

51st Annual MTA Conference Builds Michigan's Future



More than 1,400 township officials and employees strengthened their commitment and dedication to township government at the 51st Annual Educational Conference, held in Lansing, January 27-30, 2004. Themed "Townships: Building Michigan's Future," this year's Conference boasted more than 50 educational sessions, a 125-booth Trade Show and new events designed with plenty of networking time.

Inspiring Opening Session Set the Tone

The Conference's Opening Session laid the foundation for the week with the patriotic presentation of colors and 2004 Parade of Flags, motivating address by MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill and a little thought-provoking humor from keynote speaker Greg Schwem.

In her President's Address, Maxine McClelland reflected on her term as president during MTA's 50th anniversary year, recalling the Association's commemorative events, and examining the legislative challenges and triumphs townships faced in 2003. She looks forward to the strong future of township government in Michigan, stating: "I am absolutely confident that 50 years from now—with the momentum we have and what township government has become in Michigan—that we will rule the day, and there won't be a single legislator or governor who doesn't know what we are or what we are about."

"We are the future of government in Michigan."

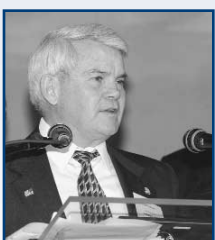
Five townships received honors from MTA's new awards program "Excellence in Township Government." For more on the award winners, and why they were honored, turn to page 16.

In his address playing off the Conference's theme, Merrill encouraged township officials to accept the challenge to build an "active citizenry," urging the 4.3 million residents who live in townships to take part in, and feel a stronger connection to, their local community. (*For more on Merrill's thoughts on this topic, see "Local View" on page 3.*)

"Bring the public in so they can express their values, hopes, fears and dreams for the community," he said. "You provide the leadership, expertise and confidence that people understand they can accomplish meaningful, exciting things working together with you. An active citizenship leads to more effective township government."

"You are America's best hope. Renovate democracy for the 21st century."

Keynoter Greg Schwem—who drew high praise from attendees and guests for his comic insights on townships, work and family—shared his philosophy that the best way to deal with stress in life is to have the ability to laugh. "When things stress you out—at work, in the government that you run or help run, when you take



problems home with you and it affects your personal life—you have to sit back and laugh,” he reminded.

A Week Full of Activity

Attendees were able to stock their “township toolkits” by attending educational sessions throughout the week. Timely topics ranged from *Annexation & Townships: What Does the Future Hold* to *Wind Turbines—Coming Soon to Your Township*. MTA Committee forums were also held to give delegates a chance to review and comment on the Association’s proposed policy platform.

The 2004 MTA Trade Show remained, as always, a popular fixture at Conference. With 128 exhibitors, vendor products and services ranged from accounting software to wastewater management, and everything in between. This year’s Featured County Chapters—Ingham, Clinton and Eaton Counties, better known as ICE—packed their booth with impressive giveaways and information about their counties surrounding the Capital City.

The Annual Banquet this year was moved to Wednesday evening to allow more than 51 legislators and other state VIPs to attend. Recognition awards were given to two legislators who supported townships in 2003. Rep. Mike Pumford (R-Newaygo) was honored as MTA’s “2003 Legislator of the Year,” and Rep. Doug Hart (R-Rockford) received a “Service Award” for his work launching the local government curriculum now available for schools. **Patrick White**, 2003 MTA president, received the Past President Award, while **Don Thall** became an MTA life member. The antics and entertaining performance of “New Odyssey” drew raves from the audience, who sang, danced and clapped along with the musical trio.

The Heritage Gala—an informal networking event new to this year’s Conference—proved one of the most popular events of the week. MTA and its Conference attendees took over the Michigan Historical Center for an evening of food, drinks, socializing and the opportunity to walk through Michigan’s history—from a pre-settlement diorama display to a 1957 auto show and beyond.

The week concluded with the adoption of MTA’s 2004 Legislative Policy Platform (see page 4) at the MTA Annual Meeting on Friday morning. Brad VanHaitisma was elected 2004 MTA president (see page 14), and three new members were elected to the MTA Board of Directors (see page 18).

Be sure to mark your calendar for next year’s Conference, January 25-28, 2005, at the Detroit Marriott Renaissance Center! ■



Mobile Homes, Elections ‘Hot Topics’ at Capitol Conference

House Speaker Rick Johnson kicked off this year’s annual Capitol Conference—held in conjunction with the Annual Educational Conference—by

welcoming almost 200 township officials during a breakfast reception for attendees and legislators.

During the morning general session, officials had an opportunity to hear from

Michigan Department of Transportation Director Gloria Jeff (pictured above top).

Revenue sharing and election consolidation were the hot topics of two concurrent

breakout sessions before officials were addressed by luncheon

speakers Senate Majority Leader Ken Sikkema (picture above center) and Sen. Mark Schauer. The

conference concluded with a general session on mobile homes. ■



Meet Brad VanHaitsma: 2004 MTA President



MTA's newly inducted president Brad VanHaitsma is a self-described optimist who has had a spark for politics since a young age. Prompted by his uncle to run for office more than 20 years ago, he now leads the very township where he attended meetings in his early 20s.

The state's uncertain economy is sure to bring issues of revenue sharing and local control to the forefront for local government. With this in mind, VanHaitsma is confident he won't carry the challenges of his presidency alone because he has 6,544 partners who love what they do and are dedicated to making their communities a better place to live and work.

As MTA's new leader, VanHaitsma knows change is inevitable but hopes he and the Board of Directors, along with the Association staff, can help townships adapt to the changes by providing information, education and a forum for networking with other officials.

Q How did you become involved in township government?

Even as a young person, I was interested in politics and government and the people who were a part of it. I remember attending township board meetings in my early 20s at the old township hall in Clam Union Township. In 1980, when I was 36 years old, my uncle, who had been clerk for as long as I could remember, approached me about running for clerk. He was planning on retiring at the end of the year and thought I should run for the position. I decided to give it a try, defeating two opponents in the primary and ran unopposed in the general election in the fall.

The day I took office, my uncle stopped over with several boxes of files, ledgers, cemetery records, etc. and left for Florida the next day. I served as clerk for 16 years and then was elected supervisor.

Q How do you stay passionate and energetic about your work in township government, and on the MTA Board?

I find it just as exciting today as I did 23 years ago when I started going through those boxes that my uncle left at my doorstep. I guess it gets in your blood. Ours is a small community, and the people appreciate what we try to do for them. Having the support of the people who elected you makes the job that much more enjoyable.

Serving on the Board of Directors, to me, has been a learning experience. My first couple of years on the Board, I sat back and observed more than participated. But as I learned more about what MTA was about and got to know the staff and fellow board members, it was impossible *not* to get excited about it.

Q What do you see as your role for the Association in the upcoming year?

I see the role of president as that of a facilitator working with fellow board members and staff. It's not a soap box for me to use to push my own agenda.

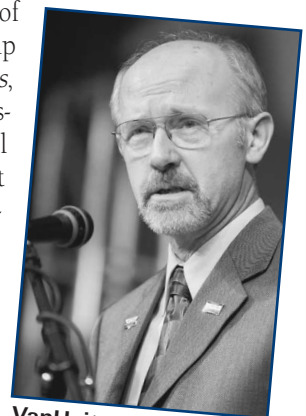
My leadership style will be low-key and organized. We have a great executive director, department heads and staff who are responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Association and don't need me looking over their shoulders.

Q What is the most effective way to connect with our membership?

I think we are doing a great job of connecting with our membership now. With the *Michigan Township News*, reports, faxes and Internet, along with district meetings and the Annual Educational Conference, no one can say that they are not informed on issues affecting township government.

Q How can we engage the public in the efforts of township government?

I think we can make much better use of the local media in our communities. We need to get news releases to them on how statewide issues affect our local communities. When they read it in the major newspapers—if they read it at all—they don't make the connection as to how it might affect them locally.



VanHaitsma addresses delegates at the Annual Meeting after being inducted as 2004 MTA President.

Q Many different groups have joined together to fight additional budget cuts during the past couple of years. How do we maintain that momentum and cooperation?

I think MTA has always done a great job in working with other organizations and groups on issues of mutual concern. The one area we need to work on is getting more of our members involved in our grassroots network. We have accomplished a lot through the network but I think that we are a sleeping giant that needs to be energized. We have enough members who, if they got on the phone to their legislator on an issue of concern, could shut down the switchboard at the Capitol.



After receiving the MTA President pin from Micki McClelland, VanHaitsma affixes the Immediate Past President pin on McClelland during the Annual Meeting.

Q How do you see township government evolving?

I'm an optimist. With the population shift to townships, I feel that it will only get stronger. With growth comes challenges, which requires strong leadership from all elected officials. We need to stay abreast of changes that will inevitably come our way and take advantage of educational opportunities that are available. That's where MTA comes in.

Q When your term as president concludes in January 2005, what would you like the membership to remember about you?

That I represented MTA with pride and perhaps helped to energize the membership into becoming more involved and claim more ownership of *their* organization.

Q What issues will the Association and members be faced with in the upcoming year?

Fighting off cuts in revenue sharing and maintaining local control within our communities.

Q What is your advice for those members who might be considering becoming a member of the Board of Directors?

If you are willing and able to commit the necessary time and dedication required, go for it. It is a great experience, one that I have enjoyed very much.

Personal Profile: Brad VanHaitsma

Family: Married to Karen for 41 years. Three children, Aaron, and Michael and Teresa, who are twins. The VanHaitsmas have eight grandchildren.

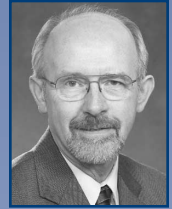
Community involvement: Member of the Paul Bunyan Board of Realtors, Prosper Christian Reformed Church and president of the MTA Missaukee County Chapter from 1989 to present.

A "day in the life" of Brad VanHaitsma: Serving as township supervisor is a part-time job for me. I am a real estate broker and own my own business. My office is located next door to my home, which is convenient in some ways but makes it a little harder to get away and relax. My real estate office and township office are one and the same and this seems to work quite well.

2004 MTA Executive Committee

Brad VanHaitsma,
MTA President
Clam Union Township
Supervisor, Missaukee County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1990
- Elected supervisor in 1996; clerk, 1980-1996



VanHaitsma



Hilton

Don R. Hilton, Sr.,
MTA First Vice President
Gaines Charter Township
Supervisor, Kent County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1996
- Elected supervisor in 1992

Arlene E. Hill,
MTA Second Vice President
Chocolay Charter Township
Clerk, Marquette County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1993
- Elected clerk in 1986
- Forsyth Township clerk for six years; deputy clerk for two years



Hill



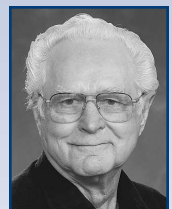
Rutledge

Larry Rutledge, MTA Treasurer
La Salle Charter Township
Supervisor, Monroe County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1996
- Elected supervisor in 1988; clerk, 1984-1988; trustee, 1980-1984; treasurer, 1975-1978

Donald McArthur,
MTA Secretary
Newton Township Supervisor,
Mackinac County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1993
- Elected supervisor in 1972



McArthur



McClelland

Maxine McClelland,
MTA Immediate Past President
Big Rapids Township Supervisor,
Mecosta County

- Elected to MTA Board in 1987
- Elected supervisor in 1980; clerk, 1972-1980; deputy clerk, 1970-1972

Five Townships Honored for 'Excellence in Township Government'



The following township officials accepted an "Excellence in Township Government Award" on behalf of their township: **Joan McCrary**, **Independence Charter Township** clerk; from **Flushing Charter Township**, **Pat Drozdowski**, deputy clerk, and **Andrew Trotogot**, supervisor; from **Superior Charter Township**, **William McFarlane**, supervisor; **Brenda McKinney**, treasurer; and **David Phillips**, trustee; and **Judy Williams**, **Unadilla Township** supervisor.

The success of any association is dependent upon the success of its members. At MTA, we recognize that township government has thrived because of the courage, commitment and vision of township boards throughout the state. To reward and highlight the outstanding achievement of dedicated townships, MTA created the "Excellence in Township Government" awards program.

Applications were accepted in seven categories: Boardsmanship, Constituent Communications, Fiscal Management, Human Resources Management, Land Use, Community Services and Intergovernmental Relations. Awards were given in five of the seven categories.

The awards were announced to township officials and guests attending Opening Session during the Association's 51st Annual Educational Conference in Lansing.

EXCELLENCE IN FISCAL MANAGEMENT

Flushing Charter Township (Genesee Co.)
"A Pay As You Go Community"



during uncertain economic times.

This "Pay As You Go Community" has been able to pay cash for most infrastructure improvements. The only debt the township has accrued in the past 14 years was a \$2 million bond in 1992 to cover sewer line projects. Since that time, projects, which are done at a resident's request, are tackled only as the township can afford to pay for them.

In addition, the township financed a 130-acre nature park with a combination of state Department of Natural Resources grants and cable TV franchise fees. The township has made many improvements to the park since its purchase, without using any taxpayer dollars.

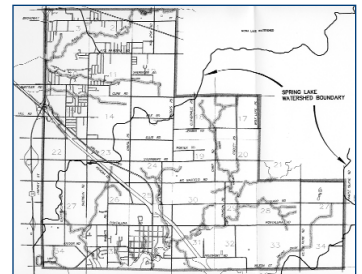
"It is our hope that we can continue to enhance our community while still maintaining the same level of fiscal responsibility in the future," said Treasurer **Carl G. Liepmann**.

A debt-free philosophy has helped **Flushing Charter Township** maintain stability without raising taxes, and lower its levy for general operating expenses

EXCELLENCE IN LAND USE

Fruitport Charter Township
(Muskegon Co.)
2002-2022 Master Plan

The December 2002 approval of **Fruitport Charter Township's** master plan for 2002-2022 was the result of the dedication and commitment that township officials and residents often show for the communities in which they work, live and play.



The master plan is a unique document because it captures the character of the community in a way that has never been done before—it focuses on their environment. The plan, which received a grant from the Coastal Zone Management Program of the Department of Natural Resources, balances the need to provide the capacity for future development while seeking to preserve the environment and protect the watershed.

"The December 2002 approval of 20-year plan was the culmination of more than a year's worth of extensive evaluation and research that was completed by 12 individuals who came together because of their pure love for where they live," noted Supervisor **Connie Smith**.

EXCELLENCE IN CONSTITUENT COMMUNICATIONS
Superior Charter Township
 (Washtenaw Co.)



Superior Charter Township strives to offer easy-to-access information, and open and accessible contact between township officials and staff and residents.

The township was honored for its formal communication efforts including welcome packets full of information about the township and the services provided to all new residents, a useful, dynamic and easily accessible Web site, and two newsletters.

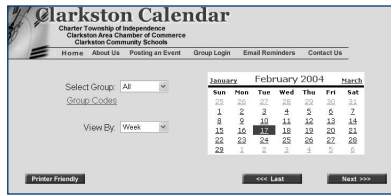
“Our township is proud to accept this award for our efforts in constituent communications,” said Treasurer **Brenda McKinney**. “In Superior Township we consider ourselves a family, and we are proud to promote accessibility and communication between township officials, trustees and staff, and the residents we serve through face-to-face contact, as well as more formal methods of constituent communications.”

EXCELLENCE IN COMMUNITY SERVICE
Charter Township of Independence
 (Oakland Co.)
www.clarkstoncalendar.org

The collaboration of three entities in Oakland County, including **Independence Charter Township**, to end the duplication of printed calendars addressing each entity’s own needs is truly exciting and innovative. The result was a Web site where each unit could post all events related to the activities specific to each group, resulting in a far more efficient method of communicating events, at a fraction of the cost.

“We believe this collaboration between Independence Township, the Clarkston Community School District and the Chamber of Commerce is a wonderful example of people working together with public and business resources to serve our community,” said Clerk **Joan E. McCrary**.

“We are greatly honored to be the recipient of a prestigious, statewide, first-time award such as this one from the Michigan Townships Association. The award will bring attention to the project and the service it brings to the community.”



An application for the 2005 “Excellence in Township Government” awards program will appear in the September 2004 issue of Michigan Township News.

EXCELLENCE IN INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS
Unadilla Township (Livingston Co.)
Gregory Sewer Project

The Gregory Sewer Project was an affordable solution to the wastewater problem in the Gregory area, made possible through the joint efforts of multiple governmental agencies working together for the good of all.



Photo courtesy of the Livingston County Daily Press & Argus

The project was made possible by the efforts of **Unadilla Township**, along with USDA Rural Development, Rural Community Assistance Program, Senator Debbie Stabenow, Livingston County Health Department, Livingston County Drain Commissioner, Washtenaw County Public Works, **Putnam Township**, **Lyndon Township** and **Dexter Township**.

“Our township is proud to accept this award for Intergovernmental Relations for the Gregory Sewer Project,” said **Judy Williams**, township supervisor. “This affordable project demonstrates the benefits of different governmental agencies working together. Also, it is our hope that this award will make other rural communities aware of the assistance available through the USDA Rural Development and the Rural Community Assistance Program.”

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Three Officials Elected to the MTA Board of Directors

Danette Converse, District 3 Director



Converse

Danette Converse, Garfield Township (Mackinac Co.) treasurer, will represent officials in Alger, Chippewa, Luce, Mackinac and Schoolcraft counties as MTA District 3 director. Converse was elected to fill the seat vacated by Donald McArthur, who was elected MTA secretary. She will serve out the remainder of a four-year term ending in 2005. Converse was appointed to the Member Services and Environment Committees.

As a district director, Converse plans to encourage townships that don't belong to MTA to join, and would also like to bring a better understanding to residents of the workings of township government. She views revenue sharing as one of the major challenges for MTA.

Converse was elected township treasurer in 2000, after serving as deputy treasurer for eight years. She has also served as chairperson of the township Emergency Services Committee since 2000, and was administrative assistant to the board from 1997-1999. She was instrumental in bringing the township tax and assessment roll into compliance with Michigan law.

Previously, Converse served on the Michigan Township Participating Plan board of directors from 2001-2002, and as a Mackinac County Housing Commissioner from 2000-2003.

While on the MTA Board, Converse said she hopes to bring "fairness to all."

Nancy Seydell, District 17 Director



Seydell

Tompkins Township Supervisor Nancy Seydell was elected to represent District 17, which includes Hillsdale, Ingham, Jackson and Lenawee counties. Seydell was elected to fill the vacancy created by the retirement of director Louis Rebottaro and will serve the remainder of a four-year term, which expires in 2005. She was appointed to the External Relations Committee.

Seydell lists her most rewarding experience in township government as "getting our township to vote to set up a Web site enabling us to reach our citizens in a rural area with information," she said. She believes that townships and MTA face numerous challenges including: statewide zoning education with new solutions for urban sprawl and loss of farmland; money from state revenues for necessary services; and new laws that reduce township control.

Elected supervisor in 2000, Seydell served as a township employee for 15 years. She served on the Jackson County Parks and Recreation Commission from 1993-2000, acting as chairperson for 1998 and 1999. Seydell was named Jackson County Citizen of the Year for 2004, and received the key to the township in 1988 for spearheading the township's sesquicentennial celebration.

Seydell was honored to be elected to the MTA Board. She said, "This position is a privilege—to be associated with an organization that provides excellence in every way."

John Randolph, District 19 Director



Randolph

John A. (Jack) Randolph, East China Charter Township (St. Clair Co.) supervisor, was elected to fill a vacancy created by the retirement of director Gerald Hannon. Randolph will serve residents in Macomb, Oakland and St. Clair counties for the remainder of a four-year term, expiring in 2005. He was appointed to the Member Services and Local Authority Committees.

Randolph has been involved in local government since 1976 when he began serving on the Marine City Planning Commission. He was elected supervisor in 2000, after serving as township trustee for five years. He is president of the MTA St. Clair County Chapter, and was chairman of the East China Planning Commission and East China Zoning Board of Appeals from 1987-1993. He was secretary/treasurer of the St. Clair County Supervisors Association from 2001-2003, and is currently chairperson of the St. Clair Area Fire Authority.

Randolph cites the formation and implementation of the St. Clair Area Fire Authority, which benefits East China Charter Township and three other governing entities, as one of the most rewarding experiences during his three decades in local government. As District 19 director, Randolph plans to promote MTA and its services to his area. He views the challenge to "protect and ensure the interests and future of township government" as a key mission for MTA.

Looking ahead to his term on the MTA Board, Randolph noted, "Local government has a big responsibility to protect the interests of the residents. At the same time, I will be learning the role and responsibilities of MTA, and to use its established procedures and policies for the betterment of local township government." ■

And the Winner is ...

Oneida Charter Township Wins Free Registration to 2005 Conference

The township board of **Oneida Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) was randomly drawn on February 6, 2004, as the winner in the contest to receive free registration to the 2005 MTA Annual Educational Conference at the Marriott Renaissance Center in Detroit, January 25-28. The winning entry was submitted by **Karen Robedeau**, treasurer of Oneida Charter Township. All 2004 Conference attendees who turned in a Conference evaluation form by February 6 were entered into the contest. Congratulations to Supervisor **Donald Cooley**, Clerk **David Carpenter**, Treasurer **Karen Robedeau**, and Trustees **Clarence Brunger**, **Paul Edwards**, **Ronald Shoal** and **Janet Schultz**.

Congratulations!

Sixty Township Flags Celebrated the 2004 Parade of Flags



Officials from 60 townships and 32 counties proudly waved their township flags during the 2004 Parade of Flags, kicking off the Conference's Opening Session.

Led by MTA Immediate Past President **Pat White, Pavilion**

Township (Kalamazoo Co.) supervisor, the parade filled the stage, gathering behind the Michigan National Color Guard holding the United States and Michigan flags. The patriotic effect was emphasized this year by the presentation of a special "Salute to America" video, with inspiring images of our country, its citizens and its service men and women.

MTA would like to express its appreciation to all townships that participated in the parade. The hard work that goes into creating a township flag is appreciated by all who attended the Conference.

Thank you 2004 Parade of Flags participants:

ALLEGAN COUNTY

Otsego Township

BAY COUNTY

Garfield Township
Williams Charter
Township

BERRIEN COUNTY

Lake Charter Township
Lincoln Charter
Township

Niles Township

CHIPPEWA COUNTY

Kinross Charter
Township

CLINTON COUNTY

Eagle Township
Victor Township

DELTA COUNTY

Escanaba Township

EATON COUNTY

Hamlin Township
Oneida Charter
Township

Windsor Charter
Township

GENESEE COUNTY

Flushing Charter
Township

Vienna Charter Township

INGHAM COUNTY

Aurelius Township
Leroy Township

IONIA COUNTY

Sebewa Township

IOSCO COUNTY

Plainfield Township

JACKSON COUNTY

Spring Arbor Township

KALAMAZOO COUNTY

Kalamazoo Charter
Township
Pavilion Township

KENT COUNTY

Alpine Township
Plainfield Charter
Township

LAPEER COUNTY

Oregon Township

LIVINGSTON COUNTY

Hartland Township
Tyrone Township

MACOMB COUNTY

Macomb Township

MASON COUNTY

Pere Marquette
Charter Township

MIDLAND COUNTY

Edenville Township
Homer Township

Ingersoll Township

Lincoln Township

MONROE COUNTY

Exeter Township
La Salle Township

MONTMORENCY COUNTY

Loud Township

MUSKEGON COUNTY

Cedar Creek Township
Dalton Township

Whitehall Township

NEWAYGO COUNTY

Croton Township

OAKLAND COUNTY

Milford Charter
Township

White Lake Charter
Township

OTSEGO COUNTY

Elmira Township

OTTAWA COUNTY

Georgetown Charter
Township

Zeeland Charter
Township

SAGINAW COUNTY

James Township
St. Charles Township

Thomas Township

SANILAC COUNTY

Bridgehampton
Township

Worth Township

ST. CLAIR COUNTY

China Charter Township
Cottrellville Township

Fort Gratiot Charter
Township

Riley Township

TUSCOLA COUNTY

Arbela Township

Millington Township

VAN BUREN COUNTY

Bloomington Township

WAYNE COUNTY

Brownstown Charter
Township

Huron Charter Township

Sumpter Township

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