Disclosures

AGA GREATER LANSING CHAPTER

www.lansing-aga.org
DECEMBER 2012

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Vision
AGA is the premier association for advancing government accountability.

Mission
AGA fosters learning, certification, leadership and collaboration for professionals and stakeholders committed to advancing government accountability.

Core Values
Service, Accountability, Integrity, Leadership

Message from the Chapter President

Even though Thanksgiving has come and gone, I’d like to express how thankful I am for a great AGA board this year. Our Program and Education chairs have worked diligently to provide wonderful opportunities for training with more to come in 2013. I also appreciate those who work in less visible positions to keep our chapter, and this president, on track.

A big thank you to those members who regularly participate in chapter events, we wouldn’t exist without you! To those of you who have not served, or not served in a long time, consider how you could get more involved in our Greater Lansing Chapter. If you would be willing to serve or interested in more information on opportunities to serve, check with Amy Zimmerman or me.

Finally to those of you whom we have not seen at any Greater Lansing Chapter events in a long time – consider a New year’s resolution to join sometime soon at one of our events.

Deborah Christopherson, CGFM
President Greater Lansing AGA Chapter

2
The number of states -- Maryland and Connecticut -- that require schools to have carbon monoxide (CO) alarms to detect the toxic gas that's often referred to as "the silent killer." At least 244 people were hospitalized or treated for CO poisoning in schools this year and last.

SOURCE: USA TODAY | NATION | DECEMBER 6, 2012

AUDIO CONFERENCE
WEDNESDAY
December 12, 2012
2:00pm to 3:50 pm
Constitution Hall
Brake Conference Room
Lansing, Michigan

JUST ETHICS!
2 hours CPE

Leon Young, Professional Trainer
Author of the "Ask Leon" column on Ethics in AGA's *Journal of Government Financial Management*

This session will present practical solutions—no arcane theory—on addressing workplace situations involving people and issues. The discussion will focus on ethical challenges and the risk-taking that may be involved in being ethical; the application of the Federal Code of Ethics; and fairness in different scenarios. Current workplace situations will be used as examples of what to do and of what not to do.

Professional trainer Leon Young, author of the "Ask Leon" column on ethics in AGA's *Journal of Government Financial Management*, will present ideas and answer your questions.

REGISTRATION
Register on-line at www.aga-lansing.org.
Click on events.
Register before Monday, December 10, 2012

COST
AGA members - free
non-members - $20
Registrants are responsible for payment unless cancellation is received by the registration deadline.

MONTHLY MEETING
TUESDAY
January 15, 2013
11:45 am
Capitol View Building
201 Townsend Street,
Lansing, Michigan

ANNUAL TAX UPDATE
joint meeting with SAAABA
1 hour CPE **

Carrie L. Hindmon, CPA
Senior Manager
Andrews, Hooper & Pavlik, P.L.C.

REGISTRATION
Register on-line at www.aga-lansing.org.
Click on events.
Register before January 10, 2013.

Space is limited.
A box lunch will be provided.

COST
$10 AGA members
$15 non-members
Registrants are responsible for payment unless cancellation is received by the registration deadline.

** As noted in last month's newsletter, in order to earn CPE for your CGFM, you need to make a connection with your job for a tax topic.

Where's that lighthouse?


A


B

see page 5 for the answer

'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house
Not a broker was churning, as they were home with a spouse;
The stocks had been researched and purchased with care,
In hopes that high returns soon would be there.

Investors were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of ten baggers danced in their heads.
The Investopedia Staff had done their week-long preach,
But they hadn't yet run out of things to teach.

When on CNBC there arose such a clatter,
Investors sprang from their chairs to see what was the matter.
Up to the TV they flew like a flash,
To hear the latest rumors and political trash.

The analyst picks - a normal part of the show;
But smart investors knew it was all so much blow.
When, what to their wondering eyes should appear,
But Warren Buffett, with something for investors to hear.

His eyes, how they twinkled with savvy and wit,
It was clear that his insight would be a smash hit.
More rabid than eagles his listeners they came,
And he bellowed, and shouted, and called out by name:

"Now, Stocks! Now, Bonds! Now, REITs and Mutuals!
On Options! On Futures! On Technicals and Fundamentals!
To the top of the world! And to prevent a great fall,
Diversify! Diversify! Diversify All!"

The market fluctuates, but long term it will fly,
When met with uncertainty, you should diversify;
Ignore the picks and advice, even from Uncle Hugh,
Forget the day to day, you have better things to do.

And then, in an email, just what should arrive?
The sound of a hot issue, making hearts come alive!
Investors shivered and shook and saw all green,
Then realized the truth: IPOs return pretty lean.

The life of a broker, the fortune and fame,
"Leave it to the expert!" you heard him exclaim.
A bundle of "wisdom" they have in their bags,
Promising you they'll make riches from rags.

But with his empty promises and occasional skim,
Are you sure you should leave your finances to him?
His fees are steep (but he seemed so credible),
"Stick with me," he announced, "it'll be unforgettable!"

But quickly you thought, like a smart little elf,
"This doesn't seem hard ... I could do it myself!"
There’s a spark in your eye - you know it won't be easy,
But the lines from your broker just sounded so cheesy.

The broker just laughed, as you gave him a "NO!"
But you know that your skills will make your cash grow.
He ranted and raved as he stomped on the floor,
"Good luck!" he sneered, "You know nothing of this chore!"

Out the door he ran and drove off in his Beemer,
But don't worry my friend, you are not just a dreamer.
With a visit to Investopedia, you are starting it right,
"So Merry Christmas to All, and to All a Good Night!"

AGA NATIONAL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR TO RETIRE

Relmond Van Daniker, DBA, CPA, AGA Executive Director, has informed the National Executive Committee that he will retire from his position at the end of his contract, September 30, 2014.

Van was selected as the Executive Director in 2003. "Together, we have built AGA into the thought leader within the government financial management community. It remains an honor to lead such a terrific organization."

During Van's tenure, a list of notable accomplishments includes:

- increasing revenue from $3 million to $7 million
- the creation of both best practice research as well as empirical research
- the establishment of an Intergovernmental Partnership to reflect the diverse membership of AGA and
- the creation and expansion of the Citizen-Centric Reporting program
- attendance at all national training events (PDC, NLC, FPT) have doubled
- the Internal Control and Fraud Prevention and the Federal Performance Management training events, as well as, the Financial Systems Summit were created
- the Sectional Leadership Meetings (SLM) were started to bring together AGA leadership from all chapters, and now has reached over 330 participants
- chapter scholarships for the PDC were created to have more chapter members attend the training event
- membership has increased while other comparable associations have seen their memberships decrease
- the number of chapters has increased to over 100

"All of these accomplishments could not have been achieved without the outstanding staff at AGA," stated Van Daniker.

ALTERNATIVES IN COLLEGE WORTH STUDYING

College is many things. Cheap is not one of them.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, the average four-year degree costs about $90,000, including tuition, room and board. That's up 70 percent in the past decade and nearly 700 percent since 1980. Two-thirds of students finish college with some amount of debt. The average amount tops $26,000.

So — finally — students, parents and politicians are beginning to grasp for new ways to put the brakes on colleges, which have often seemed indifferent to the problem.

One intriguing idea comes from Rick Perry and Rick Scott, the Republican governors of Texas and Florida, respectively. Last year, Perry asked public universities in his state to submit plans for a degree that would cost no more than $10,000 in tuition for all four years. Ten schools have done so, prompting Scott to follow suit last week in his state.

Governors can't snap their fingers to bring down college costs. But Perry and Scott are on to something.

Higher education costs are inflated by bloated bureaucracies and bills paid with other people's money. Universities employ professors too busy with research to spend much time teaching. They sink vast sums into money-losing intercollegiate sports. And they spend lavishly on marketing efforts to build prestige and buck up their college rankings.

Then, after deciding what they need to send, they price accordingly. Their tuition is a function of this bloat and government's willingness to subsidize them.

The Perry and Scott approach turns the process around, starting with a hypothetical student with $10,000 to spend on tuition. Its appeal is that it puts the interest of the student above all other university concerns.

The Texas universities' cost-saving ideas are hardly unique. Many are being tried elsewhere. But they present a real path forward.

continued on page 5

ALTERNATIVES IN COLLEGE
continued from page 4

Several proposed partnering with community colleges, which are largely devoid of the frills that make four-year institutions so expensive. Many cost-conscious students are already starting at two-year schools, then transferring. Formalizing these partnerships would help students and force the four-year institutions to ask themselves why they should charge so much more than their partners.

An even better idea is to push further into online education. Here Texas is just part of a major potentially transformational trend. Harvard and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology are among the colleges offering free, not-for-credit instruction through what are known as massive open online courses, or MOOCs. Some colleges have begun testing online courses for credit.

Online instruction can remove the redundancy of having instructors around the country delivering the same lecture. While student-to-instructor contact is still vital, it should be focused on conferences and study groups.

source: Livingston Daily Press and Argus (12/07/2012)

NEED CPE? MEMBERS ONLY HOLIDAY SALE

Take $10 off when you purchase a subscription of *Journal* quizzes. It's an easy way to fulfill your end of the year CGFM CPE requirements by reading the *Journal of Government Financial Management.* Get 3 CPEs for each issue when you take the on-line quiz and pass with an 80 percent or better.

This is a limited-time offer for members. Purchase a subscription before December 15, 2012 to get 4 quizzes—and earn up to 12 CPEs—for just $99!

More information is available on the National AGA website at www.agacgfm.org.

OMB News

Friday – 11/23/2012 10:12am

1500AM FederalNewsRadio.com

Michael O'Connell

Werfel: Government avoids $47B in overpayments

The federal government avoided making $47 billion in overpayments over the last three years. In addition, the government-wide error rate dropped from 5.4 percent in fiscal 2009 to 4.3 percent in fiscal 2012.

Adding in the number of improper payments avoided during the same three-year period by the Department of Defense in commercial contracts, the overpayment savings rise to $70 billion and the government-wide error rate sinks to 3.7 percent.

Danny Werfel, the controller of the Office of Management and Budget, announced these figures Wednesday in a blog post.

Werfel wrote that error rates dropped in major programs across the government, including Medicare Fee-for-Service, Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (food stamps). He added the Department of Labor is also working with states to reduce improper payments of unemployment insurance.

Danny Werfel
Controller
OMB

"In total, the government has so far avoided over $47 billion in improper payments over the past three years, almost hitting the President's ambitious goal of avoiding $50 billion in improper payments by the end of FY 2012," Werfel wrote.

Werfel credited the successful Medicare Fee-for-Service Recovery Audit Contractor program with helping to recapture $4.4 billion in overpayments to contractors from 2009-2012.

When President Barack Obama entered office in 2009, he made reducing waste, fraud and abuse in the federal government a priority, issuing an executive order to target improper payments and signing the Improper Payments Elimination and Recovery Act in July 2010.

Answers to Where's that lighthouse
A = Holland B = St. Joseph

You Won the Election. Now Go Meet Your Auditor.

Dr. Mark Funkhouser, a former Kansas City mayor and auditor, is the director of the Governing Institute.

When Emanual Cleaver was elected mayor of Kansas City in 1991, it was his prerogative to create the city-council committee structure and appoint the committees' members. He created a new committee called Rules and Audit and assigned four brand-new council members to it, with George Blackwood as chair. The power committees on the council were the Finance Committee and the Plans and Zoning Committee. Rules and Audit was seen as a bit of a backwater, with its purview combining a number of the seemingly less important aspects of city government.

I was the city auditor at the time, and in Kansas City the auditor serves at the pleasure of the mayor and council. So once they had been sworn in, I paid a visit to Blackwood. I introduced myself and said that, in essence, as city auditor I worked for him. He was a little taken aback and asked, "Well, that's great, but what do you do?" I told him I did performance auditing. "What is that?" he asked. I gave a brief description of the nature of our office's work, and he scheduled an executive session of the committee to discuss my work and to set expectations regarding my performance. Once the doors were closed, I told the committee members, "Audit is an instrument of power." I'll never forget the response of Ron Finley, a council member from a district in the inner city. He sat up, leaned forward, and said, "I heard that!"

Auditors can flush out government's fur rabbits and lurking demons. But they can do a lot more than that. They can help you govern effectively.

I recall this story because, while a gazillion words are being written about the presidential election, thousands of men and women have just been elected as mayors, city council members, county executives and county commissioners. A good many of those people, hopefully the vast majority, ran because they wanted to be part of the process of improving their communities. They want to govern well, make sound policy decisions and see that those decisions are efficiently and effectively implemented. The auditor can help them do that.

When he was comptroller general of the United States and therefore head of the Government Accountability Office, David M. Walker described GAO's mission as that of giving "government decision-makers, and the public as well, the professional, objective, fact-based, nonpartisan, nonideological, fair, balanced, and reliable information they need to make timely and informed decisions." That's a pretty fair description of the work of an auditor, and the key word in that description is "information." Many people have a vague but narrow view of auditing as something akin to accounting. It is actually much broader. At their best, audit organizations can provide a wide variety of insight, oversight and foresight functions.

A newly elected local-government official should call the auditor in and ask the following sorts of questions:

• "Whom do you work for?" Some local government auditors are internal auditors working for management--for example, an elected executive or a professional manager such as a city administrator--and some work for the legislative body, independent of management. In many cases, the skills required and the work performed are similar. but obviously the priorities of the auditor may differ depending the structure of the office. Every jurisdiction of any size needs an independent auditor as a check on management.

• "What auditing standards do you follow?" This question is critical because it gives you a gauge of how professional the audit office is. An internal-audit function may follow the "Red Book" standards of the Institute of Internal Auditors. An independent audit function will follow the "Yellow Book," the governmental auditing standards issued by the federal government. Every audit office should follow some form of standards; unfortunately, many do not.

• "What do I need to know that I don't know?" Every jurisdiction has "fat rabbits" and "lurking demons." Fat rabbits are opportunities to improve or save money that have been overlooked by elected officials because the people who know that things could be different hope no one will notice how fat and happy they are. Lurking demons are problems that are under the surface but that will inevitably rise up and bite the jurisdiction.

• "Here are my priorities. What audit work have you've done that is relevant to them? What do you see as our biggest challenges? And how has your audit work addressed these challenges?"

George Blackwood used to say that before he met me he didn't know performance auditing from dog poop, but that he learned that it's both good government and good politics. He should know. During his first term, he made Rules and Audit arguably the most powerful committee on the city council. In his second term, he got the mayor to put the audit function under the Finance Committee and appoint him as chair. And Blackwood had a significant positive impact on the financial position of the city through such measures as building up reserve funds and pressuring staff to substantially reduce weaknesses in the city's financial reporting.

Auditing is about trying to determine what reality is and what to do about that reality. That is also the essence of governing in a representative democracy. A newly elected council member or mayor should be as able to articulate what the auditor brings to the table as he or she can articulate what the police chief brings to the table.

Source: governing.com http://www.governing.com/gov-institute/funkhouser/col-elected-official-auditor-govern-effectively.html

MEMBER ANNIVERSARIES

12/18/1995	Leo LaPorte, CGFM
12/02/1996	Annette Eustice, CGFM
12/10/1996	Bobbie Marr, CGFM
12/13/2012	Linda Shepard, CGFM
12/31/1998	Tim Martin

CHAPTER FINANCES

Balance Sheet at October 30, 2012

Assets	
Cash	
Checking Account	$ 4,934.18
Certificate of Deposit	-0-
Accounts Receivable	-0-
Total Assets	$ 4,934.18
Liabilities and Net Assets	
Accounts Payable	$ -0-
Unrestricted Fund Balance	4,934.18
Total Liabilities and Net Assets	$ 4,934.18

CHAPTER EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES

November 14, 2012

CEC Members Present: Karine Akopov, Deb Christopherson, Tom Colosimo, Linda deBourbon, Heather Hammond, Cindy Osga, Susan Saari, Corey Sparks, Karen Stout, Dan Wawiernia, Amy Zimmerman

CEC Members Absent: Charlotte Roper

Meeting was called to order at 12:04 pm. A motion to accept the agenda with changes was seconded and approved.

Minutes: Minutes from the 10/10/2012 CEC meeting were approved by e-mail on 10/17/2012. Susan will take minutes at the January and February CEC meetings as Corey will not be able to attend.

Financials: Dan distributed financial statements for October 2012. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to increase the Public Service budget line by $150 and decrease the Programs budget line by $150. A motion to approve the October financial statements and disbursements of $281.15 was seconded and approved.

Community Service: The next community service event is VITA.

Education: Heather will set up a meeting to discuss the Spring PDC. She will contact Dave Quigley for a list of State accountants. Corey reported on the Becker Education proposal. Becker will sponsor a dinner in January. The dinner will include a speaker with one hour of CPE. Attendees will also get one year of access to Becker's weekly webinars and web based self-study CPE materials. The chapter will be responsible for registration. A motion was made, seconded, and approved to accept Becker proposal.

Program Luncheons: Eighteen people signed up for the November luncheon. Karen contacted SAAABA about the joint luncheon meeting. Still need May topic and speaker.

Awards: Karine has begun the process of gathering names to send award nomination invitations to.

Membership/Outreach: The October and November newsletters were posted on the website.

Website: Linda continues to work on cleaning up the website. Corey contacted Affiniscape. They are doing some research and will get back with him.

CGFM: Ethics Audio Conference scheduled for December 12.

Meeting adjourned at 1:03 pm.

Posted by Jack Gates on September 27, 2012 at 2:21pm

The Hot Dog Stand – Customer Service?

At the game I went to the concession stand for some snacks and drinks, to be greeted by a long, slow-moving line. While the second quarter evaporated and the line inched forward, I looked at the hot dog stand operators to see why there was such a delay.

Here are some highlights:

- 8 enthusiastic people – 5 at the counter and 3 doing prep in the back
- the counter folks reminded by of a demolition derby, bumping each other and constantly crossing paths
- the preparation folks were paying no attention – standing and talking
- supplies (napkins, plasticware, cardboard trays) were on the right end of the counter but condiments were on the left end
- the menu and prices were on a banner on the back wall of the stand
  finally, the line was amorphous and confused, people lined up on a server but some also thought it was the next available server

If a transaction takes an average of 4 minutes from order to payment per customer per server, a back-of-the-envelope calculation of service capacity is about 75 per customers per hour. A person joining the end of this line at its peak can expect about an hour before heading back to the seat, partially due to the absence of training and flow.

From this experience, I saw general guidelines for improving customer service, based on the pinch points and frustrations of the patrons at the hot dog stand. Consider these five items (the examples tie back to my quest of food and beverages):

- **inform the customers what you expect from them** – in our example, how to navigate the line was unclear and the menu and prices were not visible until at the counter
- **design flow for efficiency** – the servers bounced around to fulfill orders and customers had to cross the line and go to two locations for supplies and condiments
- **train staff on roles and assignments** – servers were swamped while preparers ignored the chaos while chatting – alternative roles for all staff are required for peak demand periods
- **manage customer perceptions** – customers get angry while waiting when they see staff standing around –regardless of the reason
- **create as positive an experience as possible while addressing the customers' needs** – smile, be upbeat when serving the customer and remain focused on the customers' need, NOT why it can't be done.

It is not unusual to be too close to this issue to see the gaps and over-servicing areas clearly in your customer service operation – and an outside advisor will review and assess how things are actually done, not influenced by how insiders *think* things are being done.

Customers want to be heard and receive accurate, timely answers to their questions or concerns. Preferences aside, there are several channels to reach the customer – web site information, interactive topic search, Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), employee blogging, telephone tree with simple questions answered by automated systems with an opt out for a real person who can do more than simply red the same web site screen to the caller. For the complex problems, one-on-one service by phone, in person, or by video call gets satisfying results.

The best approach to customer service is to put yourself in the customer's shoes and proceed the way YOU would like to be served.

Don't come to the game hungry is NOT a solution to the hot dog stand problem, even though may see the second quarter.

Your thoughts?

The Mark of Excellence in Federal, State, and Local Government

Requirements to Maintain Your Certification

All active CGFMs are required to complete at least 80 hours of continuing professional education (CPE) every two years in government financial management topics or related technical subjects. The 80 CPE hours must be completed within the CGFM's two year CPE cycle.

CGFMs do not need to submit supporting documentation of the CPE hours at the time of renewal. The payment itself serves as the CGFMs affirmation of his or her compliance with the CPE requirements.

CGFMs are required to maintain supporting documentation on CPE hours earned for a minimum of three years and provide it to AGA upon request. This documentation may be requested by AGA as part of the annual audit of a random sample of CGFMs.

Waiver or extensions on earning CPE hours are granted on an individual case basis. All requests for waivers must be submitted in writing to the National AGA's Office of Professional Certification no later than April 30 in the year following the end of the two-year CPE cycle.

To learn more about the CGFM certification visit the agacgfm.org.

Chapter Educational Events

~~**September 19, 2012**~~
~~**Professional Development Conference**~~
~~The Changing Environment in the Government Accountability Community~~
~~Library of Michigan~~
~~4 hours CPE~~

~~**October 23, 2012**~~
~~**Monthly Luncheon Meeting**~~
~~Doing More with Less – Paul Artale~~
~~Capitol View Building~~
~~1 hour CPE~~

~~**November 13, 2012**~~
~~**Monthly Luncheon Meeting**~~
~~Effective Business Speaking – Jack Pyle~~
~~Capitol View Building~~
~~1 hour CPE~~

December 12, 2012
Audio Conference
Just Ethics
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

January 9, 2013
Audio Conference
Government Financial Management
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

January 15, 2013
Monthly Luncheon Meeting
Tax Update (joint with SAAABA)
Capitol View Building
1 hour CPE

February 6, 2013
Audio Conference
Fraud Prevention
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

February 19, 2013
Monthly Luncheon Meeting
Strategic Planning – Berri Meyers
Capitol View Building
1 hour CPE

You can register for all chapter events at www.aga-lansing.org. Click on events.

Check the chapter website and newsletter for updated educational opportunities.

February 27, 2013
Audio Conference
Internal Controls
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

March 13, 2013
Audio Conference
Government Financial Management
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

March 26, 2013
Professional Development Conference
Government Accountability Topics
LCC West Campus
8 hours CPE

April 17, 2013
Audio Conference
Internal Controls
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

April 23, 2013
Monthly Luncheon Meeting
The State Budget – John Nixon
Capitol View Building
1 hour CPE

May 21, 2013
Monthly Luncheon Meeting
To Be Announced
Capitol View Building
1 hour CPE

May 22, 2013
Audio Conference
Ethics
Constitution Hall
2 hours CPE

OTHER EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

West Michigan AGA

To register for events visit
www.agawestmichigan.org/home/events

December 20, 2012
Michigan's Economic Vitality Incentive Program
City of Holland
1 hour CPE

January 23, 2013
Governmental Accounting Training Series Level 2
Rehmann Group Office, Grand Rapids Michigan
8 hours CPE

January 29, 2013
Governmental GAAP Update
Webinar
1 hour CPE

April 24, 2013
Governmental Accounting Training Series Level 3
Rehmann Group Office, Grand Rapids Michigan
8 hours CPE

National AGA

To register for events visit
www.agacgfm.org

February 12-13, 2013
Ronald Regan Building and
International Trade Center
Washington, D.C.
14 hours CPE

Western Michigan Chapter ISACA

To register for events visit
http://www.isaca.org/chapters2/Western-Michigan/events/Pages/Calendar.aspx

January 17, 2012
Chapter Meeting
Kalamazoo

March 21, 2013
Winter Seminar
Grand Rapids

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