

Iowa Rehabilitation Association Newsletter 1st Quarter 2009

Suzanne Paulson, Editor

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT Harlietta Helland

Good news! The Clarion in Cedar Rapids has offered rooms for the fall conference, October 14 through 16, at the great rate of \$79 and it includes a hot breakfast! Refrigerators, shower chairs, rooms near the elevators, and other accessibility features are available upon request when you make your reservation. John TenPas completed the access survey and assisted the hotel in making the appropriate changes. Go ahead and make your reservations now! The toll free number is 1-877-949-2992. The web site is <http://www.clarioncr.com/> See Jonathan's article about the upcoming training conference elsewhere in the newsletter.

At the first quarterly board meeting, the board made decisions on:

- Delaying a Youth Scholarship program until we have a funding stream in place to insure longevity
- Holding the fall training conference in the Cedar Rapids/Iowa City area in support of their rebuilding efforts after the flood
- Supporting certain state legislation – see your website for legislative updates
- Financially assisting legislative chair, Ellen Sokolowski, to attend the Governmental Affairs Seminar
- Approving committee chairs as follows: Jonathan Ice, Conference Committee; Marcia Gracey, Awards Committee; Ellen Sokolowski, Legislative Committee; Roger Carter, By-Laws & Policy Committee; Victoria Kollmann, Membership Committee; John TenPas, Nominations and Elections; Mike Williams, Web Site Committee; Suzie Paulson, Newsletter Committee. All of these individuals are willing to serve as

mentors and welcome you to join their committee. Volunteer now!

Additionally, we learned that the Association of Persons in Supported Employment will not be joining us at our conference this fall. NRA is considering a new membership category to include associates, assistants, and other rehabilitation professionals. The next board meeting will be held May 1st in Des Moines with the third quarter meeting held at the Clarion in Cedar Rapids on July 31st. All members are welcome to attend board meetings and provide input.
Harlietta Helland

Message from a Member

As a new member to the Iowa Rehabilitation Association's board I offered a suggestion in our last meeting that we should consider extending our network for organizations of people with disabilities. The idea came to me since I am an active member on our local CHADD (Children and Adults with Disabilities) and my wife, a therapist, is the treasurer to the local NAMI (National Alliance for the Mentally Ill) chapter. In addition, I had the benefit of giving talks to two national organizations these past two years, ADDA (Adults with Attention Deficit Disorder) and a tele-training to the American Coaches Association. The ACA serves persons with organization issues.

Before I gave my talks to these national organizations I had to make some phone calls around the U.S. to see the relationship between organizational coaches and vocational rehabilitation. I found they were not aware of each other. Coaches did not know that vocational rehabilitation could be a possible funding source for their coaching services and could help with other employment needs of their clients who were looking for work or were trying to become entrepreneurs. Vocational rehabilitation counselors did not know of coaching services that could help their underachieving high school and college students achieve and their entrepreneurs follow through in business ventures.

There were about 400 professionals and consumers from throughout the U.S. and some from other countries in the ADDA meeting in Minneapolis.

There were about 1000 people at the CHADD in Chicago. There was no representative from the state/federal vocational rehabilitation program at either event. In the CHADD meeting in Chicago, I talked with the president and told her vocational rehabilitation needs to be here - we need to be aware of each other. Mrs. Green, the president, said "I am aware of vocational rehabilitation since they have been making a huge difference in helping my son with ADHD be successful."

In our recent IRA meeting, President Harlietta suggested I write my idea for the IRA newsletter. I agreed. So I decided to call NRA in Washington to be sure I was not "reinventing the wheel." Bev Stafford, Executive Director, picked up the phone and we had a cordial talk. (What a great organization with this access!) She said there is the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities made of agencies that serve people with disabilities.

I viewed their web site and see 100 agencies are in partnership. The site says they research public policy and offer testimony to congress and plus encourage people with disabilities to advocate for themselves. So I was close to reinventing the wheel. However, what I believe is still needed is to have members of NRA (and IRA chapters) be on their boards and attend their annual meetings as liaison persons. Why NRA? Because NRA serves all disabilities so they can be the common bond. I would start out with no cost to either body for the liaison membership and no cost for one person for the registration fee for the annual national and state meetings. NRA doesn't have staff or money to send a liaison to 100 national meetings but they can coordinate with members- liaisons- of NRA who can communicate and report. In the meantime, I would like to see IRA start a dialogue (polylogue?) by inviting the other advocacy groups in the state to our annual meeting in which they can update us and become aware of us and the NRA.

A note...

The Board of Directors of the Iowa Rehabilitation Association has made the decision to take positions on pieces of legislation of importance to persons with disabilities. E-mails will be sent to you to have you take action, such as notifying your legislator of your position and interest on an issue. For those of you who have supplied NRA with your

e-mail address, your name has already been placed on this list. If you would like to be part of this, please send your e-mail address where you would like to receive this information to Ellen Sokolowski at esokolowski@mchsi.com with the subject heading Legislative Advocacy.



2009 AWARDS CEREMONY

By Marcia Gracey

Once again the time has come to put your thinking caps on, grab your pen or keyboard and nominate a client for the Achiever of the Year or the Chuck Wood Award. If you attended the conference and were there for the Awards luncheon you realize what a worthwhile effort this is. To hear the story of how someone with all kinds of barriers and bad things happening in their lives, persists and continues to push to improve their lives - and succeeds! I am sure you have all worked with clients who exemplify this type of determination and grit.

I want you to consider your co-workers or other professionals you work with daily who are working hard to assist their clients and consumers to reach their goals. Whether it is working with clients to determine their job goal or working with an employer to meet their needs, either by supplying qualified clients to fill job openings or being available to discuss employer concerns regarding disabilities or reasonable accommodations. Consider nominating a friend or co-worker for the Counselor of the Year Award, or the Bill Donahue Award for excellence in job placement, or the Gerry Byers Award.

Just as a reminder, last year the following people were recognized: Frank Potter (VR counselor in Dubuque) with over 30 years experience received Counselor of the Year. Joleen Schulz (VR counselor in Carroll) received the Bill Donahue Award, recognizing her dedicated work assisting her clients with employment. I was humbled by receiving the Gerry Byers Award. Please look in this newsletter for the nomination criteria for each of the awards.

If you have questions please give me a call at 515-281-4268 (until April 30) or 515-321-8162, or my home 515-243-0042. Tim and I share Email

at t.gracey@mchsi.com. I would like to receive nominations for the Achiever of the Year by September 4, 2009 at 4512 SW 16th St., Des Moines, IA 50315. Please watch the newsletter for deadlines for the other awards. I know our awards luncheon this year will be a big success.

Legislative Report

The 111th Congress convened on January 6th and began immediately on establishing the rules on which the House and Senate will operate. They have also made some new committee assignments as well. **Representative Todd Tiahrt (R-KS)** has been named the Ranking Minority Member of the Appropriates Committee of the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education while **Representative Tom Latham** assumes a similar role for the Departments of Transportation and Housing and Urban Development. Both are new appointees to these roles.

The Senate Republican Leadership, having lost at least two committee slots per committee due to their shrinking minority after elections, have made several appointments to key committees: **Senator Michael Enzi (R-WY)** already the Ranking Minority Member on the Health, Education and Labor and Pensions (HELP) Committee has been added to the Senate Finance Committee. The HELP and Finance Committee control the health care agenda in the Senate and other issues of importance to persons with disabilities. Two other Senators, **Hatch (R-UT)** and **Roberts (R-KS)** also sit on both committees. **Republican Senator John McCain** has been appointed to the HELP Committee which **Senator John Cornyn (R-TX)** is a new member of the Finance Committee, New Republican members of the Appropriations Committee are **George Voinovich (R-OH)**, **Lisa Murkowski (R-AK)** and **Susan Collins (R-ME)**

FY2009 Appropriations...At the time of this writing, the Democratic leadership in the US Senate was unable to secure the necessary sixty votes to pass the \$410 billion FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill. Several Democrats have voiced their opposition to the bill, primarily due to the \$8 billion in earmarked spending. The Omnibus Appropriations bill would fund the nin FY 2009 appropriations bills left over from the last Congress. Virtually all human services spending is contained in this bill. The Senate defeated several amendments that would have cut spending through tactics such as eliminating all earmarked spending and freezing funding for the entire fiscal year at the FY 2008 level. Both Houses of Congress voted to keep the federal government operating for another week as the Senate continues to debate the FY 2009 Omnibus Appropriations bill.

The Economic Stimulus Bill passed both houses of Congress and was signed into law by President

Obama. What this means financially for various programs in the state of Iowa and nationally is as follows:

State Fiscal Stabilization Fund: \$386.3 million to help local schools districts and public colleges and universities avoid layoffs. Incentive grants are also offered as a reward for meeting key education performance measures. This funding can also be used for other high priority needs such as public safety and other critical services.

State Employment Services Grants: \$3.9 million to Iowa Workforce Development to match unemployed individuals in job openings and provide customized reemployment services.

State Grants for Job Training: \$6.3 million in Dislocated Workers State Grants, \$5.2 million for Youth State Grants and \$1.6 million for Adult State Grants. These funds will help Iowa Workforce Development and workforce investment boards meet the immediate workforce needs of local communities, as well as invest in training to help[prepare the workforce for the economy of tomorrow.

Other Workforce Development: A total of \$950 million is available to the US Department of Labor for the following: \$500 million for grants focusing on training, research and labor exchange for "Green Jobs", such as those in energy efficiency and renewable energy, \$250 million is available for training capacity building at community colleges and other training providers in health care and other high growth industries, and \$200 million is available for National Emergency Grants to communities particularly hit hard by mass layoffs and other economics dislocations.

Vocational Rehabilitation Teraining:\$5.7 million for Vocational Rehabilitation to help individuals with disabilities prepare for and sustain gainful employment.

AmeriCorps: \$200 million for AmeriCorps programs nationally. These funds will be used for new or expanded AmeriCorps grants, and \$65 million will be used for additional VISTA volunteers. These funds will be used to support part-time and full-time volunteers at non-profit organizations helping those hardest hit by the flood and economic downturn.

Job Corps: \$250 million to address immediate Job Corps facility repairs and renovation, as well as support construction at the new Job Corps Center in Ottumwa. Up to 15 percent of available funds also may be used for existing Job Corps Centers that are facing shortfalls in their current operating budgets.

YouthBuild: \$50 million to help disadvantaged youth re-connect with education and engage in construction skills training. Competitive grants are awarded by the US Department of Labor and these funds will support grants under a grant competition that closed earlier this year, as well as future grant competitions. The added benefits of the YouthBuild program is the creation of affordable housing in low-income communities.

The White House has sent out information where the jobs will be located and how many jobs will be in each state. In *Employment Numbers by State* it is predicted that there will be 37,000 jobs in Iowa of the 3.5 million new jobs that will either be saved or created. In *Employment Numbers by Congressional Districts* it breaks down as follows for Iowa's five Congressional districts:

Congressional District 1 7,300
Congressional District 2 7,700
Congressional District 3 7,700
Congressional District 4 7,400
Congressional District 5 6,900

President Obama hosted a White House Summit on Health Care Reform which was attended by approximately 82 policy stakeholders (trade associations representing the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, providers, business and consumer groups). 23 Senators, 32 Members of the House of Representatives and 8 "everyday" Americans. Following the Summit, the White House announced that five regional forums would be held in late March-early April in California, Iowa, Michigan, North Carolina and Vermont. The date for the Iowa Health Care Reform Summit is March 23, 2009 in Des Moines, Iowa. The summit will be hosted by Governor Chet Culver.

The full Senate Budget Committee met on March 10th to convene a hearing on the President's fiscal year 2010 budget proposal. While the President's proposal isn't expected until May, Congress will begin working to create its budget now.

In Iowa...

March 13th marked the first funnel deadline of the legislative session. Bills that have not passed out of one committee by March 13th are considered dead unless offered later as an amendment to another live bill or as a leadership bill. Bills that spend money or include a tax are not subject to the funnel deadline.

Funnel Survivors include the following bills:

Mental Health Parity. Mental Health Parity survived not just this first funnel-it has advanced so that it is alive for the rest of the session. Both the House and Senate committees voted mental health parity bills out before the deadline (HF 234 and SSB 1002). Legislators are allowed to take a shortcut if two bills that are similar are sitting on both House and Senate debate calendars. Once one chamber has passed the bill, the other chamber can avoid re-sending it to committee, and simply "attach it" to the other bill on the debate calendar. A lot can still happen, so do let your legislators know that you want to end the inequity in health care coverage for mental illness. A note: SSB 1002 should be renumbered soon, but legislators should still be able to find the bill even if you sue this number.

Service Animals... Persons with disabilities that use service animals may get help if HF 106 continues to advance. The bill which made it through the first funnel,

would require DHX to apply for a waiver to allow Medicaid to pay for costs associated with using and keeping a service animal. If a waiver is approved, funding would be required to pay for this service.

Autism Mandates... The bills to require private insurance to pay for autism treatment did not make the funnel (HF 1 and SF 1). A different bill (HF 501) did make it out of committee and is safe from the funnel-it required the state to apply for an autism waiver. Some activists wish that the state would look at a "developmental disabilities" waiver and include more children, not just those with autism. If a waiver is approved, the state will need to find money to pay for its third of the services tab (the federal government picks up the remaining portion).

MS Lottery Games.. Groups are becoming more creative in finding ways to secure funds. Activists with the Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Society asked legislators to introduce a bill (SF 77) to create a new lottery game, with the money generated from the game to go to funding MS education and research. The bill made it through the funnel, so it is alive until the next deadline.

Automatic Absentee Ballots.. Iowa voters who want to vote by mail have to request an absentee ballot for each election, even if they always wish to vote by mail. A new bill, that survived the first funnel (HF 670) will allow a person to request a ballot to come automatically each election. The automatic renewal would expire should the person ever miss a vote.

Caucus Time Off. With record numbers of Iowans attending the caucuses in 2008, voting activists were concerned that many Iowans were unable to attend the evening event as they had to work, and feared losing their jobs. Under a new bill that has survived the funnel (HF 675 and SF 125), employers would be required to give the employees unpaid time off work to attend the caucuses.

Break Time for Medications... A bill that required businesses to give their breast feeding employees time to pump breast milk was expanded before passing out of committee (HF 683). It now requires businesses to also give employees unpaid break time with reasonable privacy to self administer prescription medications.

Mental Health/Disability Services Redesign... Sen. Jack Hatch and Sen. Steve Kettering floated their ideas to redesign the seriously underfunded adult mental health and disability services (MH/DS). Sen. Hatch proposed a regional approach with a school-aid type formula to distribute funds (SF 134) and Sen. Kettering suggested the state take over paying for everything (SF 144). Both bills died in the funnel, but discussion is ongoing about ways to provide incentives for counties to regionalize MH/DS services and funding to be distributed more equitably (like through a school formula). If a decision is made in this area, legislators would likely add it to the Health/Human Services Budget Bill.

Iowa Rehabilitation Counselors and Educators Association

As John Lee-Egan shared in the previous IRA Newsletter, IRCEA members met during the IRA Training Conference and agreed to develop a Constitution and Bylaws so we can be recognized by RCEA as an official affiliate. Lisa Chellew prepared a draft and I have sent that out to all 19 IRCEA members for comments.

If you did not receive this information, I do not have your correct email address. Please contact me at victoria.kollmann@blind.state.ia.us or 319.230.8737 to update your contact information.

IRECA hopes to offer ethics training this spring or summer. Information will follow.

The 2009 IRCEA Board is President - Victoria Kollmann; Vice President-Lisa Chellew; Treasurer – Jackie Wiperman; Secretary – Suzie Paulson; Board Member/Bylaws – Roger Carter; Board Member – Ray Olejniczak.

Victoria Kollmann

IRA Membership Report

Hope everyone is having a great 2009!!

Since reaching our big 100 Member landslide at the 2008 IRA Training Conference, there has been a change in staff at the NRA offices, and the frequency of membership reports has decreased. I hope this is a temporary situation but, in the meantime, this affects the accuracy and timeliness of the information I can provide to you. I need your help. Please let me know when you renew your membership so I can keep our records up to date here in Iowa. If you have address, phone or email changes, please let me know.

Also, please tell me if you would like a notification when the IRA newsletter is available on the website. We will continue to mail the newsletter to your designated address until you tell us otherwise.

Recently, you were notified to access the IRA website to learn about vital legislative issues. Our

website can be a powerful tool, and it is important that we have your correct contact information.

Currently, the Membership Committee consists of Sheila Stoeckel, Marcia Gracey, Tim Gracey and me. Anyone wanting to be a part of this committee, or having suggestions or comments, please contact me at victoria.kollmann@blind.state.ia.us or 319-230-8737.

Victoria, IRA Member Chair

2009 IRA Board Member Contact List

President-Harlietta Helland, harlietta@marshallnet.com
Vice President-Matt Bruinekool,
matt.bruinekool@drake.edu
President-Elect-Jonathan Ice319-365-9111
jonathan.ice@blind.state.ia.us
Secretary-Mary Augustus, 515-573-8175 (work)
mary.augustus@iowa.gov
Treasurer-Rosie Thierer, rosie.thierer@blind.state.ia.us
Past President- John TenPas, 515-281-5969
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Board Member-Curt Jones, curt.jones@iowa.gov
Board Member-Lisa Chellew, lisa.chellew1@va.gov
Board Member-Gary Johnson,
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By-laws & Policy Chair-Roger Carter,
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Division Chairs
RCE Association-Victoria Kollman,
victoria.kollmann@blind.state.ia.us
JPD-Job Placement Division- Matt Bruinekool,
matt.bruinekool@drake.edu

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

2009 CHUCK WOOD MEMORIAL AWARD

The **Iowa Rehabilitation Association** is seeking nominations for the Chuck Wood Memorial Award. This award is given to recognize the achievements of a person with a disability who has attained a high level of independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in the community.

If you know of a person who has demonstrated achievement of their goal of independence in their community and personal life, we strongly encourage you to submit a nomination packet.

The Chuck Wood Award will be presented at the Iowa Rehabilitation Association Annual Conference Awards Banquet.

NOMINEE _____

ADDRESS _____

SPONSOR _____

ADDRESS _____

TELEPHONE _____

A nomination packet may include:

- One or more nomination letter(s)
- Information concerning the nominee's disability
- Nominee's personal achievements

Please send your nomination packet to:

Jonathan Ice
Iowa Department for the Blind
411 3rd Street SE, Suite 745
Cedar Rapids IA 52401-1811
jonathan.ice@blind.state.ia.us

Nominations should be submitted no later than September 1, 2009

IOWA REHABILITATION ASSOCIATION
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