS CEREMONY

By Marcia Gracey



The Awards Luncheon was a great success and I am sure there was not a dry eye left in the room by the end of the luncheon. Our Award winners were:

**Kristy O'Brien** – nominated by Roger Carter for the Chuck Wood Memorial Award

**Frank Potter** – IVRS Counselor in Dubuque, received Counselor of the Year Award

**Joleen Schulz** – IVRS Counselor from Carroll, received the Bill Donahue Award

**Marcia Gracey** – IVRS Counselor from Des Moines, received the Gerry Byers Award



**Heather** Foresman nominated by Roger Carter for the Achievement Award

to attend. The evaluations were very positive and we even received suggestions for some topics for future trainings.

I would like to share we do have a slate of officers for 2009. They are: President - Matt Bruinekool; President-Elect – John Lee-Egan; Secretary – Denise Hubert; Treasurer – Marcia Gracey; and Board Members – Suzie Paulson, Rosie Thierer, & Mary Augustus.

If you would like to be a part of the planning committee for Brag N Steal 2009, let me know. I can be reached at [Marcia.Gracey@iowa.gov](mailto:Marcia.Gracey@iowa.gov) and home phone is 515-243-0042, or work at 515-281-4268.

The Bill Donahue Award went to Joleen Schulz, IVRS counselor from Carroll. Get your thinking caps on, look around your office. I am sure you are working with some co-workers who are doing a great job and deserve to be recognized. So, set aside some time, sharpen your pencils and make some phone calls, and submit a packet for 2009.

**John TenPas**  
**current IRA**  
**President**  
**was presented**  
**with the**  
**President's**  
**Plaque**



Thank you to all of you who took the time to put together nomination packets, made phone calls to get letters of support, those who wrote letters of support. I will be Awards Chair next year as well, so you should go ahead and start working on nominations packets. It is not too early. I will be nagging, begging, and whining about getting your packets in on time soon enough! So, watch for more to come in 2009 newsletters. Trust me, you will experience a good feeling and sense of accomplishment by taking time to nominate someone.

# JPD

By Marcia Gracey

WOW! We made it through another year on a wing and a prayer, considering we did not have an official Board. JPD successfully sponsored another Brag N Steal in July at DMACC in Ankeny. I want to thank all you who helped plan that conference and all of you who took time



## Iowa Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Association

The Iowa RCEA was proud to present the Rehabilitation Counselor of the Year Award to M. Frank Potter during the 2008 IRA/IAPSE Annual Conference. Frank has been a dedicated Rehabilitation Counselor with the State of Iowa for 38 years. He has helped many adults and high school students to pursue and obtain employment. He is the founder Brag and Steal of the Iowa Job Placement Division of the Iowa Rehabilitation Association. He is very knowledgeable about ADHD and has made numerous presentations including at the national Attention Deficit Disorder Association Conference in Minneapolis in July of this year. We congratulate Frank on the honor of receiving this award.

The Iowa RCEA Board met on the earlier evening of October 9<sup>th</sup>. Business was discussed including rewriting the bylaws so that our chapter is recognized as a RCEA chapter by NRA RCEA. The Iowa RECA is planning to offer ethics training next spring. An announcement will be sent out with details about the training.

New board members were elected as follows: President - Victoria Kollmann; Vice President- Lisa Chellew; Treasurer – Jackie Wipperman; Secretary – Suzie Paulson; Board Member/By Laws – Roger Carter; Board Member – Ray Olejniczak. By John Lee-Egan



## CHUCK WOOD AWARD GOES TO KRISTY O'BRIEN



The Chuck Wood Memorial Award was given this year to Kristy O'Brien of Atlantic. This award is given to people with disabilities who have achieved a high level of independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in their communities, and Kristi embodies this. Diabetic since the age of 10, she began experiencing complications in 2004, and since has had both legs amputated above the knee. As she now uses a wheelchair to get around, this necessitated some major remodeling at her home and acquisition of a wheelchair lift for her vehicle. She received some help from IVRS counselor Roger Carter, but she organized most of this work on her own, and now can enjoy the fruits of her labors. And now with independence on the home front, she may be able to rekindle that search for a job, which had been put on hold to deal with the above more pressing matters. Congratulations, Kristy!



Carl Suter....does Sue know he's in Iowa?



Hey Lois!!!!  
Looking good!

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### Membership Report

By the end of the IRA Training Conference, we had 100 members, including two new students!!!

Please welcome Debora Frazee, Chris Olson, Lisa Chellew, John Wadsworth, Ruth VanTol, Julie Dixon, Doug Keast, Keri Osterhaus, Kate Benson-Larson, Suzanne McKinley, and Sharman Lowenberg.

Several of these folks became members of our organization via the IRA Membership Campaign. Because of their recruitment efforts, some IRA members received \$20 or even \$40 off their training conference fees.

Please email me your address, work and home phone, fax, and email to update our roster. We are going to put this information into a database. That's a great idea to maintain member data and that of former members.

Currently, the Membership Committee consists of Sheila Stoeckel, Marcia Gracey, Tim Gracey and myself. Anyone wanting to be apart of this committee, or having suggestions or comments, please contact [victoria.kollmann@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:victoria.kollmann@blind.state.ia.us) or 319-230-8737. Stay warm!! Victoria, IRA Member Chair



This is some kind of new membership initiation called doing the "alligator"...what can I say...they're professionals!

### A MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT ELECT

After a grueling and nasty campaign against my (perceived) opponent, in which I took the high road and only appealed to the "Real IRA," whereas he chose to wallow in the mud (presumably with IRA terrorists), the forces of good prevailed in this year's race for President Elect of IRA. Yes, I beat back a concerted write-in campaign for Arnold Ziffel and put that pig in his place!



Well, perhaps it wasn't quite as dramatic as that, but every good politician needs to embellish his legend a little. I feel honored – and a bit scared – to be asked to serve in the Association in this way, and only agreed to run with the assurance that there were sufficient helpful souls in the organization that we have a chance of putting together a fine training conference next year. And I'm sure we will.

As I am from Cedar Rapids there is a good chance that next year's conference will be there or in the Iowa City/Coralville area, but no contracts have been signed yet. So you'll have to wait till the winter newsletter (or look on our web site) to find out its location and dates. If you have any topics or speakers you would like to see there, please feel free to suggest them to me, and thereby help to shape our conference. I can be contacted at 319-365-9111 or [jonathan.ice@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:jonathan.ice@blind.state.ia.us).

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NRA News.....At the time of the National Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference, the National Board received the recommendation from the Membership Committee to establish a new level of membership. This would be an affiliate member. The exact name of the membership has not yet been established. This level of membership would include support staff, rehabilitation associates, rehabilitation assistants, etc. The cost of the membership would be lower than the present professional level of membership and annual membership dues of \$96.00 has been proposed. This cost has not been finalized at this point. Members at this

level would be able to hold office in their division, state and regional level but not at the national level. It has been reported that this final point has been of some concern to some members of the National Rehabilitation Association Board of Directors. A final proposal will be submitted by the membership committee to the NRA Board of Directors for approval. If approved, it will then be sent to the delegates, designated by their states for this 2008-2009 year for their vote. If you should have any comments or discussion on any part of this proposal, (name of division, dues costs and if the individuals in this division can hold national office) please send them to me at [esokolowski@mchsi.com](mailto:esokolowski@mchsi.com).

Legislative Update....On November 4<sup>th</sup> the Democrats gained control of the White House and increased their margins in the Senate and the House. The Democrats hold a 54 to 40 lead over the Republicans in the Senate after having picked up at least 6 seats (two independents caucus with the Democrats). Three Senate races have not yet been decided-Alaska, Georgia and Minnesota. In the House of Representatives, the Democrats gained a 254 to 175 seat advantage. Democrats picked up at least 19 seats in the House and four races have not yet been called. In addition to those who won Senate seats last week, two other new members will join the Senate in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress to replace the winning presidential ticket of Senator Barack Obama and Delaware Senator Joe Biden, Jr. The governors of those two states will choose replacements for those Senators and they would serve until the 2010 election. In addition the governor of Illinois will replace the seat held by Representative Rahm Emanuel (D-IL) who will be President-elect Obama's Chief of Staff.

House Leadership...While it appears that House Minority Leader John Boehner (R-OH) will remain in his leadership position, the other Republican leadership positions began changing. IN the wake of the election, House Republican Whip Roy Blunt (R-MO) stepped down as the minority Whip. Rep. Eric Cantor (R-CA) announced that he is running for the Minority Whip, rather than challenge Rep Boehner. Rep. Adam Putnam, the Republican conference chairman also resigned his position. Rep. Michael Pence (R-IN) is running for that leadership position. At this point there is no challenger for either the Minority Whip or Conference Chairman. The House Democratic leadership is expected to remain the same with the exceptions of the vacancy of the Democratic Caucus chairman, Rep. Rahm Emanuel.

Economic Stimulus...Discussions between the House and Senate leaders continued about a second stimulus package. House Speaker Pelosi has suggested that the Senate take up a \$61 billion stimulus bill that the House passed in September and send that bill to President Bush. It included funding for infrastructure projects, state Medicaid programs and an extension of unemployment insurance and food stamps. If that does

not happen, it is unclear if there will be time to develop an alternative stimulus package.

Appropriations..Senator Robert Byrd (D-WV) announced that he will give up his chairmanship of the Senate Appropriations Committee. Senator Byrd will turn over the chairmanship on January 6<sup>th</sup> to his successor, Senator Daniel Inouye (D-HI). It has been reported that Senator Byrd has been in ill health for some time.

Members of the House and Senate are expected back in Washington on November 17<sup>th</sup> for organizational meetings. Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has already indicated the days following the organizational meeting will be dedicated to a lame-duck work period. House leaders have not yet formally announced that they will ask their members to stay in Washington following the organizational meetings

What to expect from a new President and Congress....During the campaign, the AAPD sent both candidates for President a questionnaire, then Senator Obama was the first to respond in October 2007. His response to the questionnaire was elaborated on in his "Plan to Empower Americans with Disabilities" His plan centers on four core themes:

- Providing Americans with disabilities educational opportunities (full funding for IDEA, improving college opportunities, improving transition.)
- Ending discrimination and promoting equality of opportunity for persons with disabilities ( Implementing the ADA Amendments Act and Genetic Information Non-Discrimination Act, judicial appointments, increasing enforcement funding, improving access to health care, improving mental health care
- Increasing employment rate of workers with disabilities (improving federal hiring and federal contractor hiring, creating national commission to look at Social Security work disincentives, promoting workplace flexibility) and
- Supporting Independent, Community based living for Americans with disabilities (passing the Community Choice Act and CLASS Act, implementing the Olmstead decision, protecting voting rights, fixing

Medicare "Homebound rule", providing access to technology, strengthening the VA.

At the time that the questionnaire was completed, Senator Obama committed to having a full time Assistant to the President on Disability Policy in the White House Domestic Policy Council, which will help insure that the President's disability policy is integrated and prioritized across multiple federal agencies.

Many of the disability related commitments were made before some of the recent disruptions in the economy

and the new President will likely need to adjust the timing of his plans to the new fiscal reality.

In Iowa....Leadership will be changing in the Iowa House. Kirk Paulsen will be taking over the responsibilities of the House Minority Leader. Christopher Rants of Sioux City previously held this position. Minority Whip will be Linda Upmeyer of Garner. Assistant Leaders will be Rod Roberts of Carroll, Jeff Kaufman of Wilton, Steve Luken of New Vienna and Jodi Tymerson of Winterset.

**Submitted by Ellen Sokolowski**



## Mary Ott

Please welcome one of our newer IRA members: Mary Ott. During this past IRA Training Conference, Mary was voted in as a Board Member for the 2009 - 2010 term.

Mary is a graduate of Drake University and has been a Counselor in the Mason City Vocational Rehabilitation office for 4 ½ years. She serves Floyd and Cerro Gordo County. Prior to working with VR Mary was employed as a Community Support Social Worker with a local Mental Health agency.

As if her VR responsibilities don't keep her busy enough Mary is also an adjunct instructor with North Iowa Area Community College (NIACC). She teaches a Sociology class 1 night a week.

Mary lives in Mason City with her husband of 39 years, Jerry. Jerry is retired from a factory position in Charles City where he worked for many years. They have 3 children and 3 grandchildren. I know Mary is very proud of her family because just talking about those grandkids brings a smile to her face.

When Mary is not working she really enjoys her quiet time. She likes to read and do crosswords. She also loves to travel with her husband, friends and family. Her next trip is scheduled for the Rivera Maya in February.

## 2008 IRA Board Member Contact List

**President-John TenPas**, 515-281-5969

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**Vice President-Matt Bruinekool**,

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**President-Elect-Harlietta Helland**,

[harlietta@marshallnet.com](mailto:harlietta@marshallnet.com)

**Secretary-Mary Augustus**, 515-573-8175 (work)

[mary.augustus@iowa.gov](mailto:mary.augustus@iowa.gov)

**Treasurer-Rosie Thierer**, [rosie.thierer@blind.state.ia.us](mailto:rosie.thierer@blind.state.ia.us)

**Past President-Gary Herrig**, [gary.herrig@mchsi.com](mailto:gary.herrig@mchsi.com)

**Board Member-Curt Jones**, [curt.jones@iowa.gov](mailto:curt.jones@iowa.gov)

**Board Member-Vienna Hoang**,

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**Board Member-Becky Cox**, 515-266-1801

**Board Member- Jonathan Ice** 319-365-9111

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**Board Member-Gary Johnson**,

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**Board Member-Mike Williams**,

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**Membership Chair-Victoria Kollmann**

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**Newsletter Chair-Suzanne Paulson** 515-229-7748

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**Awards Chair-Marcia Gracey**, 515-281-7643 (work)

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**Nominations Chair-Gary Herrig**,

[gary.herrig@mchsi.com](mailto:gary.herrig@mchsi.com)

**Legislative Chair-Ellen Sokolowski**, 1-800-432-5852,

ext. 3280 [ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov](mailto:ellen.sokolowski@iowa.gov)

**APSE Liaison-Sherry Becker**,

[sherry@nivcservices.org](mailto:sherry@nivcservices.org)

### Division Chairs

**RCE Association-John Lee-Egan**,

[john.lee-egan@iowa.gov](mailto:john.lee-egan@iowa.gov)

**JPD-Job Placement Division**

Vacant

**Please contact any of these individuals if you have questions about or suggestions for IRA!**



## COUNT US IN

The National Rehabilitation Association needs your support. **Count Us In** is our annual fund raising campaign. Can we count on you? I hope so as all of us working together can complete the puzzle and help NRA fulfill its mission!

Think about it...what would you pay for programs and services to boost your rehabilitation skills and professional growth as an NRA member? Such programs and services as:

- Educational training conferences with affordable, multiple and varied opportunities to earn continuing education credits
- Access to websites on the local and national level and with current rehabilitation information as well as regular e-mail notifications and announcements.
- A governmental affairs program that provides current and accurate advocacy and legislative updates relating to rehabilitation
- Publications such as the quarterly *Journal of Rehabilitation* which is internationally acclaimed and *Contemporary Rehab*, a bi-monthly association newsletter with timely rehabilitation information and important Division and general membership news
- Opportunities for professional and special interest divisions
- National, Regional and State chapter membership
- Participation in community service activities that build good will toward the rehabilitation profession
- Professional liability and health insurance
- Members only financial services
- Powerful professional networking with other professionals
- Leadership development and skill building
- Membership certificate

**Priceless-right?** Your membership with the National Rehabilitation Association provides all of that and more! ***There are not many true bargains left today, but your membership with NRA qualifies as one!***

As you can imagine, annual dues alone can't cover the necessary expense of providing services and benefits to NRA members. Your support beyond annual dues is very important to accomplishing our organization goals. To recognize your support of this campaign, all chapters, regions, divisions and individual donors will be listed on the **Count Us In Honor Roll** to be published in *Contemporary Rehab* and placed on the NRA website.

Thank you for considering an investment in the success of the National Rehabilitation Association. Can we count on you? Please make your donation today to help NRA fulfill its mission.

-----clip and mail-----

\_\_\_ Yes, I would like to support the National Rehabilitation Association. Enclosed is my contribution.

\_\_\_\$1,000 \_\_\_\$500 \_\_\_ \$250 \_\_\_\$100 \_\_\_\$75 \_\_\_\$50 \_\_\_\$ 25 \_\_\_other

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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PH: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge \$ \_\_\_ to my \_\_\_ VISA \_\_\_ Mastercard

Account number \_\_\_\_\_ Expiration date \_\_\_\_\_

Please return to the National Rehabilitation Association

633 S. Washington

Alexandria, Virginia 22314

For more information please go to [www.nationalrehab.org](http://www.nationalrehab.org)

**IOWA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION**



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