



FRONTLINE

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National Council of Social Security Management Associations, Inc.

Special Interest Articles:

- Find out who David Rust is.
- Step into a day in the life of a Sysco.
- Read about how a MAPS verification dramatically changed a widow's life.

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"I must say the experience through my involvement in attending the meeting helped develop my role as Area Vice President."

Connie Loftin, SF Region

PHILADELPHIA HOSTS NCSSMA'S 38th ANNUAL MEETING

Contributed by Mike Wilson, Dallas Region

The National Council of Social Security Management Associations held its 38th annual meeting October 29th through November 1st, 2007 at the Sheraton Society Hill in historic Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The theme for the meeting, "Philadelphia--Back Where It All Began", could not have provided a better backdrop for the event. Delegates and guests began arriving as early as the Saturday before to register and participate in extracurricular activities such as the Spirit of 76 Ghost Tour, a trip to Atlantic City or the Historical Philly Trolley Tour to name just a few. Many enjoyed walking in and around Philadelphia's historic Downtown soaking up the ambiance.

On Monday, October 29th, the Philadelphia Regional Management Association got things started right with a reception at the hotel. Everyone had the opportunity to socialize with peers from all over the United States. Commissioner Michael Astrue attended the event and it was a wonderful opportunity for members to chat with him. The next morning, special guest speaker Benjamin Franklin gave us an idea of how things used to be in Philadelphia during his lifetime.

NCSSMA President, Rick Warsinskey, convened the plenary session of the meeting introducing Commissioner Michael Astrue. Commissioner Astrue expressed his thanks to Rick and NCSSMA for all the hours of hard work spent on budget issues, stating that good communication with Congress is key to getting SSA's message to policy makers. He discussed the challenges we face with increasing workloads and diminishing

resources and outlined the operational initiatives we face under various budget scenarios. In addition to funding, SSA is working on initiatives to do more with what we have. Quick Disability Decision (QDD) is being expanded nationally. Another initiative being worked on is called compassionate allowances. If we know an allowance is inevitable given the nature of the diagnosis we will skip the five step process and allow the claim with one decision maker. The agency thinks these two initiatives will allow us to process about 15% of our disability claims in an expedited process.

Our next speaker was Linda McMahon, Deputy Commissioner for Operations. Linda opened by thanking NCSSMA for our leadership. The most difficult part of her job is the realization that she can't get us the resources we need to do the job in the field. When asked about closing or consolidating offices she stated that she expected sensible decisions to be made. She doesn't see a time that SSA won't be a presence in the community. "It is an important part of what we are and it is one of our strengths. Unfortunately, in these tight budget times, it has become one of our weaknesses also."

(Article continued on page 3)





"I will work to make sure your unfiltered voice is heard."

President's Corner

Greetings! My name is Greg Heineman, and I'm a native of Omaha, NE. I spent the first eight years of my career with Social Security in offices on the South Side of Chicago. There, I learned first hand how to provide excellent customer service in difficult situations. My co-workers and I took pride in providing a high level of service to those in need. I also spent a year on detail to OPSOS in central office learning about the important activities performed at our headquarters to support the work in the field. Currently I am the District Manager of the Norfolk, NE field office. I've worked for Social Security for 29 years, 19 of those in management. In spite of the day to day tribulations, for me, it is a labor of love.

My belief in the importance of strong management in Social Security is why I have been a member of NCSSMA for my entire

management career, and why I have been active as a regional or national officer for much of that time. Managers are often able to spot trends in service which can be shared with colleagues in other offices, their Area Directors and even Regional Commissioners, but sometimes the filter of the chain of command gets in the way of providing good feedback to our top leadership. This hampers their ability to make the best decisions possible. That is why I fully believe in the motto of NCSSMA, "The Unfiltered Voice of Management." I will work to make sure your unfiltered voice is heard.

Earlier this year, NCSSMA developed a package of suggestions for legislative changes received from members that would simplify and/or streamline our programs. It was submitted to agency leaders and appropriate Congressional committees

for consideration. A second paper involving ideas for deferring workloads in light of our budget crisis is currently being considered by CO staffers. We will soon be offering a third list of suggestions aimed at streamlining processes to allow us to more effectively serve the public.

NCSSMA will continue to work with Congress to obtain adequate funding. We have reached out to other organizations such as AARP who share our concern that the American Public receives the quality service they deserve and have paid for. Internally, we will work with agency leaders to ensure that adequate resources reach field offices and teleservice centers. This will enable us to provide the high quality service that the public deserves and we, as Social Security managers, demand of ourselves.

WHO SAID THIS . . . Regarding the Social Security Act?

"This law represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built but is by no means completed--a structure intended to lessen the force of possible future depressions, to act as a protection to future administrations of the Government against the necessity of going deeply into debt to furnish relief to the needy--a law to flatten out the peaks and valleys of deflation and of inflation--in other words, a law that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide for the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness." answer on page 7.



<http://www.ssaeea.org/>

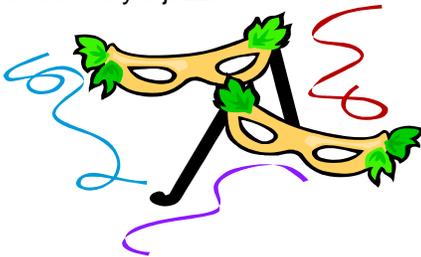
NCSSMA ANNUAL MEETING continued from page 1

McMahon was asked about how the FY 08 budget will be allocated. She stated everyone will get something but most will be focused on where the strongest needs are. Currently she sees a need in the TSCs as there is degradation in 800# service due to the loss of 400 TSRs. She also discussed streamlining initiatives.

Throughout the meeting we worked on the proposed resolutions, editing, debating and fine tuning them until we were satisfied. Since these provide direction to the National Council for the coming year they are the most important part of the meeting. Ultimately 27 resolutions were passed.

Wednesday we had the opportunity to hear Milt Beever from OLMER, who updated us on current LMR initiatives and activities. Later in the day, we heard from our Government Relations Consultant, Rachel Emmons, who covered current activities on the Hill as they relate to SSA. We ended the day with the Candidates Forum.

We enjoyed the President's Reception followed by a banquet and awards ceremony on Wednesday evening. It was a fun, gala affair complete with Mardi Gras style masks. The food was extraordinary and the entertainment was top notch, featuring an instrumental trio that brought the house down with New Orleans style jazz.



After the meal, S.C. Thomas, DM Vicksburg, MS, was honored with NCSSMA's Community Service Award, given annually to a person who provides exceptional community service. This year's winner was richly deserving of that award-- an individual with a true heart for community service, engaging in

community events and activities too numerous to mention here. The next presentation was the Joseph P. Collins award, established in 1978 in memory of the first president of the association. It is given by NCSSMA to the member who, during the preceding year, has done the most to further the objectives of the National Council. This year's winner, Lynn King, Project Manager in the Dallas Regional Office and Past President of the Dallas Region Management Association, personifies the spirit behind this award. She is a dynamic leader with a "never-say-die" attitude who inspires and motivates everyone fortunate enough to come into contact with her to give their very best. Congratulations to both Lynn and S.C. on their well-deserved awards.

Elections were held on Thursday morning. NCSSMA's new officers are:

- President - Greg Heineman, DM Norfolk, NE
- Vice President - Bethany Paradis, DM Saco, ME
- Secretary - Connie Doolen, DM, Roswell, NM
- Treasurer - Hugh Stempfley, DM, West Frankfort, IL
- TSC Rep - Bob Perian, TSC Manager, Pittsburgh PA

Greg named Ron Mitchell, DM Cheyenne, WY as his Executive Officer.

On a personal note, this was my first national meeting. When I was asked to go, my first thought was, "What? Now? With PACS and everything else that's going on?", but I am certainly gratified to have been given this opportunity to work with so many of my colleagues who, before the meeting, were only a name on an email message. I was totally impressed by the professionalism, planning and execution of all facets of the meeting by PRMA. I look forward to my next opportunity to attend a NCSSMA national meeting.

(Visit www.NCSSMA.org for details)

"This was especially revitalizing for me in that the managers participating in NCSSMA are not only genuinely concerned about service to the public and a healthy work environment for employees but are also in a position to do something about it."

Joan Arnold, Denver Region

"Attending my first National Meeting was a wonderful and educational opportunity. It was an eye-opener that gave me the incentive and drive to be more involved in representing not only the requests of Management Staff in the Atlanta Region but the entire nation."

Deborah Thomas, Atlanta Region

"As someone attending for the first time, I was immediately struck by the amount of planning and organization that it took to have the meeting run smoothly. I had a chance to talk to most of the planning committee and was very impressed with their positive attitudes, attention to detail and overall willingness to share some best practices."

Dominick Pratico, NY Region

"I never felt left out even though I was the new kid. Everyone was friendly and made me feel as if I belonged. If I wasn't clear on some issue or on what proper protocol was, someone took the time to explain without making me feel dumb. I also very much enjoyed all the things there were to do in Philadelphia."

Connie Doolen, Dallas Region

Profiles Page Featuring David Rust by Jewell Colbert

NCSSMA would like to welcome our readers to the first in a series of interviews conducted by your peers in the association. We hope our new "Profiles Page" will enable our readers to become familiar with SSA's top leadership. In this issue we had the chance to sit down with David Rust, Acting Deputy Commissioner of the Office of Disability and Income Security Programs.

Who is David Rust?

I describe myself as a local boy who grew up in Baltimore County not far from the SSA Headquarters. I am married and the father of two grown children--a daughter age 26 and a son 28. After graduating from college I became a high school social studies and history teacher from 1965-1970. I took a leave of absence from teaching to take advantage of an opportunity to work on Capital Hill. After 10 ½ years on the Hill, I worked in multiple agencies with the most recent move coming from USDA to SSA in March of 2007. Prior to my current position at SSA, I had the privilege to work as the Associate Commissioner for Disability from 1986-1989 under Commissioner of Dorcas Hardy and as a Special Assistant to Commissioner Gwen King from 1989-1992. It was during an earlier tour at HHS that I first worked with our current Commissioner, Michael Astrue. Fortunately, Commissioner Astrue asked me to return to SSA in 2007. My personal interests include spending time with my family and reading or watching anything related to history, political science and international affairs.

What is your vision for the Office of Disability and Insurance Security Programs? (ODISP)

I oversee a staff of approximately 650 employees which includes five Associate Commissioners. I believe if we are going to be successful ODISP must play a central role in developing policies that are doable from an operations standpoint. To do that we have to work in a collaborative effort with other components such as Operations, Systems, ODAR, etc. to streamline and simplify the agency's policies. In the next few months Social Security's workforce will fall below 60,000 employees. This equates to a decrease of over 20,000 employees since the 1980's. It is very important that we constantly look at all policies based on the resources we have now. Our declining staff requires that changes be made to streamline our policies so that we can continue to serve the public in the manner they have come to expect from our agency.

One of the biggest challenges facing SSA is the "graying" of America. The baby boomer generation is here and at the same time we have declining staff. The elderly dependency ratio will put many new demands on our trust

fund and workloads. Also SSA has been under resourced for several years which has culminated in unprecedented backlogs. As a result, we are constantly looking for new and creative ways to move our workloads with the current resources. We then have to ask the question, "Can we stop doing some things? Or are there things we can do to simplify our processes to better match them to the resources we have and provide the same if not better service?"

What are some initiatives and pilots that are in the works for ODISP?

Commissioner Astrue has made it clear that we need to find ways to streamline our processes and simplify our policies and I agree with him. ODISP in conjunction with other components has started a workgroup known as the Policy Experimentation Group (PEG.) PEG looks for issues with high impact on the agency where no statutory or regulatory changes are needed i.e. policies that can be changed in POMS that would result in significant time and workload savings for Operations or ODAR. The intercomponent team work through the issues and shape and clear a new or revised policy. These issues are then fast tracked to reach implementation as quickly as possible.

I believe communication is important and have developed an ODISP monthly newsletter (<http://eis.ba.ssa.gov/odisp/odispfo/newsletter.html>) to give senior management a periodic update about what we are doing. A second challenge relates to the number of new initiatives that Commissioner Astrue has launched across all SSA components. There are so many initiatives going on in the agency at all different levels that ODISP had taken the lead in developing the Key Initiative Matrix (KIM) to organize them so that any executive can see what is being worked on where.

One way we try to insure that policies are doable (can be implemented as easily as possible) on the front line is to give a number of ODISP employees the opportunity to take a two week assignment in the field. We also actively seek field employees to be detailed to ODISP as part of their development assignments to bring in that experience.

On the disability front, Quick Disability Decision (QDD) is being unveiled nationwide. We are currently working on another Astrue initiative to identify potential "Compassionate Allowances" (severe diseases and conditions that may be processed for quicker allowance decisions.

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A Look Back at Our Legislative Efforts in 2007: Putting It All In Perspective

by Rachel Emmons and Rick Warsinsky

2007 turned out to be a very busy year for NCSSMA in Washington. We began the year with Congress trying to wrap up work on the 2007 appropriations process. As we're sure you all remember too well we were faced with the very real possibility of a ten-day furlough at SSA last year. With your help, we sent hundreds of letters to Washington legislators urging that SSA receive sufficient resources to prevent that from happening. Due in part to your efforts, Congress appropriated an additional \$200 million for the agency and the furloughs did not occur.

In February 2007 the President's Budget Request for 2008 was released. After reviewing the document we realized that the President's budget would leave SSA in dire straits. In response, we initiated a very intensive effort to once again make the case for additional resources for SSA. Again you came through by sending hundreds of letters to our Washington legislators!

This past year we also received a tremendous boost to our advocacy efforts when a number of organizations joined forces to form the SSA Advocacy Group. Members of the group include AFGE, NTEU, AARP, FMA, the Leadership Council on Aging and the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities. There are currently more than 40 organizations participating in the group. Although a wide variety of interests and constituencies are represented, we all share a common goal – making the case for adequate resources for SSA.

Both NCSSMA and the SSA Advocacy Group launched an extensive campaign to increase media coverage of SSA's funding issues. There were over 100 articles published this year on our funding challenges and service delivery issues. These articles included front page stories in USA Today and the New York Times. AARP also featured a two-issue series in their Bulletin that was received by over 30 million households.

And finally, and perhaps most importantly, we received strong support from friends on Capitol Hill – in both the House and Senate and on both sides of the aisle. Without this support we would not have gotten our efforts off the ground and we most certainly would not have received funding above the President's recommended level.

One of the key legislative goals we set for the year was to help ensure substantive funding above the President's 2008 Budget Request for SSA. We felt this would prevent a hiring freeze and would allow the agency to slow the steady decline in its ability to provide timely and accurate service to the American public.

We received really good news in the spring when the 2008 Budget Resolution included \$430 million above the President's Budget Request for SSA. This amount was reduced during the appropriations process – to \$100 million in the House and \$125



million in the Senate. We continued to believe that we needed funding above these levels in order to make a noticeable improvement in our service delivery. We continued to make the case for additional resources for SSA! Our efforts and those of our key allies (both on and off the Hill) were successful – during consideration of the Labor-HHS Appropriations bill on the Senate floor, an amendment sponsored by Senators Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Max Baucus (D-MT), and others was offered to increase funding for SSA by \$150 million over the Senate Appropriations Committee's recommended level. The amendment passed by an overwhelming majority – 88-6! The House and Senate Labor-HHS Appropriations conferees agreed during their negotiations to include a total of \$275 million above the President's Budget Request.

We received a significant set back when the President vetoed the Labor-HHS Appropriations measure which included funding for SSA. In order to meet the discretionary spending levels set by the President, Congress was forced to reduce the \$275 million. The final level of funding was \$150 million above the President's Budget Request – still a VERY significant victory given the current budget environment.

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GEICO
geico.com

<http://geico.com/index.php>

DAVID RUST continued

QDD software may be tweaked to identify Compassionate Allowances cases when we are ready for implementation. We are also the lead on identifying ways to simplify work incentives to encourage recipients to return to work. The work incentive processes in both Title II and XVI are a very complex. Our beneficiaries look at these complexities and generally determine it would be safer not to take advantage of them. We need to find out whether there are practical ways to remove this fear. Currently, we are making changes to the Ticket to Work process. We realized the program has not worked very well and we are in the process of revising some of the regulations to improve it. Hopefully we can re-launch a better Ticket to Work program some time this spring.

Where do you see SSA in 15-20 years from now?

I believe Social Security will not look like it does today. On the other hand, I don't know what it will look like. The Agency has to change. It will need to rely more on the electronic systems and a truly paperless process. We need to greatly simplify our electronic procedures to enable us to work successfully and have people want to use our electronic services. If tax preparation can be made easily doable on line then we should be able to make retirement and disability claims more easily doable on line. Our agency needs to be constantly on the hunt for better ways to do our work. If we don't shape the change of how our agency will look in the future, will we have to be prepared to let outside forces shape it for us? I know the Commissioner is moving in the right direction to ensure we are forward thinking and shaping our own future.

Legislative Efforts continued

Many agencies, departments, and programs received significant reductions in their funding. Our success story for the year owes much to the efforts of NCSSMA members, SSA Advocacy Group members, and our supporters in Congress – both Members of Congress and staff.

From an historical perspective, it is unprecedented that SSA will receive funding above the President's Budget Request for FY 2008. Clearly there were very sound and sensible reasons for the additional funding. SSA still needs additional resources to keep providing good, solid service. Therefore we'll need to keep things rolling into Fiscal Year 2009. Please know how much we appreciate your efforts – and more importantly how much the American public appreciates your efforts!

Committee Update

NCSSMA is currently working on a letter with streamlining ideas to be submitted to DCO shortly. Several committees were actively involved in gathering and prioritizing ideas for inclusion. Management, Automation, Title II, Title XVI, Service Delivery and the Disability Committees all submitted lists of ideas. Most committees are just getting started. Several were assigned resolutions to pursue this year and are busy writing action plans to submit to NCSSMA President, Greg Heineman. The Title II and Title XVI committees review and comment on POMS instructions before they are released throughout the year. The Title II committee continues to work on redesigning the SS5. The Disability Committee chair, Kathy Vannatta, listened in on a hearing for Compassionate Allowances recently and found it very interesting.

Who Said This**Answer:**

*Franklin Delano
Roosevelt, -August
14, 1935*

**NCSSMA
Membership
Report:**

District Managers:
1256

Assistant District
Managers: 509

Staff Assistant/OO:
49

Operations
Supervisors: 1302

Management
Support Specialists:
493

Area Systems
Coordinators: 242

TSC Managers: 44

TSC Supervisors:
213

TSC MSS: 41

Other TSC MGMT:
59

Other Members: 257

Total Members:
3482



<http://sprint.com/index.html>

Editorial—I'd Rate PACS a 3

By Bethany Paradis, DM, Saco, ME

Completing the first year under our new performance appraisal system, I would rate it a 3—fully successful. The high level of expectations raised the bar for performance, resulting in some improvement nationwide. Including the elements of Interpersonal Skills and Participation allowed us to improve our work environment and encourage teamwork, flexibility and cooperation. Employees were better informed about Agency goals and how they relate to both office and individual performance. Communication regarding performance improved significantly, as we discussed expectations with each employee, in detail, at least twice during the year.

Three levels did make it easier to distinguish performance, however it created a very broad spectrum of level 3 performance from those doing the minimum to those going above and beyond, but not quite reaching the level 5 performance standard. This was demotivating to those excellent employees who should be recognized for their performance, but didn't meet the level 5 standard. This is especially true because of the link between awards and the appraisal system, requiring employees to get a level 5 in at least 50% of the elements to qualify for a performance award. Excellent employees who strive to

attain the level 5, but can't, are left frustrated and demoralized.

Additionally, the standards for Interpersonal Skills, Participation, Job Knowledge and Achieves Business Results are the same for all employees regardless of position. I believe that the TE and management positions need different standards which relate better to our positions. In reading the level 5 standards for these four elements, I believe they should be the level 3 expectation for these positions. The position expectations clearly indicate that these things are expected so how do you apply them when rating these positions? If the level 5 standards should really be level 3 for TE's and above, then what is a level 5? If TE's are routinely doing the level 5 standard as part of their jobs then are they the only employees that will qualify for an outstanding rating? I don't believe that any management employees have a clear understanding of what it takes to meet the level 5 standards for these elements in our own positions.

Under pass/fail I encouraged and rewarded employees for working together and looking beyond their

own units. Over time we developed a pleasant working environment where employees looked after each other. When the SRs were backed up with foreign SS5 applicants, all available CRs called interviews to help clear the reception area out. If someone was overwhelmed with their work, coworkers jumped in and covered interviews or took some work from that person to ease the stress. No one came back from vacation to find a backlog of work, and they sometimes found their desk cleaner than when they left. These employees exhibited a high level of Participation—are they all level 5's? Now that I have to distinguish between a level 3 and a level 5 am I discouraging this behavior from those employees who I didn't rate the 5?

We should eliminate performance related awards and simply have ECSA's that allow us to recognize significant contributions throughout the year. Perhaps we should have an agency wide performance incentive for meeting the agency goals similar to profit sharing. If we meet the goals, everyone gets a flat amount rather than trying to recognize individual performance. In these times of tight budgets, perhaps it would be better to put the award money into additional employees and recognize contributions in non-monetary ways. There are many options, and now is the time to start thinking about them. We should be ready with fresh ideas prior to negotiating new union contracts.

PACS brought positive changes to SSA, but it needs adjustment. We need to rewrite the standards for the TE and higher positions so that they relate more to what we do, along with training on what they are and how to interpret them. My overall experience was positive enough to rate PACS a level 3, but it needs work to get to a level 5.



FEDS SPECIAL OFFER: Six months free when you make the switch from another professional liability program by the end of the year.

FEDS is continuing its Holiday Special, where FEDS will give you 18 months for the price of a year if you make the switch to FEDS by January 31, 2007. All you need to do to receive your free six months is enter the discount code of 3337 (FEDS) while completing the online check out process at www.fedsprotection.com.

The FEDS liability protection offers its liability protection benefits for \$270 a year. However, members of NCSSMA who are not currently enrolled in another liability provider are entitled to a \$10.00 discount. In order to receive this discount, you simply need to enter the discount code of 772 during the online check out process.

Around the Regions

ATLANTA:

As we close out calendar year 2007, ARMA is already planning for two upcoming meetings. We plan to have the ARMA Annual Meeting in early August 2008 in the lovely city of Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We are busy working out the arrangement for a Benefits and Retirement Planning Seminar to be conducted by CHR Director Iris Wallace, a banquet featuring Keynote Speaker, Regional Commissioner Paul Barnes, and business meeting featuring guest speakers Rachel Emmons, the NCSSMA Legislative Consultant, and Greg Heineman, NCSSMA President. Also, ARMA is busy planning the 2009 NCSSMA Annual Meeting. We have tentative plans to hold the meeting in Tampa, Florida during late October or early November 2009. Tampa District Manager Alina Ortiz will head up the "host committee."

On a separate note, the recent ARMA Election yielded a new Area Vice President, Todd Rothell, OS in Jacksonville, Florida. Todd brings high energy and a strong work ethic to the ARMA Executive Committee. Incumbent Area Vice Presidents Ronie Johnson (GA), Gail Perozzi (South Carolina), and Deborah Thomas (TSC's) were reelected as were ARMA Executive Vice President Bob Flournoy and President, Bruce Fraley. All of these individuals will serve two year terms of office.

DENVER

Historically, delivery of services to remote locations, including American Indian Reservations, has been impeded by distance, travel and inclement weather. Some rural locations in the Denver Region are over 100 miles away from their nearest office. Early in 2003, the Denver Region sought to improve SSA service delivery by establishing video connectivity. The first site was established in North Dakota. The overwhelming success of this initial pilot resulted in expansion to sites in Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. These video sites have shown improved service by bridging distance, enabling "visual" service to remote locations, improving efficiencies and increasing claims. At this time, the testing is limited to the Denver Region.



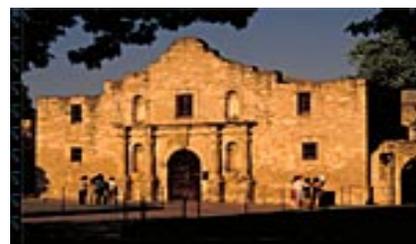
KANSAS CITY:

The Kansas City Management Association (KCMA) is planning an association meeting in connection with a scheduled July 2008 Regional Managers Forum. We have increased our overall membership and have allowed our ASC's as members. We have had a number of office closings and consolidations and continue to close or consolidate where it makes sense. Like the rest of the nation, we are feeling the effects of not being able to replace lost staff, and continue to look for ways to best utilize the remaining staff.

Some might think Immigration Legislation would have little impact in "The Heartland". Not so. There are many migrant workers in our meat packing plants and agricultural areas. Much of our Region is rural so office size tends to be relatively small. Any mandated SSA involvement accompanying Immigration Legislation may cause additional work on those small offices. In the Kansas City Region, we have always believed that we can get it done no matter what. We still believe that, but it is getting more difficult.

DALLAS

2007 brought many changes to the Dallas Region and DRMA. We welcomed Billye Hill as our new Deputy RC and Vita Casavantes-G as our new ARC-MOS. The continued growth of our region resulted in the addition of a new area (Area 7-Oklahoma/Northwest Texas). More than 20 of our members have retired since June 1, including four past presidents of DRMA - Jim Majestic, Jim Schampers, Bob Parent and Gordon Gonzalez. We are actively recruiting to replenish our ranks.



Several DRMA members represent NCSSMA on national committees and workgroups. Jackie Delgadillo (DM, San Antonio Downtown) serves on the Field Office Design Workgroup, Suelyn Allen (DM, Dallas-Pleasant Grove) on the Office of Training Website Workgroup, Peggy Buchanan (ADM, Lufkin, TX) on the eServices Workgroup, and Laurin Jimenez (DM, San Antonio South) on the FO/TSC/PSC/ODAR/DDS Cooperative Activities Workgroup. Our next meeting with Ramona and the RO staff will be on January 30-31. We are looking forward to the 2008 DRMA Annual Meeting on May 9-10 at the Drury Plaza Hotel on the beautiful San Antonio Riverwalk.

Around the Regions *continued*

NEW YORK

The 2007 NYRMS Annual Meeting was held in West Point, New York, November 2nd and 3rd at the historic and beautiful Thayer Hotel, located on the grounds of the USMA at West Point overlooking the Hudson River. The meeting was a real success and feedback received indicated that it ranked up with the best annual meetings that we have ever had. Our turnout of 100 members was excellent and the meetings and events were well received. Everyone enjoyed the beautiful venue, our speakers, the great banquet, and the entertainment.

Keynote speakers included Dr. Reginald Wells, Deputy Commissioner Human Resources, our Regional Commissioner, Bea Disman, NCSSMA's legislative representative, Rachel Emmons, and NCSSMA President Greg Heineman. They addressed many important issues and concerns challenging our agency in a frank and direct manner. At our business meeting we passed several very important resolutions expressing the will of the NYRMS membership. They will be used to chart a course for the Executive Committee to follow.

We had an elegant banquet on Friday evening, which featured presentation of the NYRMS Annual Awards. Joan Freeburn, Director of the Office for Civil Rights and Equal Opportunity (CREO), received the 2007 NYRMS Regional Employee Appreciation Award for her exceptional assistance to field office management personnel. Ron Sobel, South Bronx District Manager and NYRMS Immediate Past President received the NYRMS Lifetime Achievement Award for his distinguished service to the New York Region Management Society. During the banquet, a murder mystery presentation was provided by the KILLING KOMPANY. This New York City based group featured Broadway, TV and film actors concealed in the audience and the plot included notable audience members. Dr. Reginald Wells was the winner of the "Ace Detective Award" for his creative solution to the mystery

NORTHWEST

NWMA recently provided refreshments for training sessions held for managers in Seattle and Portland on Increasing Personal Effectiveness. This training was provided by the Seattle Region and conducted by the USDA Graduate School. NWMA commonly sponsors refreshments at regional meetings and training. It allows us an opportunity to get the word out about NWMA to prospective members. It also provides a more comfortable and pleasant training/meeting for our members.

NEW ENGLAND

NESSMA has been working with our newly promoted management staff to promote the benefits of NESSMA membership. Thanks to the continued hard work of our Area Representatives, we have not only maintained, but increased our membership in this busy season of managerial retirements in New England. We sponsored a social hour at a recent regional meeting, which given the turnout and noise levels, was successful. Our NESSMA EC recently had a candid, cordial, and informative meeting with our Regional and Deputy Regional Commissioners. Finally, our sports fans have been reveling in this year's bumper crop of pro team performances, from the World Series Champs Boston Red Sox, to the powerhouse New England Patriots (no videotaping please!), and the resurgent Boston Celtics.



CHICAGO

The CSSMA Officer's met with Jim Martin, RC and his staff in early December. We have begun a dialogue on the issues and concerns that are important to our membership. One item Jim Martin focused on was eServices and we were concerned with the future of our budget and staffing. We have had several changes in leadership this year and we are appointing new committee chairs and will be electing a new VP with Doug Schenck leaving to fill the permanent DAD position in Wisconsin.

Around the Regions continued on page 11.

**We welcome any comments, editorials or suggestions for future articles.
Send your feedback to: Sue.King@ssa.gov**

Medicare Part D Extra Help Program Provides Unexpected "Extra Help"

By Lori Lancaster, OS, Saco, ME

"It reaffirmed the difference we can make in people's lives—sometimes in the most unexpected ways."



With staffing at the lowest level since 1973 and constantly increasing workloads, it is very easy to get caught up in the negative feelings and frustrations of having to do additional workloads such as those associated with the Medicare Part D Extra Help program. While working a verification list for this program, I was hung up on numerous times and sworn at a few times as people were feeling harassed by all the mail and phone calls they were getting about Part D. Just as I was starting to expect the worse each time I picked up the phone, I was

pleasantly surprised. I called a woman to inquire about an IRS verification discrepancy. On her subsidy application she stated that she did not have any stocks or other assets. She appeared on my verification list because IRS reported several thousand dollars in stocks. When I questioned her about it, she didn't know anything about them so I asked her to contact the company to see what she could find out. The next day she called me back all excited. She could not thank me enough! She had apparently inherited these stocks from a relative and

the value was over \$100,000. She was so grateful. Her home needed significant repairs and she did not own a car that ran. This new found asset significantly improved her standard of living! She didn't even care that she didn't qualify for the Extra Help. This phone call made my day. It reaffirmed the difference we can make in people's lives-- some times in the most unexpected ways. I found it much easier to work the rest of the list after that.

The Teleservice Connection by Barb Perian

"The Twin Cities TSC will be remissioned as a Social Security Card Center in 2009."

It's early in the new year and already the TSC is involved in a major activity. It was recently announced that SSA will close the Twin Cities TSC and remission it as a Social Security Card Center in early 2009. The NCSSMA TSC Committee has been discussing the whole issue of closing and remissioning TSCs. In January we plan to make a recommendation regarding our position to NCSSMA's Executive Committee. NCSSMA's representative on the national TSC Steering Committee, Denise

Hachicho, has been doing an outstanding job representing TSC management. Your ideas and thoughts are very important. Let your regional TSC Representative know what's on your mind. If you have ideas for streamlining processes let us know. Together we can help the

Agency continue to provide top notch service even in these times of tough budgets.



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Around the Regions continued

PHILADELPHIA

The Philadelphia Region successfully hosted the 2007 NCSSMA Annual Meeting in Philadelphia. The COSS and DCO were in attendance, along with the Philadelphia Regional Commissioner. Kudos goes out to Carol and Ron Weber, chairs of the host committee, as many compliments were received on the event.

While we're proud to announce that our membership numbers are up in the PRMA, we are concerned about increasing our membership among our OS/MSS ranks. This is one of our biggest priorities for 2008. Our 2008 PRMA annual meeting will be in August, 2008 in Pittsburgh, PA.

SAN FRANCISCO

The San Francisco Regional Management Association had its annual meeting on November 9-10, 2007 at the beautiful Pacific Palms Resort in Industry Hills, CA. This year's theme was "You Make the Magic Happen".



On November 9th, there was fun filled day with GETA training presented by Mark Mayfield, "The Glass Ain't Half Empty, It's Just Too Big", followed by the SFRMA reception in the evening. On November 10th the business meeting was held. The speakers for this year's meeting were Pete Spencer, San Francisco Regional Commissioner; Patty Robidart, Deputy Regional Commissioner; Christina Hendricks, Project Manager- Labor & Employee Relations Team; Greg Heineman, NCSSMA President; and Rachel Emmons, NCSSMA Lobbyist. There were sixteen resolutions submitted. It was a very productive meeting. In addition, there were 100 door prizes given throughout the day. On February 27, 2008, the SFRMA EC will meet with ORC. Don't forget to visit the SFRMA website:

INSIDE VIEW

SYSCO-ING In Upstate New York

By Tom Onisk

I have been an Area Systems Coordinator (ASC) since 1996, with time off as an enrichment DM in 1999. Prior to that, I was the ADM in Oneonta, NY for 7 years and a long-time SSI CR in Utica, NY. I have been in the New York Management Society since 1990 and held various positions on the Executive Council.

Upstate New York is in the newly reorganized Area 3, in Region 2. We now cover pretty much the entire state north and west of New York City, minus a few counties near the Big Apple. Mention New York and a lot of people think of New York City but, we upstaters associate our region with the Adirondacks, Catskill and Allegheny Mountains, the Finger Lakes and Great Lakes, a fair amount of snow in the winter and glorious summers. A retired Area Director used to say, upstate New York is more like Iowa than NYC. Never been to Iowa but I think that is a pretty fair assessment.

Area 3 has 29 offices and I support six of them. My resident office, Utica, is a mid-sized office of 32 employees and 58 workstations. We have a branch office, Rome, which is 15 miles away and has 19 workstations and 11 employees. Oneonta is similar in size to Rome. The largest of my non-resident offices, Schenectady, has 57 workstations and 33 employees. The furthest away is Watertown at 82 miles. It has 21 workstations and 14 employees. Three of my offices are single manager offices. All my offices have been losing people to retirement, but none as fast as Gloversville, which now has only 8 employees and 14 workstations. With the exception of Rome, all of my offices are from 53 to 82 miles away. When 2 ASCs retired in January 2007, I felt lucky to avoid inheriting another office 150 miles away on the Canadian border in the re-shuffle.

If you asked me what a typical month was like this past spring, I would have reported one emergency UPS replacement, one emergency server replacement, one server rebuild, and 2 scheduled server replacements. When we aren't doing these projects, we stayed busy handling calls for assistance from management and staff remotely using Terminal Services, Remote Assistance or SMS Remote. We all have additional "side jobs" as all management employees have. Lately, mine have been setting up eData with the sheltered workshops for my offices (now mostly done); setting up eData for the jails (still a "work in progress"); processing sheltered workshops wages as needed or

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Phone: (202) 547-8530
Fax: (202) 547-8532
rachele@greystone-group.com

SYSCO-ING In Upstate New York continued

fixing reports that can't be processed; processing jail reports for two offices; keeping tabs on the NY Area 3 managers list and running FindFiles for my Managers to locate inappropriate files on the server, to name a few.

In the past month, things changed. The Area 3 employees in the ASC, ATS and PAS positions were assigned MAPS redeterminations and exception cases to assist offices that were behind schedule. We had 4-5 hours of training in early December and started making calls. To assist the other offices, we must change our Pins in Top Secret to see their cases. We were advised to restrict our travel to each office to once a quarter, barring emergencies, in order to have time to process this workload. I used to visit my offices once a month.

In upstate New York, we have lost 4 ASCs since 2006 to retirement and

to promotion. We have only replaced some of them which makes me wonder about the future of the ASC job. Although I always felt that the ASC was a valuable part of the management structure, I am not so sure my belief is universally held by management. To the untrained eye one could argue the need for ASCs is less with the systems improvements we have seen. But on my monthly visits, I notice so many items that need attention and remain undone because management is stretched too thin. These could be simple things that cause annoyance to the staff to potential show stoppers. Every time I make an office visit, I wish I could spend another day to fix all the little things that I know are not right. Whatever happens to the ASC job, we will all survive, perhaps not by design but rather because of the dedication of the SSA management team.

2008 NCSSMA Meeting to be Held in West Point, NY

New York will be hosting the National Council Annual Meeting from October 20 – 23, 2008. The Thayer Hotel located on the grounds of the USMA at West Point will provide an outstanding venue for the NYRMS to host the NCSSMA Annual meeting. The Host Committee has been busy planning and arranging an exciting agenda of events and activities. This will include a trip to New York City to see the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island and Rockefeller Center. Also, a tour of the U.S.M.A. at West Point, and a cruise down the beautiful Hudson River is being planned. The NYRMS looks forward to hosting a truly memorable and fantastic meeting!



For more
information about
NCSSMA visit our
web page at
www.NCSSMA.org

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Editor: Bethany Paradis
Layout: Bethany Paradis and Gina Ramer