



NAHO News

October 2008

There is still time to register for this year's Conference, "Striving for Excellence in the Hearing Process" November 9-12, 2008, in Orlando, Florida.

The deadline for registration for the 2008 Conference is fast approaching.

- ❖ Hotel registration deadline is Oct. 8, 2008, to ensure receiving the conference rate.
- ❖ Conference registration deadline is October 15, 2008, to avoid paying late fees.

The Florida Bar Association has approved 18 CLE credits for the conference.

The 2008 NAHO conference is *going green*. We will not automatically be printing course materials for everyone. All materials will be available on a website prior to the conference and handed out on CD at the conference. Registrants may bring a laptop, and they are encouraged to print out the materials from the website and bring them to the conference. For those who want to obtain a set of the materials at the conference, there will be an additional fee of \$50.00 (prepaid).

COMMITTEE ACHIEVES GOAL TO INCREASE MEMBERSHIP

Sherrie Teasley (TX)

At last year's conference in Santa Fe, 2006-2007 Membership Co-Chair Mark Richmond (ID) announced the committee's goal to increase membership by 10 % before the 2008 conference in Orlando. He expressed his confidence in NAHO's ability to attain this goal and encouraged current members to reach out to co-workers within their own agencies as well as to colleagues in other state and federal agencies to let them know the benefits of belonging to such a vital organization as NAHO. The Membership Committee is proud to announce that its goal has not only been met, but surpassed. As of September 30, 2008, NAHO membership stood at 322 members.

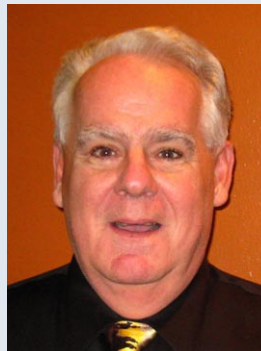
In the last NAHO News, current Membership Co-Chair Eric Moody asked each of you to act as an ambassador for NAHO and challenged all of you "to go out and brag or gossip" about NAHO to non-members, explaining the unlimited opportunities for professional growth and development that this remarkable organization offers. Based on the growing number of membership inquiries as well as the number of new membership applications since the article was published, it is evident that NAHO members have risen to the occasion and are meeting the challenge. Eric and I, along with the rest of the Membership Committee, would like to congratulate you on your efforts to date and to encourage everyone to keep up the good work.

Go to www.naho.org for full Conference details and registration information.

Profile: MICHAEL D. TRAMMEL

Michael Trammel is a graduate of Purdue University, with a Bachelor's degree in education and a Master's degree in counseling and personal services. His love for, and loyalty to, Purdue is evidenced in many ways as he is a life member of the Purdue University Alumni Association, a member of the Purdue Club of Northwest Indiana, a member of the John Purdue Club, and is a long-time season ticket holder for Purdue University football and

men's basketball games. His post-graduate degree is put to good use both in his work and outside of work, in his role as president and member of the



Michael D. Trammel (IN)

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MEMBER TO MEMBER QUESTION

What Advice Do You Have for First-time NAHO Professional Development Conference Attendees?

This is the question that was posed in the last issue of NAHO News when we inaugurated a new feature, the Member to Member Question, that we hope will stimulate interest, discussion and interaction among NAHO members. Because this issue will come out shortly before the Orlando conference, it seemed auspicious to ask past conference attendees to share their conference experiences with first-time attendees to help the first-timers get the most out of their time and enjoy themselves as they sharpen their professional skills. We thank those who submitted answers. The selected answers appear below.

Allen C. Hoberg (ND): Attendees should select their sessions with care. Regardless of how relevant the session you choose actually is to your work, sit up front, pay attention and participate. Don't be afraid to ask questions. There is no such thing as a dumb question; someone else likely wanted to ask the same question but did not.

Zandra E. Petersen (USVI): First and foremost, when you attend the NAHO 2008 conference, keep an open positive mind. Be prepared for a different kind of a conference. Our conference is not just another conference—I promise you that. You WILL definitely take away something positive from your NAHO experience. Whether it's an "AHHHHH Now I get it" moment, or engulfing the networking opportunities with other attendees, board members and presenters, or enhancing your skills as a hearing officer, you WILL have a great experience!

When I first attended the NAHO conference, many years ago, I NEVER expected to become a member of the Board. I was honored to accept and still honored to be a part of this truly awesome organization. Our members are a wonderful group of people from around the USA who enjoy coming together to plan for our annual conference. We also take time out to enjoy each other's company and have some fun in the process. We are excited and committed to making your conference experience a positive and unforgettable one! I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can as we come together in Orlando, Florida,

for the NAHO 2008 Striving for Excellence in the Hearing Process conference.

Michael D. Trammel (IN): While attending the Development Conference sessions and social activities be sure to network with attendees from other states and other agencies. A great deal of knowledge can be gained outside the classroom from others doing similar work in different areas of the country and in different ways. And if you have any questions regarding anything at the conference, find a NAHO Board Member and ask away . . . that is why we are here . . . for you to have the best training experience possible.

Norman J. Patenaude (NH): I suggest that first-time conferees meet and greet as many of their peers as possible. They will discover how much they have in common and how much they can learn from each other. I also suggest that they then discuss the value of the course presentations and networking with their superiors, as well as the certification program which can only enhance an agency's standing and work product. For these reasons, I recommend that hearing officials attend a NAHO conference at least every other year. I look forward to meeting the new participants.

Louis A. Thayer (MN): By way of background, I have been a human services judge in Minnesota for over eight years. I attended the 2000 conference in Norfolk, VA; I was a curriculum coordinator for the 2003 conference in Minneapolis, MN; and I attended the 2007 conference in Santa Fe, NM.

My advice to someone new to NAHO conferences would be to review the curriculum closely and focus on the fundamentals. Even seasoned hearing officials need to get back to the basics of our roles and functions. These courses might include evidence basics, demeanor, control of the hearing, and writing the decision. Also, the history of administrative law I always found to provide some perspective on what we do. In addition, I would advise someone new to NAHO conferences to

coordinate their course selections with NAHO's Certification Committee. A first time NAHO conference attendee should focus as much as possible on the courses that meet the mandatory course work. This is particularly important in making sure not to get too many hours focused in one area and not enough in another. For example, I always had an interest in the courses focused on determining witness credibility but this is only two hours of the certification requirements. One would be well advised to ensure their selections are sufficiently distributed across each of the certification areas. Moreover, coordinating course selections with the certification criteria before the conference allows an attendee to take stock of other training/education that may already meet the certification requirements. Lastly, I'd remind someone new to a NAHO conference to have fun and socialize with the other hearing officials at the conference. It's rare that we get an opportunity to get away from our offices and the pressures of deadlines, challenging people, and other office stresses. I often found some of the best tips for doing my job came from the times in between classes and at social occasions with other conference attendees. We need these opportunities to relax, reflect and enjoy the company of our peers. I've made connections and friends that I've kept for nearly a decade.

Editor's Note: Wow! The answers all have a common theme and lots of good, practical advice for how to get the most out of the conference while having a great time. The next issue of NAHO News will come out close to the



end of the year. It is the post-conference issue and usually is packed with articles related to the conference. Due to space limitations there will not be a Member to Member column in the post-conference issue but we will pose the next Member to Member question, with the selected answers to appear in the spring issue of NAHO News.

Joy L. Wezelman (ND)

President's Message

Bonny M. Fetch (ND)

One of my favorite movies is that great holiday classic, "It's a Wonderful Life." You know, the one in which George Bailey, played by Jimmy Stewart, learns a valuable Christmas Eve lesson when an angel saves him from jumping off a bridge and shows him what would have happened to the people in his life if he'd never been born. I love the movie and the message, and I wonder sometimes just how many lives I have touched and what impact I have had. Do you ever wonder how many lives you touch? Think about it. As hearing officers, we touch a great many lives, some directly and many more indirectly.

NAHO encompasses a diverse group of hearing officers who do many different kinds of hearings. The decisions we make every day impact people's lives in some very basic ways and in some very complex ways, but each decision makes a difference. For instance, in my job, I make decisions that determine whether people will get assistance benefits for such basics as food, medical care, cash assistance, hearing, nursing home care and child care, or whether a person will be disqualified from receiving benefits for a period of time. In other cases, I decide whether a terminated employee will get her job back, whether a child will be provided special education, whether a veteran is entitled to preference in employment, or whether a person's name will be placed on the child abuse/neglect index.

These are but some of the varied cases I hear and decisions I make. Now think of the decisions you make. And then think of the impact our decisions have on the lives

of the persons who come before us, not only the impact on the person directly, but also the impact on the person's family, extended family, and sometimes even friends, co-workers, employers, and others.



Bonny M. Fetch (ND),
NAHO President

It certainly should be a sobering thought to realize the gravity of the decisions we make. It's serious business. Sometimes I have to make a decision I would rather not. Then being a hearing officer can seem a bit overwhelming. But sometimes I feel as though I have set something right, or maybe I have been someone's champion. Then it is very gratifying.

Hearing officers rarely receive praise or even a thank you for the job we do. That doesn't usually come with the territory. So, let me send a little gratitude your way. The job we do is extremely important. Without administrative hearing officers the judicial system would collapse. And let me remind you that if we do our jobs competently, professionally, and compassionately, and if we keep in mind that each person who comes before us deserves fair treatment and the best we can give, it will be reflected in our own lives, as well as the lives we touch as hearing officers.

I wish you all the best and hope to see you in Orlando in November for the 2008 Conference.

Do good. And take care.

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PROFILE: MICHAEL D. TRAMMEL

Mended Hearts support group at Saint Mary Medical Center.

Professionally, Michael has been employed by the State of Indiana Family and Social Services Administration for more than 32 years. He has been an administrative law judge for 22 years, a quality control supervisor for six years, and a quality control reviewer for five years. In 2000, Michael completed the NAHO Certification Program and completed the recertification program in 2003 and 2006.

Michael's experience with NAHO is also very extensive. He became a NAHO member in 1988 and is currently serving a second two-year term as Treasurer and is co-chairperson of the Finance Committee. Michael has attended the NAHO Annual Professional Development Conferences in Louisville (1998), Norfolk (2000), Anchorage (2002), Minneapolis (2003), Fort Worth (2004), Durham (2005), Bismarck (2006), and Santa Fe (2007), where he received the NAHO President's Award for his service to the organization. Michael served as NAHO librarian for four years (2002 through 2005) and was the Central Regional Alternate board member for two years (from 2004 through 2005) before taking on the Treasurer's position.

Such a busy professional and volunteer life does not leave a lot of spare time but Michael does squeeze in some fun. He enjoys going to the Purdue football and basketball games, taking architecture tours with the Chicago Architectural Foundation, and traveling. In addition to travels in Canada, Mexico, and the United States, he has gone to Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy, Spain, Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Russia. He lives with a spoiled 14-year-old, 15-pound miniature dachshund that rules the house and provides great companionship.

LATEST FROM THE NAHO LIBRARY

By *Phil Snow (NC)*



Phil Snow (NC)

The ease of copying DVD's makes this possible.

The 2007 video sessions from the Santa Fe, New Mexico Conference have been sent to the Web Master for addition to the Library loan list. Hopefully by the time you read this, they will be posted.

I would like to remind anyone who is renting videos that they must be returned 30 days from the date of mailing. The videos are the property of NAHO, and must be returned. A late charge will apply for videos not returned on time. Please abide by these requirements. The Library Committee is in the process of formulating a policy that will apply to those who abuse the rental/loan agreement. After the policy has been approved by the NAHO Board, it will be posted on the NAHO website and in the next NAHO News.

The procedure for obtaining the videos is available on the NAHO website.

Please email me at pmsnow@ncdot.gov with any suggestions you may have for improving the library.

The NAHO Library is a valuable tool for continuing education and completing requirements for certification. Since converting all the video sessions to DVD's, there will not be a wait for anyone wanting

a specific video.

Profile: RAMONA V. COLLINGSWORTH

Ramona grew up a tomboy in the tiny rural community of Gillett located in South Central Texas. Keeping pace with her two older brothers, Ramona fished, hunted rabbits, and raised pigs and steers for show and sale. She was on constant alert for rattlesnakes while picking grapes to help her parents make wine or walking the path to catch the school bus. Yes, you are correct. She is the same Ramona always donning a bit of 925 with whom you're supposed to talk to about NAHO certification!



Ramona V. Collingsworth (TX)

Her education started in a quaint four-room school house.

When she was a sophomore in high school, her family moved 15 miles to Nixon where Ramona graduated with a senior class of 50 students. Upon graduation, Ramona attended Trinity University in San Antonio and Southwest Texas State University in San Marcos. She received a Bachelor of Science degree in Spanish and English education.

Ramona taught middle school English in the area where she grew up. She then became interested in serving the needy of the State of Texas and moved to the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex to work for the Texas Department of Human Services as an Eligibility Specialist determining eligibility in the Income Assistance program serving families and children. After working all levels of the Eligibility Specialist position, Ramona became a Supervisor, overseeing a unit of 18 staff who administered income assistance services. She also worked as an Educational Services Specialist, providing Management and Income Assistance training. Ramona later joined the Appeals Division where she worked as a Hearings Officer for seven years and as a Hearings Manager for the last five years. She is one of five area managers with the Texas Health and Human Services Commission. She supervises eight Hearings Officers and five support staff who process 800 to 900 appeals monthly for 65 programs. Ramona has worked for the State of Texas for more than 25 years. She is also a Certified Spanish Interpreter.

Ramona, who has been a NAHO member for 12 years, is a Certified Hearing Official. She has served as a Curriculum Committee member and as an At-Large Board Member for one term. Currently, she is co-chair of the Certification Committee and is the Southwest Regional Representative on the NAHO Board.

To folks who don't know Ramona, she may come across aloof, but once they get to know her, she is friendly, outgoing, considerate, generous, and funny.

Ramona lives in Arlington and is married to Paul, a coddling and loving spouse. They were married in Cuernavaca, Morelos, just south of Mexico City. Her interpretation skills came in handy when she had to interpret the ceremony from Spanish to English and English to Spanish. Both Ramona and Paul are avid fans of NASCAR, Formula 1, and Indy Car racing, and enjoy frequent travel to races across the country.

Newsletter Credits:

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Production:

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and Frances Zuther

Layout & Design:

Wendy Moen, Design Dimension
www.designnd.net