



VLGMA August eNews

Supporting local government managers
building great communities through
inclusion, innovation and leadership

In This Issue

A Memo from Randy

Tedd's Take

Innovation Edge

2013 SEI Alumni Program

Noteworthy Study

VLGMA Facebook Update

A DAO in the Life

Certificate News

Mel's Poetry Corner

Calendar of Upcoming Events

A Memo from Randy

Randy's Ramblings

Well, it is hard to believe that the first month of my Presidency is over. It has been a busy several weeks as the Officers and Board Members have begun fanning out across the Commonwealth to engage the managers and DAO's in the various planning districts to seek advice and suggestions from our member and non-member colleagues. We can do an even better job of supporting and learning from each other as a professional peer network and VLGMA can help facilitate, nurture and enhance that peer network while at the same time continuing to provide outstanding professional development training opportunities and networking. What we've heard so far has been invaluable. Here's a couple of take aways so far which I plan to bring to the Board and the Professional Development Committee in the next few months for discussion.



Randy Wheeler

First, every region is different; it has its own character and feel. In some regions the managers are friends and mutually supportive colleagues, in others it is fairly clear to me that some of the managers aren't quite sure who else is even in their district and in at least one district, relations between the managers and the communities they serve seem downright hostile. So the first take away lesson - one size definitely does not fit all, which reinforces for me the belief that in order to do a great job in supporting our diverse membership, we need to have a customized relationship with each region. How might we do that?

Here's the second major take away which came from my meeting with

Lynchburg - we need to examine the job description (a polite way of saying we need to write one) for our Support Coordinators. We need to train them, support them and count on them to be our eyes and ears in each region. They can be our two-way conduit for support, suggestions and special needs. We have a tremendous resource and structure that I think we are not fully optimizing. I believe this one idea, if done properly, is transformational and the good news is it's one of a dozen or more we've received so far.

In the coming weeks, I would encourage each of you to share your thoughts and ideas with me or any of the Executive Board Members or Officers. Please call, e-mail or better yet attend a regional managers meeting. Thank you for all you do on behalf of the citizens of Virginia, our profession and our organization. Lastly, but by no means least, please join me in welcoming our newest members - Tabitha Crowder, Bristol Interim City Manager; Susan Kidd, Narrows Community & Economic Development Director; Greg Warner, Marshall-Wagner Associates, LLP General Partner; Brandon Hinton, Henrico Director, Office of Management & Budget and Andrew Trivette, Bristol Assistant City Manager. We welcome you and encourage you to become active members of VLGMA as quickly as you can.

--Randy

[Contact Randy Wheeler](#)

Tedd's Take



Public Perception

One doesn't have to look far these days for examples of officials who have run afoul of the basic truth that "perception is reality" when it comes to alleged impropriety in public office.

VLGMA has dedicated considerable conference time each year to discussions about ethics and conduct, addressing both general behavior and specific do's and don'ts. No matter how much time and energy is allotted to the topics by us and others, some folks just don't seem to get it. Why? Good question.

It's interesting to note that certain public officials, such as Elliott Spitzer and Anthony Weiner in New York, and former SC governor Mark Sanford, are able to resurrect their political careers after scandalous personal behavior. The public is able to accept apologies and give a second chance for such transgressions. Conversely, profiting from or abuse of position while in public

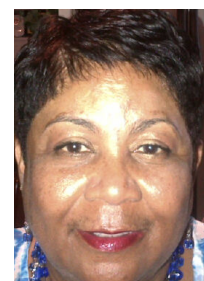
A DAO in the Life

Shock and Awe

In thinking of a title for this article, the first thing that came to my mind was "*Shock and Awe*". Please let me explain. First, my "Awe" experience.

AWE

It was a Friday afternoon after a long day at work, which had also been a very long and hectic week at work. I was unwinding at home talking with my husband, when I received an email from Joe Casey. "Hmmm", I thought to myself... "Joe doesn't normally email me... this must be pretty important...let me see what he wants. " Now for the "AWE"; it turned out that Joe wanted me to write the DAO article for the August VLGMA eNewsletter. "Me?" I thought to myself. "Why is he asking me? There is no way that what I do in a day could ever be of any interest to the members who have much more important positions than I have." So that was my



Sherri Neil

office is a totally different matter. It is unforgivable, unacceptable, and, unfortunately, reinforces the negative stereotype many people hold of government officials. Tens of thousands of hours of good work can be obliterated by one person's momentary lack of judgment.

It is difficult to listen to the ridicule of all levels of government when these things happen. Public servants need to recommit themselves to doing the best they can to establish public trust, root out the bad apples, and serve as personal and professional models.

We need to counteract those damaging perceptions, and that's the truth!

Contact [Tedd Povar](#)
[Innovation Edge](#)



UnTagging the Town: Blacksburg's Murals Bloom Amid Graffiti

by *Matt Hanratty, Housing & Neighborhood Services Manager, Blacksburg, VA*

Over the past handful of years, Blacksburg noticed a trend in and around downtown that wasn't resulting in a positive image of the community. Graffiti, and more particularly tags, were being painted throughout the area on walls, buildings, electrical boxes, fences, and any surface that lent itself to the medium. To address the problem, town staff began working with local businesses and homeowners to utilize volunteers to rid their properties of these nuisances. This public private partnership was born out of the necessity to remove unwanted tagging from the community without a budget or ordinance requiring the cleanup. This was done through the Town's Housing

initial response to Joe. But after a few back and forth email messages, Joe... in his very kind, yet highly persuasive way, convinced me that I could do this. "Okay"... I said to my-self, "this may not be so bad... I can think of something intelligent to write."

SHOCK

Now for the "SHOCK" aspect; I was just getting comfortable with the thought of writing this column, and my phone rings. Low and behold...it's Joe Casey. "Wow"... I think to myself, "he is really trying to console me about writing this article." But that was not his objective.... He called to tell me that I had been assigned the position of Committee Chairperson for the VLGMA Communications and Networking Committee! Well, for me, that just about did it. "Me? Why me? I am a great support member, but the Chair?" were the thoughts that were rushing through my mind. Joe calmly, yet firmly reminded me that one of the duties of the Executive Board members (of which I was recently appointed...and I humbly thank the members that supported my nomination) was to Chair a committee and report the committee's activities to the Board. Chairing this committee was his role, but he was now bestowing that honor upon me. Well what could I say, but okay? Although no-way was on my lips... it did not come out of my mouth.

Lean In

After our conversation, all sorts of apprehensions and in trepidations began running through my mind. Then I reminded myself that the morning portion of the next DAO meeting was about "Leaning In", and that was what I was about to do. Not having read the book yet, it seemed to me that by agreeing to take on these duties was analogous with what the "Lean In" concept was all about. I have since purchased the book and began reading

and Neighborhood Services Office strengthening its relationships with the community to creatively address the problem through community and property owner support.

As it was quickly discovered, cleaning or painting over tagged surfaces provided the vandals a clean area to retag. Despite efforts from the Housing and Neighborhood Services Office, Police Department, and property owners, the perpetrators were extremely difficult to catch and thus an alternative method to remove the unwanted tags from the community was taken. [Keep Reading...](#)

Visit the [Alliance for Innovation](#) for more information.

2013 SEI Alumni Program



Date Change for the 2013 SEI Alumni Program.

December 2013 is the tentative date of the expanded SEI Alumni Program. In addition to being more like the much loved SEI program, the SEI Alumni program qualifies for ICMA credentialing credits.

[Click here for more info.](#)

Noteworthy Study

Something Tedd thought you'd find interesting...

Noteworthy study!

Researchers for the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority found over 200 dead crows near Boston recently, and there was some concern that they may have died from the avian flu.

They had a bird pathologist, who was a member of the group, examine the



it. Well the first chapter entitled "**What Would You Do If You Weren't Afraid**" spoke to me loud and clear! This was what I was doing with these assignments... stepping in and stepping up to the plate.

I am certain that all of us in our professional and personal lives "*Lean In*" on a daily basis, but we may not have realized that was exactly what we were doing. Therefore, at the next DAO meeting in October, we should have a great conversation from both men and women about a time when they found themselves in "*Shock and Awe*" yet in spite of their fears or hesitations... *leaned in*. That is the mark of true leaders, and we are all leaders in our own way, in our own space, in our varied local government positions. I hope you enjoyed my "*Lean In*" story... now I look forward to hearing your stories in October. See you in Charlottesville!

[Contact Sherri Neil](#)
Certificate News

The end is in sight for our summer students, and then, within two weeks, the fall semester will begin. To help ease the pain of the coming hectic time of transition, the Certificate program welcomed back Dr. John Nalbandian. His visits allow everyone involved in the program to take a quick, refreshing breath in order to add broad perspective to our work.

Dr. Nalbandian lectured two classes for the Certificate, led a lunch discussion with students, and dined with alumni in Roanoke. His lectures focused on the administrative and political sustainability of local government policies. As a former mayor with a long association with local government professionals, he understands both the management and political aspects of



remains of all the crows, and, to everyone's relief, he confirmed that the problem was definitely not avian flu.

However, he determined that 98% of the crows had been killed by impact with trucks and 2% were killed by an impact with cars.

Massachusetts then hired an ornithological behaviorist from Harvard University to determine the cause of the disproportionate percentage of truck kills versus car kills.

The ornithological behaviorist quickly determined the reason for this.

When crows eat road kill, they always have a 'lookout' crow in a nearby tree to warn of impending danger.

His conclusion was that, while 'lookout' crows could say 'cah,' none of them could say 'truck.'

VLGMA Facebook Update

As we crossed over into a new fiscal year, local government news interest remained strong on VLGMA's



Virginia Local Government News Facebook Group members. Of particular note, the Bedford reversion from city to town earned lots of ink & pixels both before and after July 1. The remarkably consistent Bill Rolfe was the top poster for both month. Overall posting activity fell from its heights reached during budget season to a total of 63 articles of local government interest for June.

The top posters for the months of June & July:

Name	June	July
Range rider Bill Rolfe	41	50
Matt Hankins, Rocky Mount	17	20
Tom Harris, Hanover County	2	11
Mary Jo Fields, VML	1	17
Bonnie Svrcek, Lynchburg	1	-
Brannon Godfrey, Portsmouth	1	-
Tedd Povar	1	-

Thanks to everyone who added

policy. The students and alumni were extremely grateful for this opportunity. Garrett Jackson, assistant town manager of Abingdon even remarked, "Dr. Nalbandian is like the wise old yogi of local government management; everyone listens closely as he shares his wisdom." These opportunities truly add a unique perspective to the already-great Certificate program.

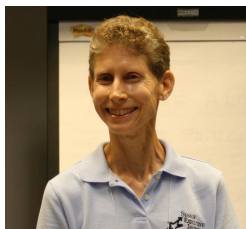
Even though the deadline to apply for the fall the semester has passed, there is still plenty of time to apply and prepare for Spring 2014. Bob Stripling, in fact, is eager to get new students for the program and even has been known to answer a potential recruit's phone call while on a cruise in Europe! He truly is dedicated and can always be contacted at chars08@vt.edu or 540-448-1102.

Find the Certificate online:



Mel's Poetry Corner

Encouragement



Mel Gillies

As you journey here in terrestrial time, cruising downhill or in the throes of a challenging climb with so many intersections, it's a toss whether to keep on truckin' or take the next exit off.

My life road map says left
but I'm not sure
if it should be right for
the more scenic tour.
What is my purpose and is this the way?
Too weary to care
by the end of the day.

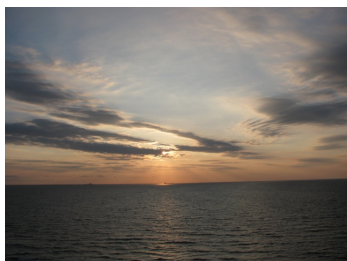
It can get kind of scary
except for the saving grace
of the presence of an encouraging face.

content this month! Help us out by posting stories of local government interest. Join the group, paste in links to the Virginia local government stories you're reading anyway, and help create a richer knowledge base for all of our Virginia colleagues.

If you're not part of the group, we're easy to find. On Facebook, look for Local Government Virginia News. It's a private group, so you have to ask to join. The Communications & Networking Committee encourages you to post news from your community and read the month's news to see whether you can gain insights from your peers' challenges. Happy posting!

Future Newsletter Articles

A goal of this e-newsletter is to keep you informed on activities relative to our profession. As



with any membership-based organization, contributions by members are welcome and encouraged. Topics can range from a recent achievement in your locality to an upcoming event with networking potential to human interest stories about current or retired members. To contribute simply send your brief e-newsletter content (~5 sentences or less) via email to [Molly Harlow](#).

Guidance to help direct my course and to keep me aligned with the values of true North.

A stranger, a friend, a parent, a child who boosts my spirit for that critical mile. And it always comes as the perfect Godsend when I can't see the light at the tunnel's end.

The inspiration for the courage to proceed En courage meant, a gift of love indeed.

Calendar

Upcoming Events



[DAO Meeting](#) - October 18, 2013 - please note the date change

[More Dates](#)

Quick Links

[VLGMA Website](#)

[ICMA Website](#)

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[Virginia Municipal League](#)

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