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Brenda's Bytes

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Brenda Garton

Get a dog.

I was asked by Bob Stripling and Neil Morgan to participate in a very minor role as a speaker at the June Professional Development in Local Government Conference, aimed at students and graduates of the Local Government Management Certificate program. For that session, several managers participated in a five-minute rapid-fire format to address issues in local government. I decided to be the touchy-feely part of the program.

In talking to the audience about work-life balance, I was basically aiming at how to stay sane in what can honestly be a very stressful, high-pressure position. One has to stay balanced, focus on the big picture, stay grounded in your friends and family, have a thick skin and a strong dose of confidence, and in general, maintain your integrity and your health (physical and mental) in order to function effectively as a CAO or Deputy/Assistant CAO.

I worked on things I wanted to say to the group over a number of days, trying to make it real and of value, drawing from bits of wisdom I'd gained over the years and learned from other managers, but also light-hearted, uplifting, and funny. After I got home, greeted at the door by my two dogs, Honey and Luc, I thought, "Oh my gosh! I left something critical out of my talk today!"

Get a dog.

I mean, honestly, when you sometimes drag yourself in the door after a long, perhaps stressful day at work, your dog is there, barking joyously as soon as you

appear, wagging his tail, jumping up and down, saying, "Mom's home! Mom's home! WOOHOO!" Is it POSSIBLE to be depressed with that kind of welcome? How can you feel sorry for yourself when the little fellow literally THROWS himself at you? Don't doggie kisses cure virtually any emotional ill? How can you not just KNOW that life is good when there is a dog curled up in your lap? It really doesn't matter what kind of person you are, how many mistakes you make, or how horrible your day was, your dog thinks you are totally WONDERFUL. You are the absolute center of his universe.

Yes, I know you will say, "Man, she is nuts." And, I accept that it is entirely possible that I am. And, yes, I know you will say, "But what about my wife/husband? What about my children?" Let me be clear: I'm NOT asserting that your spouse and your children are less important than your pooch. However, speaking as one who comes home to no human companion during the week, my weekday life would be much bleaker were it not for Honey and Luc.

And, for those of you who DO have a spouse and children at home, does a dog get irritated with you for dropping your dirty clothes on the floor instead of in the hamper? Does a dog say, "What's for dinner?" as soon as you come in the door? (OK, well, maybe he WOULD if he could talk.) Does a dog get his feelings hurt because you forgot his birthday? Does a dog have expectations? Does a dog roll his eyes clean out of his head and respond, "Whatever!" after you've asked him to clean up his room and do his homework?

And for you weird cat people out there who are saying, "Hey. What about my CAT?" Well, speaking as a former cat owner and cat lover, I'd have to say, "Are you kidding me?" No matter how much she loves you, you are lucky if your feline friend even deigns to acknowledge that you are home! She may be in the window behind the curtains vicariously stalking a bird, hiding under the bed just because, or in a sleep-dream state only to be awakened by a volcanic eruption or a 9.9 Richter scale earthquake. MAYBE if you open a can of cat food with the electric can opener will she bother to even make an appearance, and then only to pretend like she's not interested in you or dinner.

Archie Bunker would say, "Case closed."

So, again, GET A DOG! And, if you already HAVE a dog, go give him a treat. He deserves it.

Guaranteed joy. Certain worship. Definite total faith that you are the greatest thing since sliced bread. Unconditional love. Predicted improved mental health. Better job performance. I promise.

And, now that I think about it, wouldn't we all be more genuinely happy if we could just bound out of bed every morning, full of pure joy and enthusiasm at just being ALIVE? Expecting and requiring absolutely NOTHING from anyone (other than a trip "outside", some water, breakfast, and maybe a toy) to be happy? Wouldn't we be better spouses, parents, friends, co-workers, colleagues, employees, and, in general, human beings, if we aim to spread joy in the world, did everything with joy and enthusiasm, approached every task as something new and exciting, and accepted and loved every other human being just as they are?

So, maybe, BE a dog. Channel a dog's joy. See the world through canine eyes. Find joy in virtually EVERYTHING. Spread joy and enthusiasm. Celebrate life. Accept everyone just as they are. Be YOU.

Woof woof.

Reminders of upcoming events:
VML Legislative Day Meeting Space for VLGMA
Date of Meeting: 1/28/2015
Time of Meeting: 1:30 PM
Location: 8th Floor West Conference Room -- House

VACo Legislative Day Meeting Space for VLGMA
Date of Meeting: 2/5/2015
Time of Meeting: 1:30 PM
Location: 5th Floor West Conference Room -- House

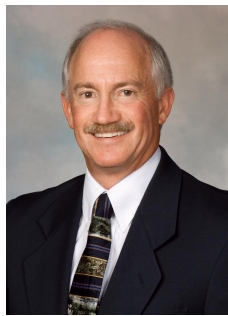
Please don't forget to register for the VLGMA Winter Conference, held February 11-13, 2014 in Staunton. And bring folks from your organization!

I would like to take a moment to recognize our new VLGMA member: Ms. Diane M. Rebertus, Gloucester Director of Library Services.

-Brenda

[Contact Brenda Garton](#)

Tedd's Take



Tedd Povar

**The International
Institute of Government
(aka, VA Inst. of Govt.)**

Over the past several years, one of the cooler parts of my job has been hosting foreign delegations from Mali and Burkina Faso that are

in the United States to learn about our governmental structures and interrelationships, and how to tackle decentralizing their highly centralized governments. Our partner is the Institute for Global Training in Washington, DC.

The delegations, which have numbered as few as three people or as many as 25, travel to Richmond on their one "field trip" (the rest of their visit is spent in the DC area) and we make sure it is a productive and informative day. Typically, sessions are held with representatives of one or more of the following: the VML, VACo, Greater Richmond (economic development) Partnership, Greater Richmond Chamber of Commerce, and a municipal government administration. We also build in a tour of the state capital.

A DAO in the Life

A Day in the Life of a DAO



Sheryl Bailey

Sheryl D. Bailey, Ph.D., Deputy County Administrator for Management Services, Chesterfield County, Virginia

"Do you enjoy this?" the senior staff member asked while discussing potential community concerns with a major project. His face and voice confirmed he was seeking perspective. "There's no standard formula for anything you do," he further observed with hand motions outlining two imaginary pillars.

The weight underlying his comments was palpable. Major local government projects often include multiple constituencies with divergent interests, especially when layered with federal and state requirements. Balancing all of these interests can be complicated and weighty for our staff.

It was time for a "why are we here" conversation. I shared how I discovered my calling in local government after experiences in higher education and

(Everyone in the world seems to know about Thomas Jefferson!) A final special event, if time and timing allow, is attendance at a public hearing and meeting, something almost unheard of in their native countries.

The primary theme throughout the day is the value of associations, and how, through collaboration, conferencing, and communication, political and administrative leaders can learn from each other, avoid duplication, solve problems, and influence decisions at higher levels of government. Things that we take totally for granted are simply amazing, and, in the process, we learn about the challenges they face, which are daunting, to say the least.

So now you know... the Virginia Institute of Government is more than training and inquiries!!! We've gone international!

[Contact Tedd Povar](#)

Position Changes
November, 2014



Frank Bossio, long-time Culpeper County administrator, announced his retirement effective April, 2015.

Jack Tuttle, city manager for Williamsburg since 1991, announced his retirement effective June 30, 2015.

Hugh G. Cooper, former city manager for Bristol and Emporia, Virginia, ICMA range rider and life member, and ICMA-VA president, passed away at the age of 85.

Laura Fitzpatrick, assistant city manager for Rio Rancho, NM, and former deputy manager for the city of Manassas Park, has been appointed assistant city manager for Hampton.

consulting. He likewise shared his journey to local government service after experiences in other arenas. We agreed that it is very meaningful to be able to do something of consequence for our communities and to do "real things for real people in real time."

Local government also constantly provides opportunities to learn and grow. I reminded him of several innovations he has advanced that have delivered substantial results for the county. Local government makes it happen, which forces us to grow to meet the needs of the mission and our community. It can be very satisfying to be a part of the long-term solutions we are forced to create.

Thankfully, this purpose-centered interlude has helped. He now smiles as we work through the many details of our major project, often referring back to our "why are we here" discussion.

While our to-do lists are never-ending, this experience was another reminder that keeping our team encouraged and inspired is a box we must always check.

[Contact Sheryl Bailey](#)

Innovation Edge



Getting Great Results for Your Community: Start with Caring About the People Who Implement Your Mission

by Stacey Peterson, Chief People Officer, Rancho Cordova, CA

An emphasis on talent management and employee engagement is critical to better organizational performance. In all industries there is considerable pressure to improve performance levels, especially in government where citizens are expecting more be done with fewer

Marvin B. Milam, Harrisonburg city manager from 1969 to 1988, and ICMA range rider and life member, died at the age of 84.

James H. Blount, Jr. - former 19 year manager for the town of Woodstock, died at the age of 83.

Thomas C. Gates, assistant city manager for Alexandria, has been appointed administrator for Roanoke County.

Mark Lauzier, administrator for Page County since July, 2013, resigned.

Lance Terpenney, town manager for Floyd, announced his retirement effective 12/31.

Laszlo Palko has been appointed town manager for Lovettsville. He has extensive military, private sector, and public sector experience, and has a public policy masters degree from Harvard.

William (Bill) Rolfe, retired administrator and multiple interim administrator, has been appointed part-time manager for the town of Glasgow.

Certificate News

The end has come! Another successful semester for the Certificate program will be in the books this month, and a new crop of graduates will be out in the world impacting local governments across the state. We are extremely proud of our new alumni and look forward to the impact they will have both professionally and personally.

In fact, one recent Certificate alumni has just made news with his first CAO

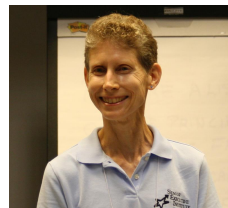


resources. To expand talent capacity, the City of Rancho Cordova, an eleven-year old City near Sacramento, California, looked to the Great Place to Work® Institute. There we learned to benchmark best practices and gain insights from years of research and experience on building employee trust, which is proven to yield significant returns on productivity, innovation and revenues. Read more [here](#).

Questions? Comments? Please reach out to me saburnett@transformgov.org, or 800-777-2509 with any questions.

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

Mel's Poetry Corner



Mel Gillies

Rudolph's Call

Rudolph had a big responsibility to fulfill a custom tailored destiny. Serving as a guiding light on a most auspicious night.

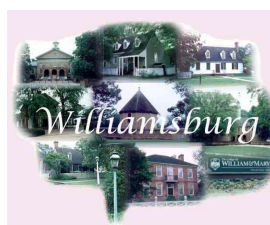
We are all pivotal to God's plan and each and every moment we can let our unique qualities glow and into the dark night joyfully go.

We never know when we'll be called, a toy-filled sled to lift and haul.

Our note is an essential key to play in Life's grand symphony.

[Contact Mel Gillies](#)

City of Williamsburg Ranks 5th in Digital Cities Annual Survey



City of Williamsburg Ranks 5th in Digital Cities Annual Survey

(Williamsburg) - The Center for Digital Government (CDG) has announced the winners of its

appointment. Laszlo Palko has been appointed as the new town manager of Lovettsville in Loudon County. Laszlo has a background in the military and management experience in both the private sector and local government. He also helped set up provisional governments while on a deployment to Afghanistan, giving him his first taste for local government. This background along with excellent leadership skills and the Certificate make Laszlo a true rising star in the profession.

The Certificate program is full of success stories. The program's network of students, faculty, and professionals is one of the greatest cradles of success in the local government profession. If you or someone you know is ready to be a part of the fun, then Bob Stripling is excited to share about the program. The deadline for the spring semester is January 2, so reach him quickly at chars08@vt.edu or 540-448-1102.

Find the Certificate online:



Certified Public Manager Program (CPM)
School of Policy, Government and
International Affairs
George Mason University



On November 7th, George Mason University's School of Policy, Government and International Affairs (SPGIA) launched the newly-created Certified Public Manager Program (CPM). This program is designed to enhance the careers of those in public service management. The curriculum meets the criteria to be certified by the National CPM Consortium and is calibrated to

2014 Digital Cities Survey, and Williamsburg, Virginia placed 5th in the top ten cities of populations less than 75,000. The annual survey is in its 14th year of showcasing top practices in public-sector information and communication technology.

Williamsburg, with a population of approximately 14,000, was selected for the second time moving up from 9th to 5th place in its population category.

The survey is coordinated by the Center for Digital Government (CDG), which is a division of e.Republic, also the parent company of Government Technology. The survey was underwritten by AT&T, Laserfiche, McAfee, and Sprint.

This 2014 survey focused on collaboration among cities, counties and regions with targeted questions on the initiatives cities were most proud of in the areas of citizen engagement, policy, operations, and technology and data. Many factors play into the judging process, including an increased focus on open government/transparency/open data and mobility/mobile applications.

Save the Date

Save the date for the VRA



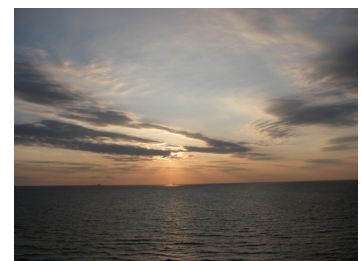
Infrastructure

Financing Conference December 10-12, 2014 in Roanoke.

[Contact Jean Bass](#)

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

provide management and leadership theory and practice to all enrollees.

The curriculum will focus on 12 critical topics including strategic management, public budgeting and finance, governance and ethics. Courses will meet in person twice per month for 12 months to enable working professionals to spend meaningful class time with a cohort of peers exploring public administration management theory and strategy. Successful participants will earn the distinction as a Certified Public Manager enabling the use of the CPM following their name.

The first class is being recruited from public safety agencies in Northern Virginia. With the experience gained from administering the first class, GMU will look to expand the CPM Program statewide. It is anticipated that the program will be offered by region when a sufficient number of students register for the CPM Program. The VLGMA Newsletter will be one of several ways of promoting the CPM Program. There is an Advisory Board for the Program and VLGMA has appointed to the Board as its representative [Cindy Mester](#), Assistant City Manager, Falls Church. The Program is being organized by [Tony Griffin](#), Mason's Practitioner-in-Residence and former Fairfax County Executive at Mason's Centers on the Public Service: 703-993-9377 or psc@gmu.edu

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](#).

[Calendar](#)

Upcoming Events

VML Legislative Day VLGMA Meeting - Jan. 28, 2015 at 1:30p.m. in the 8th Floor West Conference Room - House

VACo Legislative Day VLGMA Meeting - Feb 5, 2015 at 1:30p.m. in the 5th Floor West Conference Room - House

2015 VLGMA Winter Conference - Feb. 11-13 at the Stonewall Jackson Hotel in Staunton

[More Dates](#)

Quick Links

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[ICMA Website](#)

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