



NEWsworthy

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

SUMMER SEMINAR 2007

“A N.E.W SHAKE, RATTLE, AND ROLL”

This year's Summer Seminar will take place on Tuesday, May 22, 2007 at the Best Western Maplewood Inn, so mark your calendar now! It's soon time to get out of the routine, hit the road, and rock and roll with the Minnesota Chapter of N.E.W.!

We are thrilled to present a variety of speakers that you will not want to miss. Details can be found on the registration form enclosed for your convenience. For more information, contact any of the N.E.W. board members listed on the last page of this issue.

Be there or be square!



2007 MN N.E.W. HORIZON AWARD NOMINATION

It's that time of year to nominate your fellow co-worker for the 2007 MN N.E.W. Horizon Award.

This year's nomination will be based on the MN N.E.W. Code of Ethics (members of the board are exempt from nomination.)

Listed below are the nomination criteria:

- Serves the public interest: treats all colleagues, clients and other members of the public with respect, dignity, and courtesy.
- Respects the law: adheres to all data privacy and confidentiality laws and policies.
- Demonstrates personal integrity: carries out personal and professional activities in a way that inspires public confidence, trust, and respect.
- Promotes and supports ethical organizations: demonstrates support for the mission, goals, and policies of N.E.W.
- Strives for professional excellence: acknowledges and takes responsibility for errors.

To nominate an individual, simply write a few short sentences about how this person exemplifies the code of ethics criteria and email it to:

Donna.Biederman@state.mn.us or Dale.Carlson@co.dakota.mn.us

The deadline for nominations is May 1, 2007

Don't delay-----do it today

Thank you for taking the time to acknowledge the outstanding performance of a co-worker.

MEET YOUR BOARD



This issue of *NEWsworthy* introduces the newest member of the Minnesota Chapter of N.E.W. Board, Ovella Davis. Ovella is a Human Services Representative III with Hennepin County and has worked in the county for the past 4 ½ years. She recently moved to a new office within Hennepin County where she will be doing more outreach work.

Ovella's desire to help people that are in need lead her to the eligibility field. Prior to her job at Hennepin County, she was a retirement plan administrator for American Express where she managed 401K plans for employees.

At the recommendation of a colleague, Ovella become involved with N.E.W. Ovella was looking for a way to become more involved with eligibility work on a professional level. Ovella hopes by participating in N.E.W., she will have the chance to network with other members. These "new" connections will allow her to share her experiences as well as gain knowledge from other members to share with her co-workers in Hennepin County and around the state.

For Ovella, being a part of a professional organization offers her the "experience" of others in her field, "collaboration," and the ability to help "make a difference" in her own life as well as the people she serves in the county.

When asked what her vision for the future of N.E.W. in Minnesota should be, Ovella's response was "To make it better with each coming year!"

On a personal note, Ovella is married with 2 children, ages 16 & 14. She loves to sing, attend church and "go shopping!" Her co-workers would describe Ovella as "funny, trustworthy, and respectful of others."

When asked what advice she would give to new eligibility workers just starting out today, Ovella said "Hang in there and take it one day at a time!" And with Ovella's positive attitude, we can all be motivated to be the best eligibility professional we can be!

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

~Marian Wright Edelman

Welcome Ovella!



August
21-24



"Mark Your Calendars"

**The N.E.W. PATHS National
Training Conference is set for
August 21 - 24, 2007
in Detroit, Michigan.**

Check out www.nationalnew.org

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

BY DALE CARLSON, DAKOTA COUNTY



Your Minnesota Chapter of N.E.W. is again busy planning for the annual Summer Seminar to be held May 22, 2007. Because last year was so successful, we have moved to a larger facility! This year's program will be held at the Best Western Maplewood Inn, west side of Maplewood Mall at I694 and White Bear Avenue. Be sure to review the details and send in your registration for "A N.E.W. Shake, Rattle and Roll."

MN N.E.W. is part of N.E.W. PATHS, a national professional association whose mission is to advance the knowledge and skills of eligibility workers and to advocate on behalf of the eligibility profession. N.E.W. PATHS works to advocate for the eligibility profession on a national basis and MN N.E.W. does it locally. MN N.E.W. does this by:

- Holding a training seminar each year to provide program and professional training.
- Partnering with other human service organizations including MSSA and MFWCAA.
- Membership on the MSSA Legislative Committee. In January, MSSA held a Legislative Update on Health and Human Services Issues for Senator Linda Berglin and Representative Thomas Huntley. I made a presentation on health care eligibility that focused on growing caseloads and added program complexity to bring attention to the impact it has on our clients and the challenges we face in delivering services.

We also recognize excellence in our profession by presenting the annual "N.E.W. Horizon Award" at the May seminar.

To become a member, please go to our website at www.mn-new.org or to N.E.W. PATHS at www.nationalnew.org. We will continue to work to advance our organization and seek out other opportunities to promote the profession. We hope you, too, will work to strive for professional excellence and promote MN N.E.W.!

THE POWER OF POSITIVE WORDS BY: LINDA OLSON AND THERESA OLSON, THE "OLSON TWINS"

In the last Issue of Newsworthy, the Olson Twins wrote about what it means to be a service leader. We hope you had success developing a plan and following through! Since the New Year brings many resolutions, we thought a focus on communication might help you keep that resolution to become a more effective service leader in 2007. As Eligibility Workers, you may have many roles in a typical day interacting with co-workers, customers and other professionals. What you say and how you say it sets a tone and may very well determine whether the outcome is going to be a positive one. It's all about the power of words. The Twins have developed a list of "alternative phrases for positive communication" to help you package your message to get better results for both you and your customer. It's important because words live and create life!

Check out these examples:

- "I NEED YOU TO GET ME A COPY OF THAT DOCUMENT" instead try asking "Would you be willing to help by getting a copy of that document for your file?" By using the alternative phrase, you empower the individual to work in partnership with you.
- "I NEED IT FOR THE COMPUTER" instead try explaining, "When you provide this information I will be able to show that you are eligible and approve your application." The alternative phrase brings the customer into the process as an active participant and helps build trust.
- "IT'S NOT MY FAULT" instead why not say "I'm sorry to hear about that, how can we find a solution?" Get the customer moving in a positive direction despite the fact that something has not gone smoothly (remember to apply HEAT: Hear them out, Empathize, Apologize, Take action!)
- "I CAN'T DO THAT" instead reframe the answer "Here are some other options I can offer today." Avoid using expressions with "red tape" or bureaucratic jargon. Always be sure to give the customer three things: the truth, the process, and any information that is required.

Keep up the great work that you are doing everyday! The Olson Twins remind you to take care of yourself especially if you are feeling stressed at work. Take a break, go out for a quick walk, read the comics, and get rid of office clutter! You'll be glad you did.

AROUND THE STATE

By Carla Scheffler, Stearns County Eligibility Worker, and recent N.E.W. Horizon Award Winner

Receiving the N.E.W. Horizons Award for an Eligibility Professional who exemplifies the ideals of the N.E.W. PATHS was truly an honor. Those who attended the conference last year saw my surprise when my name was called. There are so many eligibility professionals throughout the state dedicated to providing the best customer service to their clients. I am humbled by this award.

When I think about “customer service” and what this means, first and foremost I think common sense. If you just use your common sense you can’t go wrong. Who is our customer? Definitely our clients. But also think about your co-workers, your boss, and the community. How do we serve everyone and still get the job done. I would like to share a few tips.

- ➔ Take care of you. If you don’t take care of yourself how can you take care of anyone else?
- ➔ Have a sense of humor. Don’t take everything so seriously.
- ➔ Treat others as you would like to be treated. Respect goes a long way.
- ➔ Put yourself in your client’s shoes. Recall your own beginnings.
- ➔ Remind yourself periodically that people really do act with good intentions.
- ➔ Smile when you enter a room. Smile even if you are down – it makes it hard to stay in a bad mood. Smile when you talk on the phone – the other person can “hear” it.
- ➔ Ignore your phone, cell phone, computer screen, etc when having a “live” conversation. Nothing says “You are less important than a message I am expecting” when you glance away after a prompt. Ask your clients to do the same for you.
- ➔ Update your voice mail every day. Include the date so callers can be assured you are available and will get their message.
- ➔ Compliment your client, no matter how routine it may seem; maintaining a job, staying in school, reporting timely.
- ➔ Take time to welcome and introduce yourself to a new co-worker. You were a new worker once yourself.
- ➔ If you are caught up, ask a co-worker how you can help.
- ➔ Set high standards for yourself. Make deadlines and meet them.
- ➔ Compliment a co-worker or yourself for a job well done.

Being an eligibility professional is a difficult and demanding job with few rewards. We are constantly responding to programs changes, client demands, co-worker requests and our boss’s expectations. However, after being in this business for over 30 years, there is nothing I would rather do. Helping people is what I like to do best and all of you would not be in this business if it wasn’t for your dedicated spirit to helping your fellow man. I commend all of you for the great work you do in improving the lives of others. I look forward to seeing all of you at the N.E.W. Conference in May.

Karen Linda Ovella Erica



Cheryl Dale Donna

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