



NEWsworthy

A newsletter for the members of Minnesota NEW – National Eligibility Workers Association



Summer Seminar 2006 Recap



The Minnesota Chapter of the National Eligibility Workers Association held its annual Summer Seminar on Tuesday, May 23 at the Hampton Inn in Shoreview. More than 140 eligibility professionals from around the state took time out of their busy schedules to attend this day long event. This year's seminar titled "A Healthy NEW You" provided attendees an opportunity to refresh, renew and reenergize, at the same time improving their skill base and performance for the important work they do.

Chapter president, Dale Carlson, opened the day with an introduction of board members and the annual business meeting. This was followed by the always popular Town Hall Meeting. Attendees were given the opportunity to ask policy questions of DHS representatives.

The Town Hall Meeting was followed by the presentation of the 2006 N.E.W. Horizons Award. The Minnesota Chapter was proud to present this year's award to **Carla Scheffler of Stearns County Human Services**. Carla began her career in 1975, and since then has proven to be a true professional, whether providing one-on-one training to a new financial worker, or sorting through a complex case problem. Carla uses her knowledge and expertise to provide the best possible service to the residents of Stearns County.

Thank you, Carla, for all you do!

The morning concluded with three break-out workshop opportunities. "**Leading From the Front**," presented by Ramona Scarpace and Denise Moreland included an opportunity for attendees to develop their own action plan to develop leadership skills. Angela Bryan, from the Office of Food and Nutrition Service provided attendees with strategies for motivating not only ourselves, but others toward excellence in payment accuracy and customer service at the workshop titled "**Pumping Up Food Support Participation, Accuracy and Service**." Wanda Huffman's "**Meal Mania**" offered creative ways to turn our family mealtime into "meal magic."

Lunch time followed a busy morning, and included not only a great meal, but lots of door prize drawings. After lunch attendees were provided more breakout opportunities including a **Shared Master Index (SMI)** update by SMI Project Staff. A workshop on **Eligibility Verification (MinnesotaCare & Medicaid Quality Control)** was facilitated by Jim Franczyk, Barbara Bellorin, and Doris Hofmeister all of the DHS Performance and Integrity Division. This timely workshop discussed current mandates, procedures and findings pertaining to health care eligibility quality control activities currently being conducted by the Department of Human Services.

Keynote speaker Hal Schippits closed out the day with "**You Are The Best Model We Have In Your Style-So Stay Healthy!**" We were reminded that each makes a unique contribution in this world and how maintaining a "healthy" way of thinking and living can help us get beyond the stress and become the "best model" we can be.

The Minnesota Chapter of N.E.W. would like to thank everyone for taking the time to attend this year's Summer Seminar and we hope to see you again next year.

Tentative date for Summer Seminar 2007 is May 22. Mark your calendars now!

NETWORKING — Meet Your Board



Meet Linda Ledkins!

My name is Linda Ledkins and I am the newest board member of the Minnesota State Chapter of NEW. I am currently working for Dakota County as a Program Trainer/Specialist. I have been at Dakota County for almost six years and have been a trainer for a little over a year. Before coming to Dakota County, I was an eligibility worker for the State of Nebraska for five years. I got my start in eligibility work when I lived in California. I had just moved from North Dakota to California and was searching for employment when I came across an ad for a job as an eligibility worker in Sutter County. The job description sounded interesting and I applied for the job, interviewed and was offered the position, really not knowing what I was getting into. Here I am almost 15 years later, so I must have made the right decision!

I did not get involved in NEW until I started working in Dakota County. Our Deputy Director, Dennis Anderson, was (and still is) a big supporter of NEW. Dennis served on the National Board and encouraged employees to join this professional organization. Because of his encouragement, I joined NEW in the first year that I came to Dakota County. Not too long after I joined, Dakota County decided to pursue having a local chapter as we had a large number of employees who were now members of NEW. I have been a board member of the Dakota County Chapter since 2003 and am currently the vice-president of that chapter. I am the chairperson of the membership committee and a member of the newsletter committee for the Dakota County Chapter.

I have been lucky enough to attend two national conferences since joining NEW, the one in St. Paul in 2003 and the most recent one in Omaha, NE. I enjoy attending the MN NEW Summer Seminars and attending events organized and/or sponsored by the Dakota County Chapter of NEW.

NEW has provided me an opportunity to grow not only professionally but also personally with the numerous workshops and speakers that it offers as well as the connection to other professionals within this field of work. I think the connection to others is what I appreciate most. These other professionals are able to provide information on what they have tried in their organization, what has worked and what has not worked. Others in the field know what we are going through and can offer wisdom, as they have been there themselves.

I currently live in Inver Grove Heights with my four cats. I like to travel, but not nearly as much as I would like! I love to spend time with my niece and nephew, who are 4 and 5 years old. I am currently attending school to obtain my master's in Public Administration and that takes up much of my free time.

I am looking forward to serving on the Minnesota State Chapter of NEW and hope to meet many NEW members from around the state!

Notes from the President

By Dale Carlson, President

On May 23, 2006, the Minnesota Chapter held another very successful Summer Seminar with more than 140 people in attendance. It was a great opportunity to network and meet and talk with people from around the state.

In August, I attended the NEW-PATHS conference in Omaha. It was great to talk with people from all around the country and the Virgin Islands. It was also very interesting to hear how other states operate. Can you imagine having to service cases where your client may live 1000 miles away as in Alaska or a caseload of well over 1000 cases? All across the country, eligibility workers face a whole range of different challenges. The one thing everyone has in common, however, is a strong commitment to helping people and demonstrating that we are a profession.

The Minnesota Chapter is starting the process of planning next year's seminar. Let us know of any ideas or issues you are particularly interested in. You can find our email addresses on the website at www.MN-NEW.org. We look forward to hearing from you.

How To Be A Service Leader

By Theresa Olson and Linda Olson

“The Olson Twins”

You might ask yourself “what is a service leader” or what do The Olson Twins mean by that? The term/concept *customer service* is over used and at times lacks meaning. Ever stood in long lines at a big box retailer who says they pride themselves on providing great customer service? We rest our case! In the public sector “Service” is job one! We have already accepted the challenge to do it better, faster and with less. Read on to see what recommendations the Olson Twins have to help improve your skills and become a service leader.

Have a plan in place for your daily tasks and follow it. You have the power to manage your time and create the kind of day that you want to have. Make a list of things you want to accomplish before the day gets away from you. Bring the focus back to your list or plan throughout the day. Written goals for the day, week, month and year are all good. Do it for you! Service leaders get things done.

Focus on the customer, you can't go wrong if you do! Identify what the customer needs, and define your role. Empower the customer by giving options not orders. You can't fix everything. Remember they play a role in the solution too. Establish trust with all customers, internal and external. Follow through on what you promise and be someone others can count on. Did you know that one of the top 5 reasons people complain is they did not get what was promised? Service Leaders are accountable and collaborate with others. Use the *Power of Team* to accomplish better results. Be tolerant and professional. You don't have to agree with the choices of others, however you are there to help and work together!

Eligibility Workers **have a clear Vision and Mission!** Do everything in your power to meet the mission no matter how difficult. Today you may meet the customer in whose life you will forever make a difference. Don't let the opportunity pass you by. Remember that in the blink of an eye you or someone you care about could be sitting on the other side of the desk. You are held to a higher standard by the public and rightly so. Most people really appreciate the services eligibility workers provide. The job isn't easy!

Customers can handle bad news or problems. Your job as a Service Leader is to be honest and up front about them. When customers complain, the Olson's **Apply HEAT!**

Hear the customer out

Empathize

Apologize if appropriate

Take Action to get back on track

In other words, get back to the plan, start over and create the rest of your day!

In conclusion, when the customer wins, you win. That's the kind of result that can have far reaching benefits for you, your customer and the agency. Go for the gold, reach for the stars and keep doing the fantastic work you do every day. Congratulations, you are a Service Leader!

National N.E.W. Conference

by Dale Carlson & Linda Ledkins,
Dakota County

The annual training conference was held in Omaha, NE, August 20th-August 23rd. The conference kicked off with a reception on Sunday night, featuring a live band, dancing and prize drawings.

On Monday morning, there was the Presentation of Colors by the Girls and Boys Town, followed by the presentation of dignitaries and the NEW PATHS business meeting. The keynote speaker, Jim Hmurovich, presented "Leading Leaders". Mr. Hmurovich explained how we all have the opportunity to be leaders and we all must use that leadership to help others that we serve. Mr. Hmurovich went on to explain what each one of us can do to become great leaders.

Monday afternoon included a variety of breakout sessions to choose from: "Here's Looking at You: a 5000 Year View" dealt with the skills it takes to work with others, "Identifying Your True Colors" to determine your own personality style, "Rapport Building" increased awareness of how you treat others, "Exploring Medicaid Options for Medicare Advantage Members" about Medicare Savings Program and LIS Extra Help Assistance, and "How the Child Support Enforcement Program Helps You" described how Child Support Enforcement works on national levels. There were also agency tours available for local Human Services Offices.

Tuesday started off with the Town Hall Meeting with representatives from Food & Nutrition Services, Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services, TANF and American Public Human Services Agency (APHSA). After they finished their overviews, we broke out into Town Hall Workshops to have a more personal, smaller group, setting to discuss program questions and give input about the programs each person administers daily. Part of the message was that they recognized we have challenging jobs with high expectations.

Tuesday afternoon and Wednesday morning you could attend more sessions including "Doing the Same Job in Different Ways" where a panel of employees from several agencies gave information on how business is done in their own states and "Texas' Eligibility System" which provided an overview of Texas' new eligibility system. It was very interesting to hear about other state experiences as well as Texas' efforts to privatize the administration of public assistance programs. On Tuesday night, there was Night Out with NEW, which was a dinner cruise aboard the River City STAR.

The closing keynote speaker was Jon Parker with his presentation "Staying Alive? Re-NEW-ing your Life and Work.". He gave an energetic presentation on refreshing your mind, body emotions and relationships for inner renewal.

The 2006 conference ended with a slide show set to music. We got to re-live the 2006 conference as well as dream about the 2007 conference in Detroit!



Recycle Your Newsletter

Pass this newsletter on to a friend and/or co-worker. Encourage him/her to become a Minnesota N.E.W. member!

Reminder!
ReNEW your
membership online at:

www.mn-new.org

MN N.E.W. Board Members

Dale Carlson, President	651-554-5671
Cheryl Hanks, Vice-President	763-323-6095
Cheryl Hanks, Acting Treasurer	763-323-6095
Donna Biederman, Secretary	651-431-4097
Linda Ledkins	651-554-5744
Erica Buelow Membership Co-chair	763-323-6031
Kitty Brown	612-348-5509
Doreen Michals	218-726-2018
Karen O'Keefe	320-656-6119