by Michael Rhyner, Executive Director

I AM HAPPY TO REPORT that the feedback from members who attended our recent Annual Meeting has been very positive. Overall attendance was similar to prior years, with a strong increase in first-time attendees.

We are seeing a growing transition in leadership among our membership as many of our longstanding member representatives retire. It is gratifying to watch the next generation of leaders learn about the many benefits of MMRMA membership.

The theme of this year’s meeting was MMRMA: A Trusted Guide. As you know, the challenges facing Michigan’s public entities are more daunting than ever. Our ongoing aim is to serve the role of your “trusted guide,” helping you navigate an ever-changing and complex landscape from a risk management standpoint.

The Annual Meeting gives us the opportunity to demonstrate how we do just that, and this year’s program offered outstanding informational and training content as well as the chance to network with peers.

The training in August, as always, emphasized leadership, governance, and personal and professional development. This year’s featured trainers were Giovanni Livera, Mark Adamshick, and Kathleen Alessandro.

Secret of the 12 Chimes
Giovanni Livera delivered his uplifting message— the art of the possible— using magic and illusions. He showed his audience how, in the face of adversity, the ability to stay positive can deliver remarkable results.

Livera presented techniques to better manage time, improve the quality of our experiences, and excel in personal development using his “Secret of the 12 Chimes” approach.

Each chime corresponds to one of the numbers on a clock, and each one signifies a different facet of our lives for which we must take time. For each chime, participants rated themselves on related affirmations to determine how effectively they were realizing its benefits.

How well do you rate on the 12 Chimes?

1. Time for yourself: Take personal time, invest in your health, and manage stress.
2. Time to be positive: Choose a positive attitude, see the potential in others, and recognize the possibilities in negative situations.
3. Time to give: Help others via time, talents, and material treasures and measure success by what you give.
4. Time for relationships: Love yourself, invest quality time with loved ones, develop spirituality, and approach everyone you meet with love in your heart.
5. Time to learn: Seek knowledge, learn from mistakes, improve processes, and teach what you know.
6. Time in the moment: Appreciate the simple pleasures of daily living, act on the most important things first, give people your full attention, and practice patience.
7. Time to dream: Believe in your potential to be greater, define your goals in writing and set deadlines for them, take action on your goals daily, and realize your dreams.

Devoting time to each of 12 important areas of your life—what Livera calls the 12 Chimes—will return tremendous personal benefits.

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Prevention is the Key to Effective Municipal Risk Control

By Al Smolen, Risk Control Consultant

THE TIME-TESTED ADAGE, “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” holds true for most of the risks we face on a daily basis. It not only applies to our personal well-being, but also to the health of our municipal work environments and the effectiveness of our risk control efforts.

MMRMA has always championed risk control measures as sound means of protection for our membership. Each member can benefit from the many resources of MMRMA’s Risk Control Department, including model policies and procedures, site visits, safety audits, and real-world risk control measures developed by the member-driven Risk Control Advisory Committees.

By adopting a holistic approach to safety for employees, visitors to municipal facilities, and the greater community, members enjoy a safer and more efficient environment while reducing the costs associated with injuries, mechanical failures, and possible litigation.

Following are four positive actions you can take to avoid problems, increase safety, and minimize unexpected costs.

1. Form a Safety and Accident Review Committee to evaluate accidents and “near misses,” develop policies and procedures, and perform facility inspections. When was the last time you had your own Building Inspector and/or Fire Marshal inspect your facilities? They are experts in their fields and can spot potential problems. By touring your facilities, potential accidents and business interruptions can be averted.

2. Request a visit from an MMRMA Risk Control Consultant. They possess the necessary knowledge and resources to conduct an assessment on virtually all of a municipality’s services and facilities.

3. Adopt policies and operational procedures that protect citizens and employees while allowing municipal services to be provided safely and efficiently.

4. Apply for an MMRMA Risk Avoidance Program (RAP) grant to help offset the costs of providing risk control measures. An example of one of MMRMA’s Standard RAP grants available to Fire and EMS agencies is for bariatric lifting chairs. Such devices not only help stabilize a patient and protect them from further harm during the transport process, they also help protect the emergency workers from lifting injuries that can occur.

As always, Michigan Municipal Risk Management Authority is eager to assist our members as they serve their residents by responding to their needs for safety, security, recreation, and quality governmental functions.

What is a Standard RAP Grant?

Based on 15 years of grant history—a total of 2,122 applications have been reviewed since 1997—MMRMA’s Membership Committee has established a set of guidelines and funding amounts for the most commonly requested risk control programs.

While the standard grant list does not guarantee funding nor restrict RAP grants to those listed, it guides members in structuring their requests. Most grants are awarded on a 50/50 cost-sharing basis, with aggregate limits, and some are subject to the review and recommendations of the Risk Control Department. For specific information, contact Cara Kowal at 734 513-0300 or ckowal@mmrma.org.
By Michael Ellis
Director of Claims

NEW MINIATURIZED video camera technology has many exciting applications, but it can be a double-edged sword when it comes to claims and litigation.

Police Videos Limit Claims
On one hand, law enforcement agencies see the benefits of video showing the behavior of a person who later complains of excessive force. In fact, Taser® manufacturers are adding a video feature: A small camera mounted onto the device captures what the officer saw just before deployment. Another company offers a camera gadget the size of a ballpoint pen that fits in the officer's shirt pocket. Recording actual events can reduce the value of claims based on the officer's alleged behavior.

Miniaturized recorders are the offspring of in-car cameras. Although the exciting action often seemed to take place just off screen, the camera now moves with the participants, potentially capturing much more detail.

The value of these new technologies has been shown repeatedly in dealing with citizen complaints and claims of excessive force. The video captures what actually happened, rather than leaving it open to interpretation and embellishment.

There is no questioning the benefit of videos of civilians’ actions being recorded by law enforcement.

Citizen Activists’ New Tool
The flip side of this technology is videos of law enforcement officers’ actions recorded by civilians. According to legal historians, the case of Rodney King marks the beginning of this phenomenon. George Holliday saw police arresting Rodney King, grabbed a video camera, and filmed the action. His footage became the focal point for public outrage surrounding King's arrest and the subsequent trial. Holliday became nearly as famous as Abraham Zapruder.

For readers too young to recognize that name, Zapruder was a Dallas businessman with a downtown office who used his new camera to videotape a presidential motorcade through his window and inadvertently captured Kennedy's assassination.

Such a situation, in which an event is unintentionally captured on video, is not what’s happening today. Rather, we are seeing a dramatic increase in bystanders actively and intentionally capturing law enforcement activity on video.

Video activism seems linked to the rising trend of blogging. Citizens are no longer content to passively read the news—they now want to create it. In the past, only experienced news photographers rushed to the scene of an incident. Now, bystanders pull out their cell phones and record at will.

Court Affirms Right to Record
This has raised questions about citizens’ right to record. Recent court decisions support this new and novel right. Attorney Simon Glik made a video of several police officers arresting a young man in Boston Common. The subsequent confrontation between Glik and the officers led to a lawsuit. In deciding Glik v Cunniffe, the 1st U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Boston ruled that “the First Amendment protects the filming of government officials in public spaces.”

The same public sentiment that led to the Open Meetings Act and the Freedom of Information Act seems to be driving this issue, and the courts are finding the logic to support it.

MMRMA is also handling several cases in which the right to record is being claimed by the arrested party. As the officers try to take the subject into custody, the subject, in turn, attempts to make a video of the entire process. All that is really achieved is a prolonged and escalated struggle.

Soon, everyone at the scene of an arrest will be recording everyone else. It reminds me of a wedding reception I once attended where the guests were given disposable cameras and asked to take photos. We then left the cameras for the bride’s and groom’s parents to develop. I later asked how the photos turned out and learned that the result was a lot of expensive photographs of “people taking pictures.”

We hope that, as MMRMA member officers find themselves on both sides of the lens, the recordings will lead to lower costs and better outcomes.
How well do you rate on the 12 Chimes?

8. Time to play: See the humor in everyday situations, laugh easily at yourself, share enthusiasm with others, and make time to have fun every day.

9. Time to work: Build your talents, finish what you start, make good decisions with your money, and have a passion for your work.

10. Time to forgive: Ask others for forgiveness and extend it to those who have hurt you, forgive youself for past failures, and move on after an act of forgiveness.

11. Time to be brave: Face life’s challenges with courage, make the right decisions in difficult situations, venture into healthy new experiences, and don’t be afraid to make mistakes.

12. Time to reset: Rebound quickly after failures and begin again, set new aspirations quickly after successes rather than resting on your laurels, make sure to get enough sleep and rest, and cherish each day.

Armed with these 12 tools, Livera said, you can begin to actively shape your life experiences and live each day to its very fullest.

Measuring Performance with an Ethical Yardstick

Mark Adamshick, a retired naval officer and current instructor at West Point, discussed the important topic of ethics. Adamshick highlighted the ways in which poor ethics can be toxic in organizations. His message focused on a hierarchy of behavior to illustrate the importance of a strong code of conduct. Using these techniques helps us measure our experiences, decisions, and actions in relationship to an ethical yardstick.

Adamshick also provided a list of seemingly positive traits such as pride, and explained that there is a proper amount of each but that either a deficiency or an excess of these traits could lead to difficult situations.

His handouts on these traits and the process of ethical decision-making are available on our website, mmrma.org, for member employees who have a user login. Go to the Members Only page to find handouts in the Workshop Materials dropdown folder.

Time to Get Organized

Kathleen Alessandro presented a set of practical techniques we can all use to better manage our time by staying organized. She demonstrated several computer software applications and web-based filing systems, including Xobni and Paper Tiger. In addition, she provided tips on daily work flow, office organization, and time management. Alessandro’s presentation materials are available on MMRMA’s website.

All training sessions gave attendees innovative tools for becoming better leaders, managers, and decision-makers. We believe that well-trained individuals improve the quality of leadership, management, and governance in our municipalities. And it’s a proven fact that well-run, well-governed municipalities generate fewer claims, which in turn saves money for both MMRMA and its members.