

The NAGC Communicator

National Association of Government Communicators

Summer 2007

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Two Honored as Communicators of the Year

Two federal communications professionals were honored as the NAGC 2007 Communicators of the Year at the Communications School. Allison Barber, deputy assistant secretary of defense for public affairs for the Department of Defense, and James J. Courtney, deputy commissioner for communications at the Social Security Administration, were chosen by a committee of former NAGC presidents.

"A government communicator is one who connects people with their government," said David Matustik, chair of the Communicator of the Year Selection Committee. "Ms. Barber and Mr. Courtney undertook massive projects with a sense of purpose and innovation that effectively brought people together and fostered an understanding of government services."

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2007 Communications School Provides Great Programs and Networking



Communications School attendees listen to presentations.

If you were among the more than 200 participants at the 2007 NAGC Communications School, you know how good it was. Held in Oak Brook, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, the spring Communications School brought together outstanding speakers, informative workshops and dedicated government communicators in a four-day program of listening, learning and networking.

See Communications School, page 3

New NAGC Dues Structure Provides for Increased Member Services

The NAGC board recently voted to increase the NAGC dues for the first time in several years. Annual dues for regular active members were increased from \$85 to \$120. The increase was warranted to assure NAGC's long-term fiscal stability, deliver enhanced member services, fund innovative new programs and keep up with the increasing cost of doing business.

There are seven categories of membership in NAGC which are fully defined on the Web site at www.nagconline.org. These categories and the associated annual fees are summarized as follows:

ACTIVE: (\$120) Employed (or unemployed and seeking a position) in federal, state, county or local government. The right to vote and to hold national elective office in the NAGC is limited to active members.

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NAGC Dues, *continued from page 1*

ORGANIZATION/AGENCY: (\$480) Any group of individuals (up to five people total) who meet the active category requirements.

AFFILIATE: (\$250) Non-government person engaged in communications or public relations whose professional activities will enhance, further or support the objectives of NAGC.

AFFILIATE GROUP: (\$1,000) Any group of five individuals from an organization meeting affiliate category requirements.

RETIRED: (\$50) An active member for five or more years, now retired.

STUDENT: (\$35) Full-time student preparing for a career in government communications.

HONORARY: A person who, by majority vote of the board of directors, is determined to have made a significant contribution to advancing the objectives of NAGC.

The board also voted to honor military members by offering a 50 percent discount on annual memberships. This special price is available for active duty military members until Oct. 1, 2007. "Even with the increase in dues, membership in NAGC still is one of the most cost-effective and beneficial activities for a government communicator," said Gene Rose, NAGC president. ■

Communications School, *continued from page 1*

A popular feature of past Communications Schools is the pre-conference workshops. This year, early arrivals could choose from three outstanding workshops to help improve communications skills. These included "Speak Now or...", presented by Larry L. Smith, president, Institute of Crisis Management; "Can You See Me Now? Creating an Effective and Visible Communications Program," presented by Theresa Graves and Cindy Fowler of Graves Fowler Creative; and "Print to Pixels: Communicating Your Messages on the Web," presented by Chris Matthews, eGovernment officer at Washoe County, Nevada.

The Communications School officially kicked off on Tuesday, April 24, with a keynote address by Brian Natwick, general manager of the Pentagon Channel, who discussed new technologies being used to distribute messages and connect with unique audiences.

Afternoons again were devoted to breakout sessions where attendees could select presentations of their particular interest. Topics included presentations and panel discussions ranging from strategic planning, branding and media relations to hearing about new technologies, personal development and the always popular speech-writing seminar.

After a full day of information gathering, conference attendees still had great social and networking opportunities ranging from attending city events to lunches and receptions. Attendees also could stroll through the exhibition hall where vendors displayed products and services.

Concluding the Communications School, the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen awards were presented at a gala banquet on Thursday evening. More than 100 people celebrated the presentation of awards recognizing those government communications activities that were judged the tops in their field.

Plans are already under way for the 2008 Communications School to be held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, April 28 - May 1, 2008. Moving to the great southwest for the first time is sure to provide unique experiences and education for government communicators. Plan now to attend the 2008 Communications School. ■



More than 200 registered for the 2007 Communications School.



Workshops were educational.



Gene Rose, NAGC president, and Carrie Morimoto, Communications School chair, draw names for prizes.

Communicators, *continued from page 1*



David Matustik presents James Courtney with a Communicator of the Year award.

According to Matustik, Ms. Barber was instrumental in establishing communications channels between deployed military troops on the front lines of an ongoing war to loved ones back home using such innovative tools as the Pentagon Channel and the America Supports You program.

Mr. Courtney successfully managed an effective communications program concerning the Medicare prescription drug program for the Social Security Administration that incorporated targeted mailings, telephone calls and community outreach events reaching more than nine million people. ■



Allison Barber appeared by video to accept a Communicator of the Year award.

Real Comments from Real People

OK, so what did attendees really think of the 2007 Communications School. Here are four candid comments. Let them encourage you to attend the 2008 Communications School.



Hilda Zuniga

It's always good to know that I am not alone when it comes to overcoming the issues of government communications; even better when best practices are shared and talked about with great frankness.

That is exactly what happened at the 2007 National Association of Government

Communicators Conference. It's impressive that attendees and presenters are so open to sharing different ideas and expertise. Nothing resembles the real life experiences and skills of those who were part of this year's conference.

There are so many aspects of government communications that it almost impossible to cover them all in just four days, but NAGC did it. Congratulations! I look forward to attending next year's conference.

- Hilda Zuniga, Public Information Officer, Fort Worth Public Health Department, Bioterrorism and Health Emergency Preparedness Team

Being a local government communicator, most of the conferences I attend are geared towards cities and counties.

With a strong federal and state base, the NAGC conference gave me some excellent insight into the processes for larger agencies, and helped me look at things in a different way.

The keynote speakers were top notch, and the networking opportunities were invaluable. Overall, an incredibly useful conference!

- Chris Matthews, eGovernment Information Officer, Washoe County, Nevada



Chris Matthews



Sheila McCant

I found both the pre-conference and conference workshops to be very helpful. The speakers were knowledgeable and the topics, timely. I benefited most from the information about trends in public relations and emergency communication. Several of the workshops gave me an indirect critique of the practices and pr tools I am currently using. It's always nice to know you're "on the right page."

I only wish some of the breakout sessions had been offered more than once so I wouldn't have missed them. I am taking back some fresh ideas that I'm anxious to try.

-Sheila McCant



C.J. Nelson

As a first-time participant of the NAGC Communications School, I can say with confidence that I took more away from this conference than I ever anticipated and would highly recommend it to professionals in the field of government communications. The resources I received including information about new software, advanced forms of technology in communication as well as a broader understanding of new concepts have provided me with a wealth of information and level of professional development I could not have accessed otherwise. This experience will allow me the opportunity to considerably advance the communications used in my office as well as in my career. In addition to the resources, the conference provided a priceless opportunity to network with communicators from around the country who graciously shared wonderful ideas and useful tools I will utilize in the future to continually improve how I communicate. I look forward to future NAGC conferences and extend my sincerest thanks to those who coordinated such an efficient, educational and beneficial event.

- C.J. Nelson, Public Information Officer, The Community Partnership, Toledo, Ohio

Congratulations to the winners of the 2007 Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards!

Winners of this year's awards program were announced at the April 26 annual awards banquet that concluded the 2007 NAGC Communications School in Oak Brook, Illinois, April 24-26, 2007.

Banquet attendees joined the NAGC Board in recognizing 170 government communicators, whose work was judged to be outstanding, by their peers. The recognition was well earned, with more than 550 entries competing in 53 categories that included magazines, public service announcements and electronic communications.

Besides entering the competition, NAGC members can benefit from this outstanding awards program by joining the newly formed Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards Committee, or volunteering as a judge. If you are uncertain about the value of participation, take a look at Kathy Rohling's article. Kathy was a judge in this year's competition and found the overall experience to be rewarding and educational. If you are interested in the committee, or being a judge, contact Jennifer Callahan, competitions director, at 202-720-8024 or jcallahan@oce.usda.gov.

Are you ready to be a 2008 Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Winner? Competition begins this fall, so start selecting your entries now. You could be one of the next winners, but only if you enter. ■

See a full list of winners and photographs on the NAGC Web site at www.nagconline.org

Some Thoughts on Being a Blue Pencil Judge

By *Kathleen Rohling*

Serving as a judge for the Blue Pencil competition has been one of the more valuable means available to me for professional development. I've learned how to improve my own products from reading, analyzing and evaluating entries. I've discovered ways to improve my entries in the competition, especially important information about what to include in the one-page description that can make a difference in the final score. A publication can be just about perfect, but if you don't convey the necessary information, it most likely will not be scored as high as it could have been.

My suggestion to help with your future entries would be to strengthen areas in the descriptions for the judges to determine as fair and accurate a score as possible. Areas most lacking in information include total costs incurred to produce and distribute publications, online availability, and dissemination or distribution to the intended audience.

The information missing most often in the cost category is the estimated cost of staff time. Many entries actually state that staff time was not included. This is a hard one to estimate, but necessary to providing a realistic total cost for the publication. A "rough estimate" or "approximate cost" provides the judges more to work with than not providing the information at all.

Many descriptions don't indicate if the publication is available online. Being online can make a difference in the publication's score for cost effectiveness because that publication is reaching a wider audience for less money.

Indicating how the product was or will be disseminated to the intended audience is critical. Many descriptions only say how many publications were distributed, but not how and to whom. Getting our products to the audience is one of the more crucial aspects of what we do. There is a close connection between successfully disseminating a product and determining the success of that product.

When I finished judging entries for this year's competition, I realized how proud I am to be a member of this "family" of government communicators. It is truly inspiring to see these wonderful products, and the creative and innovative ways that communicators employ for making budgets, staff and other resources stretch without compromising quality. As a Blue Pencil judge, I found it educational to be able to see a bigger picture of what is happening in our fields—in federal, state and local governments—and to incorporate the new things we've learned into our own workplace cultures.

If it sounds like I'm recommending that you volunteer to be a judge for the next competition, I am! I guarantee it is one of the more rewarding things you'll ever do that you will absolutely benefit from—in your personal growth and professional development and in the new ideas you will be sharing with your coworkers and within your organization. ■

Kathleen Rohling is a Writer/Editor with the Bureau of Land Management's National Science and Technology Center, Branch of Publishing Services, in Denver.

“Year in Review” from NAGC Headquarters

As we approach the conclusion of our first year of service to NAGC, Association and Society Management International (ASMI) is pleased to report on accomplishments. ASMI was retained beginning June 1, 2006, after NAGC completed an extensive search for new management

- ◆ Several new NAGC member benefits have been launched and a complete package of member benefits is nearing completion. This year, NAGC has initiated communities of interest that allow members to network and seek resources in areas specific to their fields, including publications, media relations, web sites, audio-visual, writing/editing and emergency management communications. Members are receiving useful messages each month that provide articles of interest, links to worthwhile resources and other information.

- ◆ The NAGC Web site was re-organized and re-launched with a new look and a focus on member service delivery;

- ◆ A regular member communications schedule has been implemented; and

- ◆ New management tools have been introduced to facilitate NAGC operations including monthly board member reports, issue papers for major decisions, and regular monthly Board calls to review status of major NAGC projects and activities.

- ◆ After careful and considerate financial management, NAGC finances have stabilized with an increase in operating capital for next year.

- ◆ A professional staff service team at ASMI has been established to help NAGC members:

- NAGC Executive Director – Beth Armstrong, MAM, CAE
- NAGC Program Manager – Melissa Trumbull
- Communications & Marketing Director – Dawn Shiley-Danzeisen
- Membership/Communications Assistant – Debbie Vincent
- Meetings Registrar/Assistant – Mary Ackleson
- Web Content Manager – Karen Thompson
- The staff team is supported by additional ASMI personnel, including specialists in financial management, meetings production, mailroom support and others.

Please contact the ASMI management firm any time we can help ensure that your NAGC membership is worthwhile: info@nagconline.org or 703-538-1787. ■



*Beth Armstrong,
NAGC Executive Director*

Exhibitors Demonstrate Products

Attendees at the 2007 Communications School had the opportunity to visit 12 exhibits this year and talk with vendors about products and services useful to government communicators. Vendors included Adobe; Online Video Services; The News Council; ConferenceDirect; Care2; Nimlok Chicago; Graves Fowler Creative; BurrellesLuce; Nikon; Vocus; Ragan Communications and NAGC.

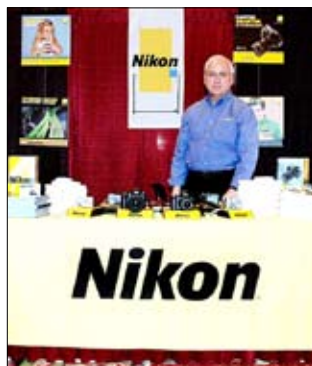
NAGC members can always contact exhibitors throughout the year if there are questions about their products or services. Members can suggest other vendors that provide useful product and services to government communicators. This helps NAGC members and encourages vendor participation in future Communication Schools. Here are pictures of some vendors. ■



ConferenceDirect



BurrellesLuce



Nikon



Care2



Online Video Services

Being an NAGC Member and Volunteer

By George Selby, NAGC President-elect, 2008-2009

At the recent 2007 NAGC Communications School and Conference in Chicago, I had the opportunity to meet and talk with many of the attendees and NAGC members from across the United States and from all levels of government. Several individuals expressed great interest in volunteering for NAGC. As NAGC President-elect, I was delighted to see such enthusiasm in becoming NAGC volunteers, and was reminded about the value of being an NAGC member, how I first came to be an NAGC volunteer and the actual meaning of serving the association in a volunteer capacity.

It seems just yesterday that I delivered my first NAGC presentation at the 2003 Communications School and Conference in New Orleans. I discussed the first "re-branding" project undertaken by the U.S. Census Bureau that spanned more than five years in research, development and implementation. The feedback I received from attendees, NAGC members and NAGC board members was nothing short of exhilarating.

I've been a member of NAGC since 1980, attending the annual conferences and occasionally judging and submitting publications into the Blue Pencil Awards competition...a fairly typical level of member participation.

Then, I got "involved."

Following my branding presentation and while waiting to accept a Blue Pencil Award for a Census Bureau publication at the conference awards banquet, I happened to sit next to the then Northeast Regional Director for NAGC and a member of the NAGC board of directors. She asked if I would consider completing her term as Northeast Regional Director as well as taking her seat on the NAGC board of directors. I agreed after hearing more about the goals and objectives of NAGC, and was voted on as a newly minted member of the NAGC Board of Directors and the Northeast Regional Director.

Fast-forward to 2007 and more than four years of volunteer participation in the operations, decision-making, goal setting, revitalization and long-range planning for the National Association of Government Communicators.

Since joining NAGC initially and then serving as an NAGC board member, I've served as NAGC Treasurer, assembled conference information packets (it's not all glamorous), and participated in selecting a new management company for NAGC. In a drive to boost NAGC membership, I developed and implemented a direct mail member solicitation campaign.

I've met federal, state, regional and local government communicators from around the nation, and critiqued the effectiveness of government Web sites; worked to foster writing that is clear, succinct and engaging in the government; judged and hosted the judging of hundreds of entries in the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards competitions; and had the pleasure of personally handing the awards to the elated winners at the awards banquet.

Perhaps most important, I have worked as part of a team of dedicated volunteers and friends whose ultimate goal and purpose is the improvement of communication between the

See Being A Member and Voluneer, page 7



George Selby, NAGC
President-elect

You'll notice the difference, as will your employer. *By joining and being actively involved in NAGC, you will be able to:*

- ◆ *Network with colleagues across the country*
- ◆ *Compare notes with others who "have been there"*
- ◆ *Renew your passion for public service*
- ◆ *Do more with less*
- ◆ *Decipher, explain, and use government data more effectively*
- ◆ *View "success" through a different prism*
- ◆ *Overcome bureaucratic obstacles to accomplishing your mission*
- ◆ *Face communications crises with greater confidence and technical expertise*
- ◆ *Redefine who you are, stretch yourself and grow*
- ◆ *Mentor new members of our profession*
- ◆ *Hone your professional skills and acquire new ones*
- ◆ *Get the most out of collaborative efforts*
- ◆ *Assist or be assisted by someone you've never met*
- ◆ *Refresh your perspective on your chosen field*
- ◆ *Evaluate your career growth and assess future growth potential*
- ◆ *Share what you've learned through your personal experience*
- ◆ *See the best in print, electronic, online, and audiovisual communications*
- ◆ *Meet and hear government newsmakers and members of the media*
- ◆ *Better appreciate the nuances of working in government communications*
- ◆ *Reap unforeseen rewards while you make a difference*

Being A Member and Volunteer, from page 6

government and the people.

I would do it again in a heartbeat.

The value of the NAGC volunteer experience cannot be measured. It's a true opportunity for you to grow personally and professionally. By investing your time and talent in NAGC, you will be investing in yourself.

If you are interested in becoming a member of NAGC or getting more involved in the organization, please contact Beth Armstrong, NAGC executive director (info@nagconline.org or 703-538-1787) and she will direct you to the appropriate area of interest

NAGC plans to conduct its board member elections electronically this year, so be sure to watch NAGC President Gene Rose's "To The Point" e-mails for details later this summer about running for a Board position, as well as the timing of the actual elections. Plans are to have the new directors installed during the 2008 Communications School and Conference, April 28-May 1, 2008, in Albuquerque.

In the meantime, if I can assist you in any way with your communications programs or answer questions about NAGC membership, please contact me directly at 301-763-4461, or e-mail me at george.selby@census.gov. I look forward to hearing from you and meeting you in person in Albuquerque. ■

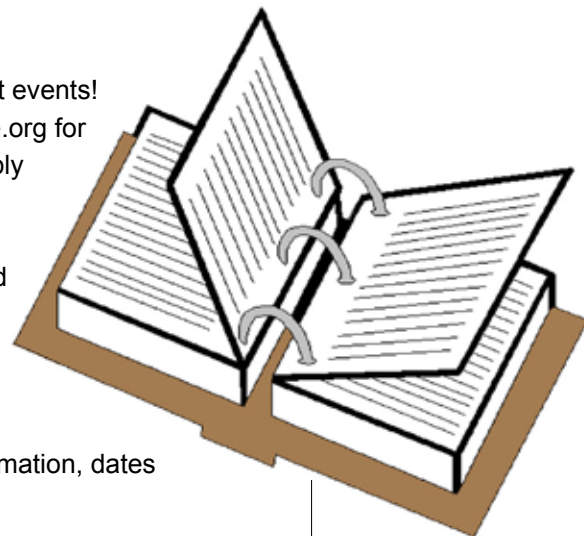
"Let the Public Service be a proud and lively career. And let every man and woman who works in any area of national government, in any branch, at any level be able to say with pride and with honor in future years, I work for the United States Government in an hour of our nation's needs."
- JFK

Important Future NAGC Events

Mark your calendars now and...start your planning for NAGC's biggest events!

- ◆ Sept. 1 - Application form will be available online at www.nagconline.org for the 2008 Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards. Early bird entry fees apply until Nov. 16. Entry deadline is Dec. 28. You can't win if you don't enter!
- ◆ Oct. 2 - Dial-in conference call on "How to Submit a Winning Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Entry." Learn from the experts what is expected of entries.
- ◆ April 28/May 1 - Of course, it's the NAGC 2008 Communications School to be held at the Albuquerque Marriott on Louisiana Blvd. in Albuquerque, NM. This, you don't want to miss!

Always visit the Web site at www.nagconline.org to get the latest information, dates and events. ■



In Memoriam

Weldon "Don" Rogers, 62, died from complications of throat cancer on Saturday, August 4, 2007. He was an educator, journalist, public relations and marketing professional. A native of Houston, Texas, and a long time member of NAGC and the Texas chapter, his long and varied career in public relations included work with Dick Clark Inc., the Playboy Enterprises Inc., Marketing/Communications Solutions; Texas Department of Emergency Management and the Texas Department of Mental Health and Retardation. He also served as adjunct professor at Texas State University in San Marcos, Texas. ■

Volunteers Are Needed

If you want to become more active in the growth of NAGC, please contact President Gene Rose at gene.rose@ncsl.org or Beth Armstrong, NAGC executive director, at barmstrong@asmii.net. Your efforts can help strengthen our work as government communicators. ■

The NAGC Communicator is published periodically to keep members apprised of special activities in the organization. Your comments, story ideas and information are always welcome. Contact Editor John Nash at jnash2@cox.net.

Always visit the NAGC Web site at www.nagconline.org for the most current and up-to-date information.

As indicated in the above articles, the NAGC 2007 Communications School and awards celebration in Oak Brook, Illinois, were great successes. Here are some pictures from the events.



The buffet line was always a gathering place.



Products were explained.



Waiting for a seminar to begin.



Planning for a day's activities.



Always connected.



Brian Natwick, Pentagon Channel



Receiving a Blue Pencil Award.



Attendees listen to outstanding speakers.



Winning entries were on display.



Seminars and workshops were well attended.



John White, photographer and speaker, answered questions.