

Special Interest Articles:

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2012 IRA Conference Report



Jeffery Morgan
President Elect and
2012 Conference Chair

Well the dust has settled, I've caught up on missed hours of sleep, and the books are closed on another IRA training conference. Modestly, I thought it was GREAT. We made money. Everyone I've talked to was impressed by the quality of presentations, and folks seemed to have fun. The first thing I want to do is acknowledge the hard work of the conference committee: Gary Johnson, Lindsay Walker, Jamie Phipps, Jessica Schneider, Mike Williams, Denise Hubert,

and Tim and Marcia Gracey. If this conference was at all successful, it is due to these people's creative ideas, hard work, tireless energy, and the willingness to go along with whatever wacky idea I came up with.

I got to peek at Gary's article; so, I won't repeat what he's written, but I want to say a word about our presenters. Wow! The range and depth of the information presented was amazing. To hear Kathy West-Evans talk about the NET and VR's efforts to work with businesses was inspirational and so important for what we do. It was an added treat for me to drive her to and from the airport and get to chat about issues in our home states. She is impressed at what we are doing here in Iowa, and I think that should make us feel good. I love going to conference for those "battery recharging" moments. Speaking of which, I don't know about you, but it made my heart smile to see Sheila Stoeckel talking about benefits and the next chapter of her job. Reps. Dave Heaton and Bob Bacon gave us all much to think about and discuss as they talked about issues that are legislatively on the table for individuals with disabilities. Former Lt Governor Sally Pederson and Janis Mendenhall featured the stories of two REACH students who candidly and humorously talked about what the program was like for them. And, what else would you expect from a conference entitled "Connecting" than our keynote Patricia Leahy being Skyped in? My high tech moment makes me shake my head and say, "How did I pull that off?" (With lots of help.)

Conference Update (Cont. from page 1)

I don't want to slight any of the other fine presenters by not mentioning them. At one point, I went from room to room at several breakout sessions, just to absorb as much as I could. As a grad of U of I, it was gratifying to see so many presenters from the university showcasing their rehab knowledge and skill sets. A special note of gratitude goes out to Dr. John Wadsworth. After he gave an excellent presentation on working with passive aggressive personalities, he stepped in at the last minute to give an ethics presentation the next day. He also went above and beyond by attending both evening socials and bringing students from the U of I Counseling Program with him. Some of you got to talk to them and tell the IRA story. I hope to see these students at future IRAs.

And the socials! Dave Zollo rocked our souls with some very funky music on Wednesday night. This was after the spirited first-ever College Bowl Quiz stretched our minds and increased our competitive spirit. The Women of Drake, ably assisted by Jonathan Ice, proved victorious, and in this unbiased judge's opinion, squashed the competition. My memory book moment will be the U of I student who named all the planets in Chinese so he could get to the correct answer of Uranus. Thursday night was crackling with energy as it brought out the high tech debut of Electric Bingo with Jessica, and Say Uncle dipped into their oldies songbook to prove the old saying "the family that rocks together stays together."

The awards luncheon was also a highlight as we got the chance to honor some well-deserved clients and colleagues. The Chuck Wood Memorial Award went to Harry Olmstead who also received a plug for his upcoming photo exhibit. IVRS Counselor Ann Birnbaum presented the IRA Achievement Award to Sonia Meade and described the team approach that assisted in Sonia's successful placement. Jonathan Ice accepted the Gerry Byers Award with his typical gentlemanly grace. Vienna Hoang of the Mason City office received the Bill Donohue Award, and brought us to tears and laughter when she described her mother as her inspiration to work in placement.

Even though I didn't get to attend, I heard some great things about the Alumni Reunion. (No pictures or stories unfortunately.) This is something I hope continues at every conference.

The vendors and exhibitors were all great and very informative. The ones that were there for the first time expressed an interest in coming back which is always a good sign.

So, it's over, it was good, and I didn't get voted off the island. I will be back next year as your humble president. One last thought that I will be returning to in 2013 a great deal is this: I appreciate the support of the IVRS administration allowing its employees to attend the IRA conferences. Spread this message to your office supervisors. To the people who attended the conference, thank you. Tell your



Pres. Elect Summit -- Ellen Sokolowski, President Elect of the NRA and Jeffery Morgan, President Elect of the IRA

Conference Update (Cont. from page 2)

colleagues, supervisors, and friends about IRA and get them to come next year. To those members who couldn't come, you were missed; but we hope to see you next year. Because I tell you what, the 2013 conference most likely will be in Ames, and with Lindsay Walker doing the organizing, it's going to be something outstanding!



Meet the New Members of the 2013 IRA Board

It is my great honor as incoming IRA President to announce the results of our IRA Board election held Oct 18th in Iowa City.

President-Elect – Lindsay Walker
 Vice President – Jessica Schneider
 Secretary – Valerie Osterberg

Board Members at Large (Two year Term)
 Jamie Phipps
 Jamie Schwickerath
 Mike Williams

Board Members at Large (One year Term)
 Matt Bruinekool

I'm excited to be working with such dedicated professionals and know good things will be happening for IRA in 2013.

President-Elect, Jeffery Morgan

Brag and Steal Report and Job Placement Division (JDP)

The Brag and Steal had an attendance of 40 people, with a total profit of \$1,071.78. JCP will be donating most of the profit to form a Drake University JCP club. The president of JCP has not been officially elected as of this publication.



Gary Johnson
President and
2011 Conference Chair

President's Message

Kudos to Jeffrey Morgan and the 2012 Conference Committee. A great conference chair has a good working committee and draws on the strength of its members. Well done!

Everybody has their own experiences at the IRA conference. Mine started early as a number of committee members and board members arrived on Tuesday night; so, we had time to socialize and get prepared for the conference.

I am not going to summarize the conference - Jeffrey Morgan gets that honor. But, I want to start by commenting on our opening speaker, Dr. Terry Wahls. Dr. Wahls is inspirational because she has secondary progressive multiple sclerosis and had reached the point where she was confined to a wheelchair. She shared her story of restorative health by intense, direct nutrition and other changes that she made in her therapy and lifestyle. Now, she's walking, riding a bike and horseback riding! I pay a lot of attention to Dr. Wahl's message. We all live and work with people who have illnesses and dietary issues. We all receive medical care that addresses symptoms and not necessarily the underlying causes. As some of you know I struggle with dietary issues as well. Is it any surprise that the shoppers in a Health Food store look healthier than those who shop at a typical grocery store? I know she left many of us pondering what additional steps we will do.

The 2012 IRA Conference was so much fun for me because I did things that I do not normally do. One of the things you learned as a conference chair is when there are opportunities to pitch in. When you transport the speakers you get the opportunity to visit with them privately- **What a wealth of information!** I sat in on sessions I never normally would because someone was needed to introduce a speaker, advance slides on the PowerPoint, or sign off on attendance forms. Yes-I missed some speakers that I wanted to see, but I gained such a wealth of information in areas that can't but help me in the future.

Jeffrey Morgan was so accommodating! Literally, during the conference I found out that the MV1 was going to be available in Iowa during the days we were at the conference (MV1 stands for Mobility Vehicle version 1, i.e. wheelchair accessible). This became a last-minute add-on and many of us took the



Rosie Thierer and Marcia Gracey enjoy the spacious back seat of the MV-1.

President's Message (Cont. from page 4)

opportunity to see the vehicle. I had promised Terry Cunningham that he could see it if it was ever in Iowa City. When the conference was over, the sales representative and I went and picked up Terry and took him for a ride. I do have to correct a comment that I made in announcing that the vehicle was going to be at the conference. I thought the vehicle could accommodate up to three wheelchairs at one time - but that is a future vehicle in the works. The current MV1 accommodates one wheelchair and three passengers.

Lastly, I again want to thank Dr. Matt Bruinekool for again encouraging the Drake Vocational Rehabilitation grad students to attend our conference. There was a good representation of students at this year's conference and they get to see the wonderful representation of the IRA members. I'm fortunate in that I knew some of them and I'm so pleased to have this quality of future member for our organization. I know there was lots of contact information exchanged - **AND THAT'S WHAT WE ARE ABOUT!!!!**

HARRY OLMSTEAD WINS THE CHUCK WOOD AWARD

Periodically the Iowa Rehabilitation Association bestows the Chuck Wood award to an Iowan with a disability who has attained a high level of independence, self-reliance, and self-sufficiency in the community. This year's Chuck Wood award winner was Harry Olmstead of Iowa City. He was nominated by Access2Independence, the local center for independent living.

Harry grew up in Connecticut, got his degree in special education at UW-Milwaukee, and taught for many years in the field of special education. In 2000 he underwent total replacement of his right knee, and got a bad MRSA infection while recovering. His choice was death by infection or to have the leg taken off. From the work he did, he knew that people could live with dignity while having a disability; so, the choice wasn't hard. Since then he has been an above-the-knee amputee. He tried prosthetic legs, but found them very unhandy, so prefers to get around in a wheelchair. He sees his adjustment to the loss of his limb as having been largely on his own.

Harry moved to Iowa City two years ago and has been very active in the disability community ever since. He has a part-time job at the U of I medical school in the simulated patient program, working primarily on developing the communication skills of medical students and budding allied health professionals. His volunteer activities include:

- membership on the Johnson County Paratransit Advisory Committee
- chairperson of the Iowa City Human Rights Commission
- chairperson and board member, Access2Independence
- board member of Johnson County Livable Communities Advisory Board
- co-founder of the Amputee Support Group for Eastern Iowa.

In his spare time Harry likes to do photography (he had an exhibit of his work in November at Uptown Bill's) and raised-bed gardening.

Images from the Conference



Checking the MV-1



Sonia Meade, winner of the achievement award, and her parents James and Hannelore



Lindsay Walker, Jamie Phipps, Jami Schwickerath, and Jessica Schneider



Heath Allen with Mardi Gras Raffle Prize



Say Uncle

IRCEA Update from Meeting on Wednesday, Oct 17

We only had 5 or 6 people at this meeting so we didn't think we could decide much.

Treasurer report: \$1,708.27
Silent Auction 2012 proceeds: \$308.00
Current Balance: \$2,016.27

Jackie will have the discussion with Matt about how much money IRCA has and what expenses have been. Jeffrey discussed history and rationale for email asking for donations from IRCEA for speaker costs. There had been a discussion last year at the IRCEA board meeting about perhaps contributing to the cost of interpreting so that's why Jeffrey generated the email. Members present decided that conference committee needed to look at specific line items for budget to more accurately know what expenses and possible earnings will be. We also need to factor in cost of interpreting as an expected conference expense. That discussion has already started.

We also discussed IRCEA membership and how we can expand it. Discussed that this is the 2nd year in a row we haven't had any nominations for the Counselor of the Year. Discussion eligibility criteria for this award, how we can recruit new members and decided this would be a topic of future meetings for the coming year. Also, we discussed how we could get current members more involved. Need to update our membership list.

With only five members present, we decided we shouldn't hold elections and that the current 2012 officers serve for 2013. They are:

President: Matt Bruinekool
Vice-President: Lois Staff
Treasurer: Jackie Wipperman
Secretary: Diane Hernandez
Board Members:
Rodney Dunn
Jeffrey Morgan

Jeffrey updated the group on discussion at the morning board meeting. The Drake University student chapter is a work in progress. They are working on the by-laws for their chapter. They will meet in January to elect officers for 2013. They have created a Facebook page and the board will talk about duplicating their good idea for an IRA Facebook page.

-Minutes reconstructed by Jeffrey Morgan and Jackie Wipperman



Legislative Report

Congress and the Budget:

Congress needed to find a way to cut \$1.2 trillion in spending by January 1, 2013 or programs would be automatically cut through a process called sequestration.

Sequestration means automatic budget cuts. If Congress does not meet the deadline of either:

- Passing a bill that cuts spending the way that it wants. This could be done with across the board cuts to all programs, by making bigger cuts to fewer programs, by increasing taxes or any combination that adds up to \$1.2 trillion dollars or
- Do nothing and allow cuts to begin automatically January 1, 2013.

Congress did not pass anything prior to November 6th Election Day, as they wanted to see who was elected and who is in control of the House, Senate and White House.

The \$1.2 trillion dollar in cuts has to happen over a period of 10 years, so the first year of cuts amounts to \$110 billion. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) plans to begin:

- Medicare payments to providers will be reduced by 2% (11 billion in 2013); so, Medicare providers will be reimbursed 98 cents on the dollar. This may make it more difficult to find Medicare providers or access more costly specialty care.
- Mandatory (required) programs will be cut by \$5.2 billion. The biggest of which supports farm prices. Others include student loans, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Social Services Block Grant. Some programs are exempt and include Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid. Others include the Children's Health Insurance Program, Food Stamp program, Child Nutrition, SSI, tax credit such as the Child Tax Credit and the Earned Income Tax Credit, veterans' compensation and other benefits and federal retirement.
- Other programs are cut by \$38.5 billion. Programs that will be cut include pay for air traffic controller, national parks, food and drug inspections, and science and technology research.
- Defense spending will be cut by \$54.7 billion, including the costs of wars and national security. The President has the ability to stop cuts that affect military personnel, but would have to make these cuts up in other areas of defense spending,
- Funding for Aging and Disability Resource Center will be cut by 8% (1.4 billion). ADRCs are the one-stop shops that provide information and assistance to persons who need public or private resources.

Legislative Update (Cont. from page 8)

- Funding for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) will be cut by \$1.2 billion. Almost \$1 out of every \$3 cut in education spending will come from programs for children with disabilities. An estimated 15,000 special education teachers could lose their jobs and fewer skilled support staff would be available to assist children with special needs (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities)
- Funding for federal housing programs would be cut by \$94 billion. This means more than 140,000 households that currently include an elderly person or a person with a disability would receive lower levels of supportive services. Other areas affected would include 1,000 fewer fair housing complaints being investigated, fewer families accessing services, and longer waits to get rid of lead where children live (Congressional Budget Office)
- Funding for the Social Services Block Grant to states could mean big cuts to social services program. Funding for the DHS redesign may be at risk if the DHS budget is adopted as proposed using SSBG funds to pay for redesign.

The House and the Senate came to an agreement that allows for a continuing resolution (CR). This is a six month continuing resolution, which based on other CRs is somewhat long. Most others have been a month or so and extended. This was an idea that was promoted by the House conservatives, betting that Republicans would take over the Senate and win the White House in November and be in a better position to force spending cuts in the next Congress. The CR was a victory for President Obama and the Democrats in protecting their priorities. Since president Obama won re-election it sets up a confrontation as Republicans will be in a position to demand new cuts from health care reforms as the price for keeping the government open.

The General Accounting Office (GAO) has published a paper on "Better Federal Coordination Could Lessen challenges in the Transition from High School" This report, completed by the GAO was requested by Representative George Miller, CA. The report concluded that there was not coordination between the agencies of the Department of Education, Department of Labor, Health and Human Services, and SSA in dealing with the transition of students from high school to post secondary services. The interviewed agency staff from the following states of Nevada, Florida, Minnesota, California and Maryland. The recommendation from the report is that all four agencies need to develop a strategy to improve services to persons transitioning from high school.

In Iowa

In Iowa the Governor has asked for two year budget requests and below lists those steps of the budget process:

- Agency sets priorities
- Governor sets priorities. He will look at the agency request, decides how much is to be spent overall and makes changes to the agency request to reflect his priorities.

Legislative Update (Cont. from page 9)

- Governor's request to the legislature Governor gives his budget request to the legislature, shortly after his Condition of the State speech on the second day of the session.
- Legislature sets its priorities. Legislative budget committees work together to develop a budget that reflects their priorities. Budget must be passed by the end of the legislative session
- Governor's approval. He can approve, veto the whole bill or line item veto.

The next two budget years begin on July 1, 2013, FY 2014 and July 1, 2014 FY 2014.

In November, President Obama won re-election as President of the United States. Not much changed with regard to the leadership in the House and the Senate. The Republicans hold the majority in the House with the Democrats holding the majority in the Senate.

"Falling off of the fiscal cliff" still looms over Congress and the White House and at the time of this writing there did not appear to be any agreement between them on resolution to this issue. The issues require some type of resolution by January 2, 2013 or automatic budget cuts will take place.

Help is a Four-Legged Word by Kathryn Roberts

Dogs hold a special place in the hearts of millions. For individuals with disabilities, service dogs are more than just companions. They can assist as guide dogs, hearing dogs, diabetic alert dogs, seizure alert dogs, psychiatric service dogs, service dogs for individuals with physical impairments and facility dogs.

Guide dogs, also called Leader dogs, are one of the most well-known type of service dogs. A Leader Dog's task is to safely navigate an individual with a visual impairment through their environment. It is the Leader Dog's responsibility to guide the handler through and around obstacles in the surroundings and stop at all street crossings as well as stop movement if traffic is crossing the handler's line of travel.

Hearing dogs assist individuals with hearing impairments by signaling with some physical action (i.e. touching one's arm or leg) when they detect different sounds. A hearing dog then leads the individual to sounds including doorbells, crying babies, ringing phones, fire alarms, or someone calling the individual's name. When in public, hearing dogs are aware of the environment and sounds around them such as a car driving close by.

Seizure Alert Dogs are trained service animals that alert their handler when a seizure is going to occur. These dogs can alert minutes to hours before the seizure occurs. In addition, they can be trained to stay with the individual or use a special telephone to call 9-1-1.

Diabetic alert dogs are trained to detect scent changes in blood sugar levels and warn their handlers. The dog is trained to notify the individual in different ways, including sitting and staring at the person, jumping in to their lap or nudging their body with their nose.

Legislative Update (Cont. from page 9)

Service dogs provide a sense of independence, whether it is to guide someone through their environment safely, raise their mood, provide comfort with difficult medical conditions or provide physical assistance. These special companions allow individuals with a wide array of disabilities to gain confidence and no longer have to depend on others for these services.

For more information on the standards of training, please visit www.assisteddogsinternational.org.

For specific information on guide dogs, visit www.leaderdogsfortheblind.org and for service dogs, www.cci.org. For a listing of service dog training programs, give us a call at 1-800-779-2001.

(Reprinted from the Iowa Compass Newsletter)

Much Thanks to the Outgoing Board for 2012

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Financial Report

This year's training conference was not only a great success for the programming provided, but we were in the black financially -- a remarkable circumstance, as we had not been getting membership rebates from the national organization for several years running. The final figures are: Income of \$8,927.70 from registrations, exhibitors, sponsors, donations, and bingo, vs. expenses of \$7965.07 for hotel expenses, speaker travel, and awards, for a surplus of \$962.63. Pretty sweet!

News flash! On December 27 we received our rebate money for the final two quarters of 2010 and the first three quarters of 2011. That puts us in the black for the year 2012, and will put us on a healthier footing for setting up for this next year's conference.

Iowa Rehabilitation
Association

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We're on the Web!

See us at:
www.iraiaowa.org

**And Now to Start Getting Ready for
Next Year**

**2013 IRA Conference
October 2, 3 & 4**

**Quality Inn and Suites
2601 East 13th Street, Ames, IA 50010**

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