

Volume 17, February 2009



NEWsworthy

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

NEW Jazz in 2009

For its annual seminar, the Minnesota Chapter of NEW often adopts the theme that the national NEW organization establishes for theirs. For 2009, we couldn't pass up the opportunity to "piggyback" NEW Path's "NEW...And All That Jazz." After all, what comes to mind when you think of the famous "crescent city?" Good times and good friends, right? Well, we hope that's what you think of when the Minnesota seminar rolls around on Tuesday, April 21, 2009.

Thanks to your positive feedback, we've decided once again to host the seminar at the conveniently-located St. Cloud Holiday Inn. And, like last year, a full day of training is offered for \$75.00. The NEW Board made a commitment to maintaining the low cost while delivering a well-rounded, quality training event. Your supervisor – and the folks in your accounting department! - will be impressed by its cost-effectiveness.

We all hear the marketing phrase, "value plus." As an added bonus, the seminar will feature a 4th track. As a result, attendees will have their choice of 4 different topics at each break-out session: that means more choices and more speakers, but at the same low price.

The St. Cloud Holiday Inn has graciously set aside a block of hotel rooms for the evening of Monday,

April 20th at a special government rate of \$72.95. Please mention the NEW seminar when you make your reservation by calling 320-253-9000.

Finally, the NEW board is seeking volunteers in 2 different capacities to help the day of the seminar. Would you consider being an "individual session manager" the person responsible for disbursing hand-outs and counting attendees, or perhaps checking in registrants? Neither job is difficult; we could just use more hands to help. Volunteers are eligible to win a paid 1-year membership to NEW, valued at \$35.00. Think about it! You may enjoy the opportunity this provides to get to know your colleagues from across the state.

Watch your email for upcoming seminar announcements and in the meantime, feel free to contact any NEW board member with questions. See you on April 21st!



Notes from the President

By Karen O'Keefe

Greetings to my colleagues throughout the state! This is my first column as the president of NEW, and I am honored to serve and flattered by the trust my fellow board members have in me.

Lately, monthly board meetings have been devoted to our upcoming 2009 seminar. Anyone with "behind the scenes" involvement with event planning knows that even the smallest of details must be addressed – or there will surely be "learning experience" to be had. Hopefully, our cumulative learning experiences only help to make each seminar better than the previous one. Overwhelmingly, though, it is a fun, exciting, and rewarding activity, and something I recommend to anyone wishing to expand their horizons and develop their skill sets.

This edition of NEWsworthy introduces a new feature entitled "NEW Advice." Please check it out! - and email Newadvice@mn-new.org with any work-related dilemmas you may be facing. Our panel of "experts" have over one hundred and six years of human services work experience and will respond sincerely. Your name will not be published; anonymity is guaranteed. We hope you enjoy and find this new feature useful.

Please consider our standing invitation to become a board member, too. Your unique experiences, outlooks, and perspectives will help shape the future of NEW, gain valuable skills, develop professional contacts, and, last but not least, have fun! Call me or any one of my hard-working board associates if you have any questions about NEW. We are happy to hear from you anytime!

Meet Your Board

It is time to meet board member

Laura Koll

1. What is your current job? How long have you been doing it?
Financial Assistance Specialist since September 2005.
2. How did you get started in eligibility work?
I started as a Senior Clerk Typist in June 2005 for Anoka County and decided I needed more of a challenge. I was hired as a financial worker in September 2005.
3. What is your work history in this field or related fields?
I have worked in customer service related fields for years.
4. What keeps you in this kind of work?
Knowing that I am making a difference in someone's life.
5. How and when did you become involved in NEW?
I became involved in NEW when I decided to attend the Spring 2008 conference in St. Cloud.
6. How have you participated in N.E.W. over the years?
I became a NEW board member in September 2008.
7. How has NEW been a positive influence for you personally and professionally?
NEW has provided me with an outlet for being creative. It has also allowed me to make some great connections through the networking opportunities it provides.
8. What has been the most rewarding thing about participating in NEW?
That my opinion matters and that I am treated as an equal.
9. What do you like best about NEW?
The networking aspect of it.
10. What do you think NEW has to offer potential members?
NEW offers members a place to meet new people. It also allows for endless possibilities of creativity.
11. How is NEW an asset in personal and professional development?
NEW looks great on a résumé but it also has helped me to enhance my leadership skills.
12. Do you have a vision for the future of NEW in Minnesota?
NEW is constantly working on getting more people involved. NEW has so many great opportunities available that I can see Minnesota NEW continuing to make a difference in the lives that it touches.
13. Personal Information—
Family- Married to my husband Jason since 2003. We have two dogs and two cats.
14. Interests – *I love to bowl. I am also one who likes to read.*
Hobbies – *Not much time for hobbies as I am a full time graduate student.*
15. How would coworkers describe you?
Motivated, dependable, knowledgeable, and always willing to help.
16. Tell me something about 3 important moments in your life.
A. The day I got married, I learned that you can't control everything in life. My dad, who is a Marine, was overseas in Iraq on my wedding day. No matter how much I wanted him there, I knew that this was a situation that was out of my control.
B. Deciding to follow my dream of furthering my education by deciding to go back to graduate school to get a degree in a subject that I am passionate about.
C. Thinking I was Ms. Fix-it and can remodel my home without the help of professionals. This adventure has taught both my husband and I about each other and about the fact that we will never do this again. Next time, we are going to not be cheap and let someone else do the work.
17. What advice would you give to new eligibility workers just starting out today?
No matter how frustrated and overwhelmed you feel, you are not alone. This job is about helping others. It takes a lot of patience; and always know that with perseverance, you can do this job.



NEW Advice!

Welcome to the first installment of our "NEW Advice" column for Newsworthy! This column will feature any work-related dilemma you or your co-workers may be facing. Email your situation to NewAdvice@mn-new.org and a panel of "experts" with over 100 years of human services experience will respond. Your name will not be published and anonymity is guaranteed! We hope that sharing these work-related issues will provide you with ideas in dealing with similar situations in your office.

Question 1:

I am a female financial worker and have a male client that is very flirty with me. While I want to be friendly, how can I make him understand our relationship always was and always will be strictly professional? I'm starting to dread talking to him, and I think he makes up reasons to call me.

NEW Advice Says:

While we usually hear about the difficulties in establishing relationships

Mark Your Calendars!

Minnesota NEW Seminar

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

St Cloud, Holiday Inn

34th Annual National NEW Conference

August 16-19, 2009

New Orleans, LA

(more information at www.nationalnew.org)

and boundaries with antagonistic clients, your letter is a good reminder that even those who are agreeable can present unique challenges. Continue to keep a positive and friendly demeanor. At the same time, though, maintain control by setting boundaries from the start. Respond to flirtatious or non-work related comments by saying something like "That's inappropriate" or "Let's keep it work-related. Please don't talk to me like that anymore." Once your pattern of sticking to business is established, he will learn to do the same. And in the meantime, go easy – perhaps his mode of communication is a habit, survival skill, or all he's ever been taught. It could also be that he just needs a friend, and the communication he has with you is an attempt to fill that void.

Question 2:

I work in a corner cubical at the end of a main walk-through. People often run into each other and stop to chat and exchange information. Some of this is work related, and some is personal. The occasional "Hi, how are you?" is fine, but sometimes I am privy to way too much information. It is distracting and it keeps me from being able to concentrate on my work. The worst is when others walking by also join in. I feel as though I am trying to answer my phone and do my work in the middle of a party! How can I get people to quiet down and let me do my work in peace without looking like I'm trying to be the "Absolute Ruler" or "Crabby Co-worker."

NEW Advice Says:

We know from our own experience that this is difficult situation. You don't want to alienate your co-workers but you do need to set some boundaries and expectations. You have the right to remind people that you are distracted from your work when they congregate around you. Keep focused on what you need and how they can help you. Be consistent. If the topic is work related, you could suggest they move to a conference room. If they are trying to

Check These Web Sites!

www.nationalnew.org

National NEW web site

Check out the "TANF Best Practices Handbook"

Written by National NEW. This handbook includes best practices from members across the US.

www.tanfbestpractices.org

www.mn-new.org

Minnesota Chapter of
NEW web site

Recycle--Recycle-- Recycle!

Pass this newsletter on to a
co-worker!

include you, suggest setting up a meeting time later in the day. If it is personal, and you don't want to be involved, remind them that you are there and suggest they finish talking in the lunchroom. If it is personal and you do want to be involved, suggest getting together at lunch or after work to finish talking. In addition, remember, you are not responsible for how others react to your requests. Don't be surprised if someone acts offended, no matter how tactfully you approach him or her. This is a frequent reaction when hiding feelings of embarrassment. Just let it go and after awhile, your consistent efforts will help to create a better culture of respectfulness within the office.



2009 N.E.W. HORIZON NOMINATION FORM

IT'S THAT TIME OF YEAR TO NOMINATE YOUR FELLOW CO-WORKER FOR THE 2009 NEW HORIZON AWARD. THIS YEAR'S NOMINATION WILL BE BASED ON THE Minnesota-NEW 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 NEW.**

***STRIVES FOR PROFESSIONAL EXCELLENCE: BY ACKNOWLEDGING AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR ERRORS.**

TO NOMINATE AN INDIVIDUAL SIMPLY WRITE A FEW SHORT SENTENCES AND EMAIL IT TO Donna.Biederman@state.mn.us OR Dale.Carlson@CO.DAKOTA.MN.US

The Minnesota NEW Board Needs You!

We currently have several openings on our board and invite you to consider joining us. As a board member of the Minnesota Chapter of NEW, you will have opportunities such as:

- Developing articles for our semi-annual newsletter;
 - Providing ideas for legislative input;
 - Networking with other professionals;
 - Planning the annual Seminar; and
- Enhancing your professional skills and career opportunities.

Please feel free to call one of the board members if you want more information.

Take the challenge and become active in **NEW!**

MN NEW Board Members

Karen O'Keefe, President	320-656-6119
Stearns County	
Vice-President	VACANT
Erica Buelow, Treasurer	763-323-6031
Anoka County	
Cheryl Reijon, Secretary	651-431-3499
DHS	
Donna Biederman, DHS	651-431-4097
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