New Board Members Ready for Leadership Roles

Following the December election, MMRMA welcomes two new Board members, Fabian Knizacky and Kathy Revels, each of whom has a track record of distinguished service to MMRMA. Please join us in congratulating them and wishing them well in this new endeavor.

“I look forward to working with the Board, committees, staff and members to enhance MMRMA’s national reputation as a leader in governmental pooling. Together, we can continue to exchange ideas and provide outstanding services to MMRMA members.”

Fabian Knizacky
Mason County administrator since 1994, Fabian Knizacky has been the county’s MMRMA member representative since 1997. He has served on the MMRMA Finance Committee for more than ten years and has been a valuable and trusted voice in managing MMRMA’s investments.

Fabian says the county’s membership in MMRMA has had many benefits, citing MMRMA’s Risk Avoidance Program (RAP) grants, jail staff training, sample policies and ordinances, and distribution of excess net assets.

Joining the Board of Directors, he says, will enable him to “give more to MMRMA, and I look forward to working with the Board of Directors, committees, staff...”

“That way, I learn from others while offering my own input.”

The Board’s successes in achieving MMRMA’s sound financial base and supporting strong risk prevention programs have earned Kathy’s admiration.

“If MMRMA’s founders hadn’t been willing to think outside the box, this organization wouldn’t exist today.”

Kathy Revels
A City of Mason employee since 1994, Kathy Revels has worked in finance, insurance, and risk management, and currently serves as the city’s finance director and treasurer. Before election to the MMRMA Board, she served on the State Pool Board and was chairperson of the State Pool Committee.

“I believe we learn by doing, and I ran for the Board of Directors because I seek involvement in organizations that affect the well-being of my municipality,” she says.

“In a dynamic world, leaders should always be looking for a better way of doing what they do,” she says. “If MMRMA’s founders hadn’t been willing to think outside the box in the 1980s, this organization wouldn’t exist today.”

Kathy looks forward to bringing her creative ideas and insights to the table as a member of the Board of Directors and, in her own way, advancing MMRMA’s tradition of excellence.
IN THE DECEMBER 2008 issue of the Risk Journal, I acknowledged and thanked outgoing Board members Cindy King, Leonard Peters, and Tom Yack. Following the 2008 Board election, Mike Welsch has ended his service to the Board of Directors, and it’s my pleasure to recognize his many years of service and dedication to MMRMA.

Mike was appointed in 2002 to fill an unexpired term created by the death of Bruce Seymore. In 2004, Mike was elected to a full four-year term; he has also held the office of Board secretary since 2005. Prior to his service on the Board of Directors, Mike participated in many MMRMA activities. In 1994, he began his term on the State Pool Board and later served as its chair for four years.

In 2007, Mike retired from Iosco County after 38 years of service: 19 as county clerk, 4 as the 81st District Court administrator and probation officer, and 15 with the Sheriff’s department in various capacities, including jailer, marine deputy, detective, detective sergeant and undersheriff. He now sits on the board of directors of AuSable Valley Community Mental Health, where he has served since 2006.

Mike Welsch has been active with MMRMA since 1994, serving as a member and chairperson of the State Pool Board, and as a MMRMA Board member, most recently as secretary.

This lighthouse guards Tawas Bay in Iosco County, where Mike Welsch retired after 38 years of service in many capacities.

On behalf of the membership, I extend our sincere thanks to Mike for many years of tireless service to MMRMA, both on the Board of Directors and beyond. He has been instrumental in many of MMRMA’s most significant successes and will continue to contribute his experience and perspectives to MMRMA. He will remain on the Events Planning Committee, of which he has been a member since its inception in 2006. All of us at MMRMA look forward to working with Mike well into the future.

Standing Committee Vacancies

Due to the Board election results and other changes, there are several vacancies on MMRMA’s standing committees. The vacancies will be announced on our website, www.mmrma.org, and by mail to member representatives. If you are interested in being considered for appointment to the State Pool Committee (two vacancies), the Finance Committee or the Membership Committee, please see the vacancy announcements and submit a letter of interest to Michael Rhyner at the MMRMA office by February 16, 2009. If you have questions about the committees, please contact Michael Rhyner at 734 245-7730 or mrhyner@mmrma.org.
Driving Down Vehicle Claim Costs

HISTORICALLY, accidents involving vehicles are the number one cause of claims for MMRMA members. Thankfully, most accidents result in property damage but not injuries. However, when vehicle downtime, reduced employee productivity, report filing and claims paperwork, and the cost of deductibles are taken into account, monetary losses add up quickly.

For example, if your municipality has 10 accidents a year, each with a $1,000 deductible, your budget will be $10,000 lighter—not including other associated costs and service interruptions.

MMRMA has developed a significant collection of programs and policies to minimize these risks and maximize savings. The following publications and recommendations are available from the Risk Control Department and can be accessed online at www.mmrma.org by clicking on the link “Online Services.”

You will be asked for your user name. If you don’t have one, click on “Request Login.”

Best Practices Volume 1 contains a Driver’s Recertification Program for use in remedial driver training of law enforcement officers.

Distracted Driving outlines a multitude of practices to minimize vehicle accidents, including policies to restrict or prohibit cell phone use, text messaging, smoking, eating and drinking, reading, note-taking, and use of pagers or signaling devices while driving.

Driver Selection includes a Safe Driver Program, which mandates that employees who drive municipally owned vehicles must have a valid driver’s license, maintain necessary certifications, report the use of medications that may affect driving, and follow an approved vehicle inspection process before driving.

The brochure also recommends that municipalities implement the Michigan Secretary of State’s Driving Record Subscription Service, which notifies a municipality of any changes to an employee’s driving record or license status. To request the forms to enroll in the program, send an email with your municipality’s address, contact person’s phone, fax and email address to: CommercialServices@michigan.gov.

You can also mail this information to: Michigan Department of State Bureau of Driver and Vehicle Records, Attn: Commercial Services Section 7064 Crowner Drive Lansing, MI 48918

Vehicular Emergency Response includes sample policies and recommendations for operating emergency vehicles and minimizing their inherent roadway dangers.

MMRMA recommends adopting and implementing all of these practices as applicable. Combined with a sound vehicle care and maintenance program, these guidelines can help communities protect their employees and citizens and minimize the cost of vehicle mishaps.

Contact your Risk Control Consultant for assistance in developing and implementing a program in your community. The effort will more than pay for itself!
AS MMRMA MEMBERS are certainly aware, energy prices have become very volatile in recent years. Not that long ago, utility companies charged their customers a stable, predictable price for the foreseeable future.

Today, most Michigan utilities have adopted a variable pricing structure that allows them to adjust their pricing monthly, “based upon future events.” As a result, your local utility company offers neither price stability nor predictability.

In fall 2008, Detroit Edison and Consumers Energy made headlines when they proposed sweeping changes before the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC), which were approved. The changes gave utilities more control over their rate structures, imposed tighter restrictions on allowed deregulation of natural gas and electricity, subjected customers to future price adjustments, and restricted their ability to buy on the open market.

Despite these changes, there are still some choices in alternative suppliers. MMRMA’s Energy Choice Program (ECP) offers members potential savings on both their electric and natural gas needs. It can allow municipalities to lock in a price for a predetermined timeframe and stabilize their energy budgets for the upcoming fiscal year(s). Having a fixed, competitive energy cost can be invaluable as energy prices are sure to continue their inevitable rise.

MMRMA has partnered with Summit Energy Service on ECP, which gives members a way to take advantage of group purchasing, bill review, consolidated billing, consumption histories, and many other services.

To learn more about ECP or to request an electric/gas price evaluation, please contact Jan Rogers, Summit Energy Service, at 888-345-0440, ext. 26, or jan.rogers@summitenergy.com.