

**MCMA**

**MICHIGAN CITY  
MANAGEMENT  
ASSOCIATION**

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# The Manager

The official newsletter of the Michigan City Management Association

<http://www.mcma.org>

September 2000

## Scholarship Recipients Report

*By Al Vanderberg, Assistant County Administrator, Kent County; Chair, MCMA Professional Development Committee*

One requirement of the scholarship program developed by MCMA's Professional Development Committee (PDC) is that all recipients submit a report to MCMA after completing the professional development activity.

**Brian Kischnick**, Vassar City Manager, who was awarded the *Frederic R. Tholen, Jr. Disney Institute Programs Scholarship* and **Ben Bifoss**, Manistee City Manager, who was one of two MCMA members to be awarded the *John M. Patriarche ICMA International Program Scholarship*, have returned from their activities.

The reports are excellent and very detailed. I can only provide a brief synopsis of each in the available space in this edition. Each newsletter will include brief synopses; the full text of the reports will be attached to my year-end report on the activities of the PDC. Look for it in the registration packets for the 2001 Winter Institute.

Ben Bifoss wants city managers to participate. "The PDC has eliminated another excuse for not participating in mid-career activities," he says. "Each of us is obligated to continue professional development. We have a responsibility to 'sharpen the axe.'"

The mechanics of the International Exchange Program are fairly straight-

forward. An application through the ICMA hopefully results in a pairing. Once a pairing occurs, the two managers work out the details with ICMA providing liaison support. The exchange is arranged so that the visiting international partner can attend the ICMA Conference with the host. ICMA provided room and board for the international partner at the conference.

### The reports—a synopsis *Kischnick reports*

Disney is a world class operation — which means Disney does what exceeds expectations, not what is expected. The Disney products thrive on its ability to tell a story that connects people's emotions. The understanding and appreciation for this "power of story" contributes to the Disney difference in leadership. The unique connection between Disney and municipalities is that each city, village, county, state has a story to tell and each tells a story every day whether it is to visitors, residents or businesses. In addition to the story our communities tell, every leader is telling a story about what he or she values. Once we understand our values personally and as an organization, decision-making and employee empowerment are easy.

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# President's Message

by Douglas B. Thomas, City Manager, Alma

**G**reetings! As the fall season is approaching and those of us with school age children begin to relish the back to school season, I found myself reflecting upon the opportunities I have had to speak before K-12 classes about local government and the City Management profession. I truly enjoy meeting with our area youth to talk about the ways in which local government services impact their daily lives and have experienced a range of emotions including pride, laughter, sorrow and humility in response to their comments about our public services and our profession. The following comments are some of the more interesting responses I have heard when students were asked what they think a City Manager's duties involve:

→ You're the person who gets to decide if the college students can have parties. (That's me, the party meister of Alma!)

→ You're the one who told my parents that we have to take down

our Christmas decorations each summer. (After inquiring of my staff, we have yet to figure out the story behind this comment.)

→ I'm not sure what you do, but I've heard my mommy say that she doesn't like you. (Following my presentation to the class, the little girl who made this comment said she thought I was "pretty cool" and she was going to tell her mom as much.)

→ Are you the person who made us move our swimming pool? (There's a long story behind that one!)

And my favorite:

→ I've seen you on TV and you get to tell the City Commission what to do!

I also remember the time I had to field a sanitary sewer back-up complaint from a second grader, and a unique dialog involving an inquisitive third-grader who was very interested in the electrical specifications for a neighborhood park project — it seems his father was an electrician and he was apparently soliciting work for the family business! One of the more painful

comments came from a sorrowful second grader who, upon visiting the Police Department, commented that his Dad had been here an awful lot of times.

Fortunately I also heard a number of responses that were both on track and extremely insightful as they related to the Manager's role in economic development activities, public safety issues and public works/infrastructure projects. I vividly recall the time I was asked to speak to a third grade class about the local economy. Following the presentation, the teacher accepted my offer to have the class visit a number of public facilities to learn more about our various services. I subsequently attended their class open house when the students presented an audio-visual report about our local government, and took turns as class reporters and spoke about a particular facility and/or service. I listened with pride as the students reflected on their knowledge of our diverse community services and sensed that they

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## Scholarships, *continued from page 1*

According to Disney philosophy, we need to ask some basic questions about the story we are telling:

*What story is our community telling?*

- Is our community clean?
- Is it easy to move around?
- What is its history?
- What is the focal point?
- Is it pedestrian friendly?
- Is it open to outsiders?

*What story do we tell as leaders?*

- Are we accessible?
- Are our employees courteous and customer friendly?
- Do we have a value system that is understood by our employees and consistently applied?

One of the benefits of the Disney Institute is the requirement of all participants to develop a Leadership Action Plan. The Leadership Action

Plan is intended to assist participants in making connections between the information presented at the Leadership Excellence seminar and their own leadership style. It is a tangible outcome of the training seminar and a useful tool to implement the strategies presented by the Disney leaders. The training at Disney Institute provided me with the opportunity to explore my leadership values and develop an action plan to improve as a leader. As a result of this training opportunity, Vassar's management team implemented the following actions:

- Established a set of values for my personal growth and refined a set of values for our management team;
- Developed personal and departmental improvement plans based on our core values.

- Conducted a group exercise modeling teamwork;
- Continuously celebrate success as a team!

## ***Bifoss reports***

*[Ben Bifoss hosted Marian Dafcik, City Manager of Kezmarok, Slovakia in September 1999 and Dafcik hosted Bifoss in May 2000.]*

Like Manistee, Kezmarok is a small, historical town that is heavily reliant on tourism. Kezmarok is a little older (developed in the 12th century compared to Manistee's 19th century development). Kezmarok has the High Tatras Mountain range and is a winter wonderland compared to Manistee's summer resort trade on Lake Michigan.

While the settings are different, the jobs of the City Manager are

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## President's Message, *continued*

probably knew more about our operation than most of their parents who were also in attendance. I was so impressed with their knowledge and enthusiasm that I invited them to attend a City Commission meeting to deliver their report, which was broadcast over the local public access channel.

It is my hope that in my own small way, speaking about our profession and the value of local government services to our youth will result in a greater understanding of our local democracies and instill a sense of civic pride and citizenship that will follow the children into adulthood. As local government professionals, I urge my colleagues to likewise reach out to their schools and speak with area youths about the business of local governments and the careers we so passionately advocate. Who knows, we might even encourage someone to pursue a career in local government as I did following my attendance at my community's council meeting for a government class assignment!

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## Scholarships, *continued from page 2*

remarkably similar. Appointed by the mayor and city council, the city manager of Kezmarok is responsible for implementing public policy. As the chief administrative officer, operating departments report to him. While many of the problems are different, the fundamental nature of the work is the same. It is about service to the public. Telephone calls at home and citizen questions on the way to the supermarket are part of the job description.

Slovakia is a beautiful country that was fun to visit. The experience has changed some of my attitudes in a fundamental way that requires more time for personal reflection. That makes it worthwhile.

# Board Highlights

Following are highlights of the MCMA Board meeting, which was held July 25, 2000 in Traverse City.

- Kathie Grinzinger, Vice-Chair of the MCMA Diversity and Member Support Services Committee reported to the Board on the committee's activities to date.

Committee members have surveyed MCMA assistants and minorities. A series of questions was asked to determine involvement in MCMA and in the MCMA conferences. The survey results identified challenges that the committee is now attempting to address.

The committee is a large one and has divided itself into two subcommittees. The first group is concentrating on developing a curriculum that promotes professional development and keeps the diversity issue in the forefront. This group plans to work with the MCMA conference planning committees and develop written material for *The Manager* and for the *Michigan Municipal Review*.

The second subcommittee will focus on member support services. One project will be to team experienced managers with newer ones on a regional basis. This is in keeping with the Board's goal of looking for ways to strengthen the role of the regional manager groups.

- The final figures on revenues and expenditures for the Winter Institute indicate a net revenue over expenditures of \$18,241.95. Preliminary numbers for the Summer Workshop won't be available until all the bills have been received and processed.
- Check the MCMA Web Site ([mcma.org](http://mcma.org)) for informational and registration material for the Michigan Night Dinner at the ICMA Conference in Cincinnati. The dinner is scheduled for Tuesday, September 19, 2000, 6:30 p.m. at the Mike Fink Restaurant in Covington, Kentucky. This is just across the river from Cincinnati, about a 10-minute drive from the convention center.
- The Board has adopted a set of Rules of Procedure for Enforcement of the ICMA Code of Ethics for MCMA members who are not members of ICMA. Directors and officers liability coverage has been obtained, as well as legal review of the Rules. Watch for more information on this new policy on the MCMA Web Site, in *The Manager*, and in the fall membership dues mailing.
- The 2003 MCMA Summer Workshop will be held at Crystal Mountain Resort in northwest Michigan.
- Plans for the upcoming MCMA Winter Institute are well underway. It was reported to the Board that the program will focus on technology — what is available and what is working for managers. In keeping with the newly formed Membership Committee's recommendation to make the conferences more welcoming to assistants, minorities and newcomers, there will be increased opportunities for evening group activities, i.e. bus tour/dinner on Wednesday evening.
- Dan Gilmartin, the newly appointed Deputy Director of the Michigan Municipal League was at the Board meeting and reported that support for the Michigan Municipal League's *Let Local Votes Count* ballot proposal has increased since petitions with 460,000 signatures were filed at the Secretary of State's Office in July. Efforts are underway to put together a statewide marketing campaign to solicit financial support from MML members and other organizations and corporations.

For additional detail on any of these issues, please contact Lois Thibault, MCMA Secretary/Treasurer at (734) 669-6317 or (906) 644-2299. You may also contact any MCMA Board Director.

# MCMA Briefs

## Committee on Diversity and Member Support Services

by Ted Staton, Chair, City Manager, East Lansing

In January 2000, the MCMA Board, following the recommendations of committee members, decided to sunset two standing committees: the Committee on Workplace Diversity and the Assistants Committee. In place of the two committees, the Board created the Committee on Workplace Diversity and Member Support Services.

The Committee has developed two basic thrusts. The first is to develop mechanisms to better support members, especially new ones.

The second area of concentration will develop curriculum on diversity issues for inclusion in the Winter Institute and Summer Workshop programs, as well as articles for *The Manager*, the *Michigan Municipal Review*, and the MCMA website. For the upcoming Winter Institute, a session is planned to highlight "Best Practices in Diversity in Michigan Municipalities." We would like all member cities, villages, townships, and counties to submit their best practices to the committee for consideration for inclusion in the seminar. (Send submissions to Ted Staton, City Manager, East Lansing, 410 Abbott Road, East Lansing, MI

48823-3388; fax: 517-337-1607; or email: [tstaton@ci.east-lansing.mi.us](mailto:tstaton@ci.east-lansing.mi.us))

Our member support recommendations rely on the establishment of a network of volunteer contacts or "membership ambassadors" to make early and frequent contact with new members. We would also like to have members from throughout MCMA to volunteer to make several of these contacts annually. Interested members should contact me at the address, fax, or email above, or call 517-319-6920.

Finally, the Committee is also developing recommendations for consideration by the MCMA Winter Institute Planning Committee that will increase the inclusion of new members in conference activities.

## Managers in Transition Committee

by George A. Brown, Adrian City Manager, Chair, Managers in Transition Committee

I knock on wood when I announce that thus far this year (February – July) the Managers in Transition (MIT) Committee has had a relatively light work load. Since February, members of the MIT Committee have provided support to managers or other MCMA members, from Fenton, Plymouth, Jonesville and Ann Arbor. Most of the managers who were still in some form of transition at the beginning of 2000 have found positions with other public or private organizations.

MCMA provides several resources to managers who find themselves in transition. The Managers in Transition notebook is packed with articles and other resources to help the manager cope and carry on with their career transition campaign.

Mark Wollenweber was instrumental in introducing the notebook and he graciously keeps it up-to-date year after year. MCMA has purchased a laptop computer for MITs that can be checked out from MML Headquarters. To check out the laptop, contact Colleen Layton, Director of Information and Publications at 734-669-6320. MCMA will also fund an Internet connection for MITs to assist them with their job search. Arrangement for Internet service can also be made through Colleen.

The Association funds professional counseling services, on a limited basis, for managers in transition. A psychologist who has experience with the kinds of emotions that a manager and his/her family experience during this tough career phase will call or meet with the member if they are interested. Doug Thomas and the MCMA Board provided additional funding for counseling services in the 2000 budget so that counseling service can also be provided to the member's spouse.

Probably the most timely and effective service MIT and other MCMA members offer to their colleagues in transition is that phone call or visit to provide moral support and encouragement. Those of us who have been through transition can attest to the fact that calls from colleagues went a long way in helping us feel less alone during those times.

If you become aware of managers who are, or are likely to be, in transition, please contact them and offer your support. Then give me a call or send an email so that the MIT Committee can get the assistance wheels turning. You can reach me at 517-263-2161 or at [gbrown@lni.net](mailto:gbrown@lni.net).

### DEADLINE

MCMA members are encouraged to submit articles for publication in *The Manager*. The next issue is scheduled for December 2000. All copy should be submitted to the editor, Sue Lee, [[leeford598@aol.com](mailto:leeford598@aol.com)] or to President-Elect, Daryl Delabbio, by November 13.

## Congratulations!

by Daryl J. Delabbio, Administrator/  
Controller, Kent County, President  
Elect, MCMA

Congratulations to **Tom Wiczorek**, City Manager of Ionia and member of the MCMA Board of Directors, for receiving the 2000 Award for Excellence in Honor of Mark E. Keane and **Wes McAllister** (retired City Manager of Eastpointe), for receiving the Award for Career Development in Memory of L.P. Cookingham from the ICMA! Both gentlemen will be formally recognized by the ICMA at the annual conference in Cincinnati.

## ICMA Best Practices 2001: Mark Your Calendars

ICMA University Best Practices 2001 will be held in Newport, Rhode Island, April 26-28, 2001. Co-sponsored by ICMA and the local government management associations in Rhode Island, Connecticut and Massachusetts, this symposium features extensive group discussion of creative approaches to local government issues.

For more information on the case studies to be presented and symposium registration, be sure to visit <http://icma.org/bestpractices>. You can also call 202/962-3553, or stop by the Best Practices table at the upcoming ICMA annual conference in Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Ohio.

## ICMA Board News

by Mark Wollenweber, City Manager, St. Clair Shores, ICMA Midwest Regional Vice President; and Darnell Earley, Deputy Controller, Ingham County, ICMA Midwest Regional Vice President

Below are highlights of the July 27-30, 2000, ICMA Board meeting.

1. The ICMA Strategic Plan was approved and the Board will be looking for ICMA staff to imple-

ment this after the Cincinnati, Ohio conference.

2. The final report of the Council-Manager Recognition Task Force was reviewed. This will necessitate an amendment to the ICMA Constitution. The component parts of the resolution include:

a. Simplifying the process of determining who is eligible to be a Corporate (voting) member of ICMA. This will be accomplished by shifting the determination of a "professional" position from the current recognition process, to having the individual, at the time of application, use the recognition criteria to define their position and therefore their eligibility for voting membership.

Develop a constitutional amendment to implement this change.

(a) Work with the National Civic League to update the Model City and County Charters that define council-manager government. This maintains the 85-year-old tradition of having a separate organization take the lead on the model council-manager charter. ICMA reserves the right to determine another cause of action should the process or end product be unacceptable.

(b) Adhere to the following guidelines if asked to play a role in a local government charter review process:

- ICMA would continue to advocate and support council-manager government as the preferred vehicle for ensuring the successful delivery of essential community services.
- ICMA would not participate in any local meetings without consulting the state association and the affected manager. If the state association were not comfortable with ICMA's participation, or if there were a difference of opinion between the state association and the manager in the affected community, ICMA would work to

build a consensus on how to proceed. The request for assistance also could be referred to another relevant group, such as the state municipal league.

- A representative of the state association should be at the table during any charter review meeting(s) in which ICMA participates.
- ICMA would help the charter committee understand the impact of any proposed changes on the manager's position, but would not attempt to make a final determination of whether the proposed charter would still be considered council-manager government.
- Once a local charter review commission has completed its revision, ICMA would use the definition of council-manager government (see #2) to evaluate that proposal.

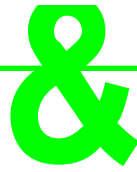
(c) Establish a process, upon approval of the constitutional amendment (see (a)), for reviewing charters and determining whether or not they meet the accepted criteria for council-manager government. This would replace the current process of tracking manager positions in all forms of government for membership purposes, with tracking council-manager governments to support ICMA's advocacy efforts. Use the current C-M criteria until new criteria are developed.

Create a review process similar to the current recognition process, which takes place upon request. All communities currently recognized as CM would be grandfathered; i.e., their charters would not be reviewed unless requested.

Encourage state associations to review their state legislation defining local government structure to determine how it supports council-manager government.

3. Finally, the ICMA Board approved Richmond, Virginia for the 2008 Conference site rather than Nashville, Tennessee.

# Back page news



# Calendar

## Give TRUMP a Try

by John Szerlag, City Manager, City of Troy

About 75% of Michigan city managers serve in municipalities under 10,000 population; and half of those are in cities under 5,000. Thus for many of our colleagues, opportunities to engage in larger-scale urban issues can be pretty scarce.

The City of Troy as an organization is at a point in time where our most aggressive and challenging scope of work lies before us. And I would like to share some of these experiences with our colleagues from small municipalities. This is the basis for developing Troy's Urban Management Program (TRUMP).

The program format is simple. Participants select an area of interest, and then work with appropriate City staff in accomplishing specific objectives.

This is much more than an internship program, as the participant would become part of our management team for the duration of the project(s) selected. Participants come to Troy for at least eight hours/month, but we're very flexible on schedules.

We know this program will benefit the City of Troy as well as the participant. Working with a sense of urgency, interaction with various disciplines, and a team-approach to problem-solving will assist MCMA colleagues in their own professional development.

Unfortunately, we can't pay you anything, with the exception of mileage and meal reimbursement, and we think it is a worthwhile endeavor. But don't take my word for it. Give **Brian Murphy**, City Manager of Belding, a call. Brian is currently in the program assisting us in developing a natural features protection ordinance. And **Tod Mowery**, former City Manager of Swartz Creek, worked with us for a few months on our Civic Center project.

Please contact me should you like more information about this program. Phone (248) 524-3330, or email [johnszerlag@ci.troy.mi.us](mailto:johnszerlag@ci.troy.mi.us).

## Regional Managers Groups

### BORDER BANDITS

Hillsdale/Branch/Jackson/Calhoun Counties. Contact: Maurice Evans, CM, Marshall.

### DOWNRIVER

Breakfast meetings held 2nd Thursday of the month in Riverview. Contact: Randy Altimus, ACM, Riverview.

### GENESEE COUNTY

Genesee County—meetings held last Friday of the month. Contact: Michael Senyko, ACM, Fenton.

### LAKE AREA

Macomb County, parts of St. Clair County and the Grosse Pointe area—lunch meetings held 3rd Thursday, every other month. Contact: Brian Vick, AA, Grosse Pointe.

### MID-MICHIGAN CITY/COUNTY

Contact: Ken Hibl, CM, Claire.

### MIDDLE OF THE MITTEN

Lansing metro area—meetings held 1st Thursday of the month. Contact: Theodore J. Staton, CM, East Lansing.

### NORTHERN MICHIGAN L.P.

Bi-monthly meetings. Contact: George Korthauer, CM, Petoskey.

### OAKLAND COUNTY

Meetings held 1st Wednesday of the month, excluding July and August. Contact: Steve Brock, CM, Farmington Hills.

### SAGINAW COUNTY

Saginaw County—meetings held last Friday of the month. Contact: Ron Lee, Saginaw Township Manager.

### SOUTHEAST

Wayne/Washtenaw/Lenawee/Monroe Counties—meetings held 3rd Wednesday of the month. Contact: Ed Koryzno, City Manager, Ypsilanti.

## Calendar

### 2000

#### September

- 17- ICMA Conference, Cincinnati/Hamilton County, Ohio
- 20
- 28- MML Annual Conference
- 30 Mackinac Island

### 2001

#### January

- 17- Michigan Township Association
- 21 Annual Conference, Lansing

#### January/February

- 31- MCMA Winter Institute
- 2 Ypsilanti

### SOUTHWEST MICHIGAN

Berrien/Kalamazoo/St. Joseph/Cass/Van Buren Counties—meetings held 3rd Wednesday of the month. Contact: Frank Walsh, CM, St. Joseph.

### THUMB NUTS

Thumb area—meetings held three times each year. Contact: Charlie Graham, CM, Frankenmuth.

### U.P.

Meetings held twice each year. Contact: Michael Uskiewicz, CM, Escanaba.

### WEST MICHIGAN

Holland/Ludington/Portland—lunch meetings held in Grand Rapids, 3rd Wednesday of each month, except July and August. Contact: Lee Slaughter, ACM, Muskegon.

## MCMA Shirt\*

Order yours now! Each white polo-style shirt with embroidered MCMA logo is just \$30, plus \$5 for shipping and handling. Simply complete the coupon and send it with a check or money order to: MCMA, P.O. Box 1487, Ann Arbor, MI 48106.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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\*Added bonus—\$5 of each purchase will be donated to the ICMA Foundation