

Cover Story



Officials embrace change at 2010 MTA Conference & Expo



Change was in the air at MTA's 57th Annual Educational Conference & Expo, held Jan. 27-29, 2010, at DeVos Place in Grand Rapids.

While some things—like quality educational sessions and top-notch entertainment—never change, the three-day event was filled with new and improved elements, including contemporary portions to the Conference's Opening Session and a revamped Networking Dinner—which replaced the traditional Annual Banquet to allow more time for conversation and connecting with fellow officials.

More than 1,300 attendees took advantage of these new features—and walked away with inspiration and information on how to embrace change in their townships, and in their lives.

A RESONATING WEEK

With a Conference theme of "Changing Times, Changing Townships," the week focused on ways that townships are adapting to today's changing times and leading Michigan into the 21st century—with new industries, a New Economy and a new attitude toward what makes local government work.

Although the Conference officially kicked off on Wednesday, the day prior was filled with pre-Conference sessions, including an informative *Secrets of Successful Grant Writing* program, with renowned grants guru, Dr. Beverly Browning, in addition to the Legal Institute for Township Attorneys, Auditor Institute and two Township Governance Academy (TGA) courses—which were jam-packed with participants!



Cover Story



Photos: (above left) A packed Opening Session started the week on an inspirational note; (above) Attendees took part in more than 70 educational sessions; (at right, from top) There was plenty of time for fun throughout the week; Choosing among the myriad of classes to attend could prove difficult; Time between sessions afforded opportunities for continued networking; Session topics covered the gamut of current issues in township government.

The Opening Session on Wednesday emphasized the change theme from start to finish, with additional elements, including a welcome from MTA President **Colleen Schwartz** and Grand Valley Metro Council Executive Director Donald Stypula. An exclusive round-table discussion on how local governments can—and should—embrace change also took place on stage, featuring President Schwartz, MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill, and Matt Ward, policy director for the National Association of Towns and Townships.

“It seems to me that townships are well poised for change, yet people don’t like change,” Merrill said. “I think it was Mark Twain who said, ‘Everyone’s for progress; it’s change they can’t stand.’”





Photos: (above, from left) Attendees were able to give back by donating blood at the MTA Blood Drive, and congratulations were extended to Livingston County for inspiring the most donors from their area; Masks, music and memories go hand-in-hand at the Par-Plan Mardi Gras party; (at left) Rep. Mike Lahti (far left), Sen. Patty Birkholz (center) and Rep. Darwin Booher received MTA legislative awards at the Networking Dinner; (at right) 2010 MTA Keynoter Aaron Davis (left) followed up his Opening Session address with a popular educational session, "Leadership Made Simple."



"I have all the confidence in the world that Michigan can restore itself to greatness. We have the will, we have the courage, we have the conviction, but most of all, we have the wonderful leaders who can give our folks hope and a new sense of commitment—to the 21st century—looking forward instead of looking back. It means doing things differently."

In a morning that incorporated traditional elements, including the Township Parade of Flags (*page 20*) and 2010 TGA graduation ceremony (*page 24*), 2010 Conference Keynoter Aaron Davis enthralled the audience at the Opening Session with his inspirational and humorous take on why people must embrace change and how to create opportunities leveraging change.

"Change is going to come regardless if you want it or not, so you have to know *why* you do what you do every day," Davis said. "If you know why you're doing it, no matter what happens, you'll continue to do it. When the passion wears out, we're in trouble."

A WEEK OF HIGHLIGHTS

Throughout the remainder of the week, officials enjoyed:

- A full slate of educational sessions—more than 70 in all—including a new "Innovations" track, with courses on cutting-edge topics on what drives today's townships and how to lead into the future. Topics ranged from "The Future of Bioenergy in Michigan" to "Keeping Your Township Special." Officials could still get their fill of traditional subjects, with dozens of sessions covering everything from the Freedom of Information Act to internal controls.
- A 140-booth Expo offering attendees information on products, services and demonstrations on how to help their township run more efficiently.

- A celebratory start to the week with Bendzinski's "3-D" pre-Conference festivities at the B.O.B., hosted by Bendzinski & Co., Municipal Finance Advisors.
- A trip to New Orleans, with the festive and fanciful Par-Plan Mardi Gras, sponsored by Kenrick Corporation and hosted by the Michigan Township Participating Plan.
- A more casual Networking Dinner, revamped to include more time for socializing and sharing ideas with friends—old and new. The evening, which began with a three-course meal, included recognition of two "Legislators of the Year," Reps. Mike Lahti (D-Hancock) and Darwin Booher (R-Osceola Twp.), and a "Township Champion," Sen. Patty Birkholz (R-Saugatuck Twp.)—all of whom received awards and addressed the audience during the dinner. Following the awards ceremony was the musical and comic entertainment of John Charles, who had the audience singing along and laughing throughout his entire performance.
- Time to relax and unwind at the Afterglow Reception, sponsored by the Burnham and Flower Insurance Group.
- The election of 2010 MTA president, **Linda Towsley, Windsor Charter Township** (Eaton Co.) clerk, and its slate of new officers (*page 18*), as well as recognition of MTA's newest life member, **Don R. Hilton, Sr., Gaines Charter Township** (Kent Co.) supervisor, and Schwartz as MTA past president.
- Adoption of the 2010 MTA Policy Platform during the Association's Annual Meeting on Jan. 29 (*page 30*).

Mark your calendars now for the 2011 MTA Annual Conference & Expo, held Jan. 26-28, at the DeVos Place in Grand Rapids, with pre-Conference events on Jan. 25. See you in 2011! ■



Photos: (above) The two-day, 140-booth MTA Expo brought together township decision-makers and the companies that can offer township solutions; (left) Musician John Charles entertained some 1,500 officials and guests during the MTA Networking Dinner.

Conference photos by Trumpie Photography, Grand Ledge. To view or purchase photos, visit www.trumpiephotography.com.

Malkin returns to MTA Board as District 20 Director

Victor Township (Clinton Co.) Supervisor **Warren Malkin** rejoined the MTA Board of Directors, after being elected at a caucus at the Conference to serve as District 20 director. He will represent officials in Eaton, Clinton and Ingham Counties.





Malkin

Malkin previously served on the MTA Board from 1998 through 2004. He said he is honored to be elected to once again serve the residents in his District. "I enjoy being on the Board and serving as director," he said. As director, Malkin says his primary goal is to "keep grassroots government growing."




Malkin was appointed township supervisor/assessor in 1989, and has served in that capacity since that time. He currently serves on the Victor Township Election Commission, and is a board member and treasurer of the Clinton Area Fire and Rescue. He is also a member of the Victor Township Historical Society.

He has served as chair and vice chair of the Clinton County MTA Chapter, and president and vice president of the Clinton County Assessors Association.

Please note: The Hubbard Law Firm, P.C. was inadvertently excluded from the list of 2010 MTA Expo exhibitors that appeared in the January/February issue of *Michigan Township News*. We regret the oversight.

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Introducing Linda Towsley, 2010 MTA president

On Jan. 29, 2010, a new MTA president began her tenure. **Linda Towsley, Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.) clerk**, brings to the presidency more than 30 years of township experience—plus a positive, enthusiastic attitude and a vision for the future of township government and Michigan.

With a friendly smile and a warm embrace, Towsley intends to make the most of her year at the helm of the Association, aiming to meet with as many members as possible and help townships strengthen their role as the government of choice in the 21st century.

Just prior to becoming MTA president, Towsley sat down with the Michigan Township News to both reflect on her past experiences that led her to the MTA presidency as well as what she sees when she looks to the future for state and local government.

Q. What are your goals as MTA president?

As MTA president, I plan to work closely with our members to ensure they get the information they need from MTA county chapters and the Board. I hope to attend all of the regional *MTA On the Road* meetings in order to meet as many officials as I can.

Q. What are your goals for the Association—and township government—in 2010?

This year, it will be crucial for townships to work together and with state legislators to protect our revenue sharing and prevent state-mandated local government consolidation that would only increase the cost of government.

Q. What experiences have prepared you to serve as MTA's president?

In addition to serving on the MTA board for the past 13 years, I was president of the Eaton County MTA Chapter, worked on



committees for the Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks, and was president, among other offices, of the Capital Area Municipal Clerks. I'm also a proud graduate of MTA's Township Governance Academy, and earned my credential in 2005.

Q. Why did you get started in township government?

I got involved in township government when I started working elections in **Delta Charter Township (Eaton Co.)** in the mid-'70s. After I moved to Windsor Charter Township, I started working elections. The clerk at the time wanted to retire and asked me to be her replacement. I worked as her deputy for one year before taking office as clerk in January 1988. I wasn't sure I'd stay for very long, but I fell in love with the people and the job.

Q. How can township officials further engage residents in local government processes?

It can be difficult to get residents more engaged in their local government because many people only get involved if they are upset or want something done. Asking people to serve on boards or form committees may spark their interest. Reaching out to residents through the township Web site or newsletter can help, too.

Q. What role do townships play in restoring Michigan to prosperity?

The role of townships in restoring Michigan's prosperity is crucial. We need to work with our neighbors to encourage commercial and industrial growth and work.



2009 MTA President Colleen Schwartz (left), Milford Charter Township (Oakland Co.) clerk, affixes the MTA president pin on incoming MTA President Linda Towsley, Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.) clerk.



On behalf of the Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.) Board, Supervisor Sue Butler (left) presented Linda Towsley with an engraved gavel at the 2010 MTA Annual Meeting in honor of Towsley's presidency.

Q. Upon completion of your term, what would you like your legacy to be?

At the completion of my term as MTA president, I hope our townships are stronger and are working together to make Michigan grow.

Q. Who are your personal heroes?

My personal hero is my dad, who was always so patient and supportive of everything the family was involved in. Even in his 80s, he became a computer user and MTA's site became one of his favorite Web sites to visit.

Getting to know Linda Towsley

Family: My husband, Tom, and I have been married for 40 years, as of September 2009. We lived in Florida while he finished his tour of duty in the Navy, and he is now retired from the state of Michigan. We have three children—Denise, Keri and Allen—and three grandchildren.

Community involvement: I'm involved in a few groups in my community, including Central United Methodist Church, United Methodist Women and Girl Scouts.

Favorite book: I don't have a favorite book, but I do have favorite authors. When I read, it's to run away and unwind, and Barbara Delinsky, Susan Wiggs, Catherine Anderson and Debbie McComber help me do that.

Favorite pastime: I love to attend Michigan State University football and women's basketball games.

A day in the life of Linda Towsley: Every day, I get up and read the paper before going in to the office. When I get home, if Tom is lucky, I'll cook dinner; otherwise we choose from our favorite restaurants. It's also fairly common that I have to attend evening meetings.

2010 MTA Executive Committee

Linda Towsley, President
Clerk, Windsor Charter Township
(Eaton Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 1997
- Appointed clerk in 1988; deputy clerk for one year



Jack Randolph, First Vice President
Supervisor, East China Charter Township
(St. Clair Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2005
- Appointed supervisor in 2000; trustee, 1994-2000



Bill Renn, Second Vice President
Supervisor, Chandler Township
(Huron Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2001
- Elected supervisor in 1990



Denny Olson, Treasurer
Supervisor, Breitung Charter Township
(Dickinson Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2005
- Appointed supervisor in 2003



Eugene Jorissen, Secretary
Supervisor, Pere Marquette Charter
Township (Mason Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2005
- Appointed supervisor in 1995



Linda Preston, Member-at-large
Supervisor, Pokagon Township (Cass Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2005
- Elected supervisor in 2004; clerk, 1984-2004



Colleen Schwartz,
Immediate Past President
Clerk, Milford Charter Township
(Oakland Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2001
- Elected clerk in 1996; deputy clerk, 1977-1996





Always-inspiring Parade of Flags kicks off 2010 Conference

Some 40-plus townships helped kick off MTA's 57th Annual Educational Conference & Expo by participating in the 2010 Parade of Flags, during the Conference's Opening Session on Jan. 27. Thanks to each township that participated, and to **Bois Blanc Township** (Mackinac Co.) Treasurer **Cheryl Gahn**, who hailed from the smallest township attending the Conference, for leading the parade with the MTA flag!

Ada Township (Kent Co.)	Lincoln Charter Township (Berrien Co.)
Alpena Township (Alpena Co.)	Macomb Township (Macomb Co.)
Alpine Township (Kent Co.)	Marion Township (Livingston Co.)
Breitung Charter Township (Dickinson Co.)	Marquette Charter Township (Marquette Co.)
Bridgehampton Township (Sanilac Co.)	Menominee Township (Menominee Co.)
Buena Vista Charter Township (Saginaw Co.)	Milford Charter Township (Oakland Co.)
Carrollton Township (Saginaw Co.)	Niles Charter Township (Berrien Co.)
Cedar Creek Township (Muskegon Co.)	Oliver Township (Huron Co.)
China Charter Township (St. Clair Co.)	Orion Charter Township (Oakland Co.)
Chippewa Township (Isabella Co.)	Plainfield Charter Township (Kent Co.)
Columbia Township (Van Buren Co.)	Richland Township (Kalamazoo Co.)
Edenville Township (Midland Co.)	Sebewa Township (Ionia Co.)
Escanaba Township (Delta Co.)	Sebewaing Township (Huron Co.)
Eureka Charter Township (Montcalm Co.)	Spencer Township (Kent Co.)
Filer Charter Township (Manistee Co.)	Spring Lake Township (Ottawa Co.)
Grant Township (St. Clair Co.)	Thomas Township (Saginaw Co.)
Hope Township (Midland Co.)	Vevay Township (Ingham Co.)
Ingersoll Township (Midland Co.)	Victor Township (Clinton Co.)
James Township (Saginaw Co.)	Williams Charter Township (Bay Co.)
Kalamazoo Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.)	Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.)
Klacking Township (Ogemaw Co.)	Zeeland Charter Township (Ottawa Co.)
Lake Charter Township (Berrien Co.)	
Leroy Township (Ingham Co.)	

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