

# KSGFOA Newsletter

Kansas Government Finance Officers Association



Special Edition...Special Edition...Special Edition...Special Edition...Special Edition

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## President's Message

Chris Chronis • Chief Financial Officer, Sedgwick County

The most successful public finance officers venture out of their comfort zones of accounting, cash management and the like, and become strategists for their governments and communities. When I was starting my career this was unheard of. The finance officer typically was a back-room number cruncher who was seen but not heard. Now, that's just not enough.

And thus, our recently concluded annual conference was titled *Traditional Skills Aren't Enough Anymore: The Finance Officer's Changing Role*. In addition to "traditional" sessions addressing basic financial management practices, participants interested in exploring new avenues could learn how to be more effective leaders in their communities, or how a different set of leadership traits was needed to effectively lead teams. At other sessions, participants could learn how to reduce the risk of claims against their jurisdiction and how to use internet-based reverse auctions to obtain lower bids for purchases.

If there was a common theme, it was that managing public resources well means more than merely adopting a balanced budget, obtaining competitive bids, and paying employees and vendors correctly. In other words, *traditional skills aren't enough anymore*.

Our neighbors entrust us with literally millions of dollars of their money. When I was growing up in the inner city of my hometown, the idea that people would someday give me that kind of responsibility was unimaginable. Whether you were a city kid like me, or you grew up in a small town or on a farm, I suspect the same could be said of you.

And yet, today we're the people who are expected to determine how much of our neighbors' money the government will take, and to figure out how to balance competing and sometimes conflicting ideas about what services to provide with their money, and finally, to use their money wisely.

In short, as my boss likes to say, we're delivering democracy to people's front doors. I can't think of a higher honor than to be one of the people who get to do this.

But with the honor comes obligation. Our neighbors deserve and expect more than mere number crunchers. To serve effectively we must learn how to be better leaders in our communities as well as our organizations. We must learn how to reward good public employees so they'll remain in public service, and how to hold bad public employees accountable for their performance. We must learn how to apply new tools and techniques to provide services more efficiently and with less risk. In other words, *traditional skills aren't enough anymore!*

Chris Chronis is the 2005 President for KSGFOA & Chief Financial Officer for Sedgwick County. Chronis can be contacted by phone at (316) 383-7591 or email at [cchronis@sedgwick.gov](mailto:cchronis@sedgwick.gov).

# KSGFOA Fall Conference a Success

by Linda Wood

Did you miss this year's KSGFOA Fall Conference? If you answered "yes," you missed a lot! This conference was one of the best our organization has put together. Much of the credit for that goes to our new President *Chris Chronis*, our past President *Ross VanderHamm*, our current Vice-President *Debra Daily*, and Board members *Gena Schallen-McDonald*, *Dennis Howard*, and *Dave Scott*.

Past-President Ross VanderHamm did a terrific job of coordinating everyone's efforts. New President Chris Chronis was able to secure some wonderful presenters, including the pre-conference speaker Terry Woodbury, who came highly recommended by Gena Schallen-McDonald. Gena, who was in the midst of wedding planning, not only helped snag a stellar pre-conference presentation, she also took some great photos at the conference.

Vice-President (former Treasurer) Deb Daily brought some good exhibitors and sponsors to the conference, and she collected the fees for all conference attendees. Dennis Howard coordinated the distribution to conference participants of hats and shirts sporting the eye-catching KSGFOA logo. And we have Dave Scott to thank for reserving a wonderful facility for the conference at the Doubletree Hotel and Conference Center in Overland Park.

## Did you know?

On the Kansas Government Finance Officers Association (KSGFOA) website (<http://www.ksgfoa.com>) you can:

- Download a list of current KSGFOA members;
- Access written policies adopted by other municipalities on everything from investments to purchasing;
- View requests for proposals prepared by other municipalities;
- Find job opportunities;
- Advertise (**for free**) for an employee;
- Browse a virtual library of resource documents;
- Link to information about future conferences and training opportunities?

The KSGFOA website, which was developed and is currently maintained by Gena Schallehn-McDonald, Budget Manager of the City of Overland Park, is a valuable resource created for our members. Please check it out—you'll be glad you did.

We had a very successful conference! The "proof"? Here's what conference attendees had to say:

*"I thought the session on how Johnson County was able to establish an employer contribution to their 457 Plan was informative and showed innovation." ~ Tom Standish, Legislative Auditor, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas*

Tom is referring to the success story we heard in one of the conference sessions. Johnson County Operations Manager Brent Christensen and ICMA Retirement representative Clint Haynes shared their experiences in getting authorization of and funding for an employer contribution to the County's 457 Plan. When the new plan was available, employee participation in the County's deferred compensation plan increased by 59%! The initial employer match was 1.5% of base salary, and, effective January 2005, it will increase to 2%. Johnson County considers this benefit to be part of their efforts to deliver a competitive compensation package to attract and retain quality personnel.

*"This was the first time Promontory Interfinancial Network participated in the conference, and I felt it was very worthwhile. We learned a great deal from talking to the attendees about how they might work with their local banks to use our service to provide FDIC insurance up to \$10 million dollars for public deposits...using CDARS...overall an excellent meeting and I am looking forward to the next one." ~ Steve Davis, Regional Director, Promontory Interfinancial Network.*

For those of you who didn't have a chance to visit the Promontory Interfinancial Network booth at the conference, Steve is referring to the Certificate of Deposit Account Registry Service (CDARS). CDARS is an innovative depository collateralization service for use by local governments in Kansas, as approved by the Kansas Attorney General in a recent opinion. An informative article about this process is in the October 2004 issue of *Government Finance Review*. A copy of the Kansas Attorney General's opinion number 2004-9 can be requested from the office of the Attorney General.

*"I think the new format of the Fall Conference is a real improvement. I like having a full day on Thursday with the KSGFOA luncheon that day instead of on Friday at the very end, when everyone is leaving. The attendance is much better, and warrants having a high caliber lunch speaker such as Nancy Zielke. I also like having a pre-conference on Wednesday afternoon. The longer format gives a better opportunity to get around to everyone to network, and also just visit! Locating at the Doubletree is also a huge improvement.*

*The sessions were very high quality. I especially enjoyed Terry Woodbury's pre-conference, and have recommended his presentation to my City Administrator for a Council retreat. I also enjoyed the risk management sessions on Parks and*

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## KSGFOA Fall Conference a Success..(continued from page 2)

Recreation exposures - new information for me and very well presented. I appreciate the opportunity to be a presenter myself - that was a good growth experience for me.

I liked the idea of covering some topics that are a little outside the traditional purview of the Finance Director. Many of us are involved in matters outside our department, or may function as Assistant City Administrators. The more we can broaden our skills, the better.

Of course the really big highlight was winning the \$50 door prize!" ~ Maureen Rogers, Director of Finance, Merriam

Maureen speaks for many of the conference attendees. The pre-conference session presented by Terry Woodbury was incredible. Mr. Woodbury spoke about rebuilding a sense of community in our communities. Maureen's idea to have Mr. Woodbury share his ideas with our governing bodies is excellent. If you have never had a chance to hear Mr. Woodbury speak, he has the enthusiastic recommendation of those of us who were privileged to listen to his message.

The session co-presented by *Kathy Sexton*, Assistant County Manager & Chief Information Officer for Sedgwick County, *Joe Koehn*, Consulting Services Manager in GFOA's Chicago office, and *Maureen Rogers* was titled *Right-Sizing Technology Budgets*, and they offered some excellent suggestions on how to handle financial planning for the dynamic world of technology.

Maureen was the lucky recipient of a \$50 door prize at the Thursday evening Welcome Reception, which was a great opportunity to network with fellow finance officers.

We were fortunate enough to have our own former Kansan *Nancy Zielke*, President of national GFOA and the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Fiscal Operations at the University of Missouri in Kansas City, Missouri, as the featured luncheon speaker on Thursday. She gave a dynamite talk, encouraging each of us to continue to be the public service professionals and community leaders we are.



Pictured is National GFOA President Nancy Zielke, the featured speaker at the conference luncheon.

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"I think that this conference was one of the best that I have ever attended. The Doubletree Hotel was an excellent location—both as a facility and as for their staff doing every thing possible to make our conference successful. Their room rates were very reasonable and it didn't hurt that they threw in a free breakfast buffet.

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This was the first year to have a pre-conference seminar. Terry Woodbury was an excellent presenter and he really had a message to present. Many communities could benefit from his services.

Bernie Hayen was excellent, as always. He had a very effective workshop concerning ethics in the workplace.

Ross VanderHamm and Mac Manning presented a two-part workshop that was very much needed, as was in evidence by the results of their questionnaire. It is embarrassing to realize how little we as finance officers actually know about various aspects of our jobs. I would strongly suggest that future conferences elaborate on this information.

I even was able to bring information home to my Parks and Recreation Director, gleaned from the final workshop of the conference concerning managing park and recreation exposures." ~ Larry L. Lindgren, Finance Director, City of Lindsborg

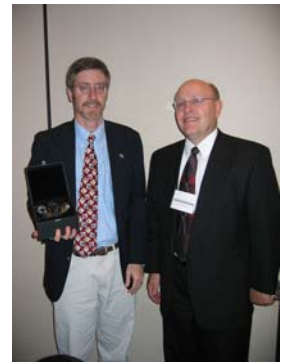
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As Larry mentioned, the choice of the Doubletree as our conference venue was popular. The food was good, the meeting rooms were great, and reports are that the hotel rooms were also comfortable and clean. Thanks again to *Dave Scott* for booking the site.

Ross VanderHamm, Deputy City Manager/City Clerk/Finance Director of the City of Hutchinson, and Mac Manning, Public Affairs Associate with the Hugo Wall School of Urban and Public Affairs at Wichita State University, presented a two-part workshop entitled *Local Government Finance Primer*. It was well-attended, and well-received. Larry's suggestion to elaborate on their topic at future conferences is a good one.

Both Larry and *Maureen Rogers* commented on the effectiveness of *Managing Your Park & Recreation Exposures*, a workshop presented by Lenexa Assistant City Attorney *Callie Marks* and *Shawn Eliff*, an Account Specialist in the Risk Control Services division of the St. Paul Insurance Companies in Kansas City.

Larry is exactly right—*Bernie Hayen* was his usual professional self as the moderator for *Ethics: Different Standards for Different Folks?*, a workshop co-presented with Douglas County Administrator *Craig Weinaug* and City of Bel Aire Finance Director *Deborah Clark*. The discussion was engaging and thought-provoking.



Pictured are KSGFOA's 2004 President Ross VanderHamm (right) with the First President's Award Recipient Chris Courtwright. Chris was instrumental in persuading Kansas lawmakers to include local governments in the Kansas Use Tax legislation, resulting in significant increases in the amount of sales and compensating use tax revenues to local government entities.

*"The Doubletree was a much nicer place to hold the conference than our old location. It was great to see the variety of vendor booths. The conference had more of a "professional" feel than in the past. It was great to see such a large turnout and to meet some new friends. Much thanks to Chris Chronis for coordinating such a great conference! The variety of sessions was great." ~ Kevin Hiskey, Assistant Finance Director, Johnson County*

*"I found this year's conference extremely helpful to my development. I especially enjoyed the pre-conference session. It was an interesting perspective on how communities change and how it is more important than ever for the "4 corners" of the community to work together to keep the community alive.*

*I also found the general session on leadership very informative. I found that I could really identify with the information. The speaker[Nancy Zielke] gave us the names of several books if we were interested in learning more about the topic." ~ Karen Kindle, Accountant II, City of Overland Park*

*"I thought the agenda was well organized. Having the business luncheon on Thursday was a smart idea. It kept members at the meeting for the keynote speaker [Nancy Zielke]. The topics covered were excellent. I attended the pre-conference seminar given by Terry Woodbury. Terry allowed us to change our perspectives for an afternoon—thinking of our jobs from the citizen's perspective." ~ Benjamin Hart, Chief Financial Officer, Unified Government of Wyandotte County/Kansas City, Kansas*

*"In summary, I believe we have a strong and growing organization in the KSGFOA. There is much to be gained by working and networking with each other. We have strong leadership and very capable support through Wichita State University. Keep up the good work!" ~ Larry L. Lindgren, Finance Director, City of Lindsborg*



Sue Howard, Accountant II for the City of Overland Park, and Dennis Howard, Director of Finance and Administration for Johnson County model the new KSGFOA shirts. Dennis, who is a former member of the KSGFOA Board, has been the leader in developing and marketing the shirts being modeled, as well as other products with the KSGFOA logo.

## Take Time to Take Time

by Linda Wood

As public officials feel the pinch of a less than robust economy, government managers and employees are being pressured to focus more and more on work and less and less on a personal life. Work hours are increasing. According to Witt Associations, an executive search firm, the workweek for managers has increased 10 to 15 hours a week in recent years.

Local government employees are feeling overwhelmed as fewer people try to handle the same old workload, or a larger one. The meager salary increases often do not keep pace with the burgeoning costs of medical insurance premiums, gasoline, or childcare costs. Workers are more than ever expected to work harder with fewer resources and for less total compensation, and we're too worried about a sluggish job market to say "NO."

Something has got to give. People can't work harder and harder, and longer and longer, without some cost to themselves. And that cost can be very devastating. Management experts Tom Peters and Nancy Austin say: "The majority of passionate activists ... have given up family vacations, Little League games, birthday dinners, evening-weekend-and-lunch hours, gardening, reading, movies, and most other pastimes. We have a number of friends whose marriages or partnerships have crumbled."

It seems that what's "giving" is personal and family time. The pressures are enormous, but there are some ways you can keep your balance. Well-known motivational speaker Dr. Alan Zimmerman offered some excellent thoughts on this subject in his "Tuesday's Tip of October 26, 2004." Here are some excerpts from that advice:

- Accept that there's always going to be more work than time. Realize that you'll never be finished with work, and **that's okay**. Give yourself permission to enjoy life, even if your work is not done.
- Force yourself to take breaks from your work—even if all your work isn't finished. Take time to read or think, to watch a movie or go to a ballgame, to take a brief trip. Your energy will be renewed and your work will be easier when you go back to it.
- Take time for quietness. If you're still for a few minutes, it restores your vitality and diminishes your tension. Find a private place and experience the calmness of silence.
- Strike a balance between work and play — between seriousness and laughter.
- Stick with the truth, even if it makes you look or feel bad. "Falsehoods are like wandering ghosts."
- Forgive your enemies. Remember the Don Henley lyrics: "you keep carrying around that anger, it'll eat you up inside."
- Go outside. Take a walk and enjoy the fresh air, the sunshine, even the rain. Get some dirt on your hands. It's remarkably therapeutic.
- Trust someone...to listen to your triumphs and tragedies, to share your dreams.

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## A Special "Thank You" is extended to WSU's Mac Manning

*Without Mac's dedication and effort, the KSGFOA Conferences would not be possible. He works hard to make things happen in what looks like a smooth, effortless way. Mac is a true professional, and we appreciate all he does for KSGFOA!*