

CONNECTIONS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2009

THE FIRST WORD

NAVIGATING IN A SEA OF CHANGE

This year, when the planning committee selected a theme for Mennonite Health Assembly, we anticipated change ahead. The U.S. economy was already shaky, and health-care reform efforts had

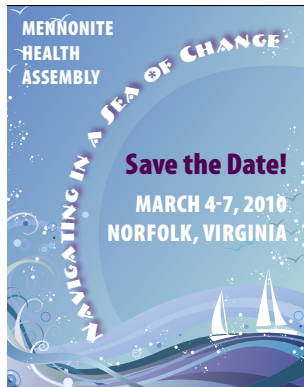
shifted into high gear. So we planned a program to address how we navigate when the environment is undergoing a sea change.

Keynote speaker Leonard Sweet will describe cultural changes that challenge people of faith. Dave Brubaker from Eastern Mennonite University will help us explore our

responses to these challenges. Tammy Alexander, from Mennonite Central Committee's Washington Office, will give an up-to-the minute report on health-care reform.

A special track for board members will include a keynote address by Jill Schumann, CEO of Lutheran Services in America, on "Governing in Turbulent Times." Board members can also choose to hear panel discussions on pertinent issues and attend practical workshops.

Come to Norfolk, Va., March 4-7, 2010, for valuable insights and the chance to explore them with trusted colleagues and new friends. Download an assembly registration booklet and register online at www.mhsonline.org. For a discount, register by Jan. 22. Registration books will not be mailed.



Mim Shirk
Vice President

PEER CONSULTATION: SEEING OURSELVES AS OTHERS SEE US

"O would some Power the small gift give us / To see ourselves as others see us!" wrote the Scottish poet Robert Burns. MHS Alliance member organizations can avail themselves of just such an opportunity by engaging in a formal peer consultation. Fairmount Homes Retirement Community, Ephrata, Pa., did just that and is reaping the benefits several years later.

Jerry D. Lile, Fairmount president and CEO, noted, "After 38 years of existence, the board and administration wanted to ensure the mission and values were still being carried out. MHS Alliance offered three individuals from different organizations to come on campus for two days and interview department leaders.



Jerry D. Lile

Lile continued, "Fairmount received a detailed report outlining the team's observations and recommendations, which were then shared with department team leaders, the board, and executive team. The peer reviewers identified some concerns, but they also identified an overall caring and compassionate environment. They also observed a strong commitment among the staff and leaders to the mission and core values of the organization."

The peer review team leader was Ron Sawatsky, CEO of Rockhill Mennonite Community, Sellersville, Pa. He recalled, "We spent two days interviewing staff, board members, and residents. Earlier, we had received (and read!) the past year's board minutes, financial statements, and management reports. On



Ron Sawatsky

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“A peer consultation is a highly intensive engagement. This process provides the recipient organization with a fairly non-threatening interaction with peers in similar organizations.”

—Curt Stutzman

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site, the team also spent time together reflecting on our observations.”

Toward the end of the visit, Sawatsky said the team selected 12 of the recommendations most germane to the managers and shared these orally in a group session. He also spent additional time with the Fairmount CEO in reviewing all of the team’s recommendations. Rick Stiffney, MHS Alliance president, also received a report and had follow-up consultation with the Fairmount board and CEO.

Theo Omo, the CEO of Thurston Woods Village, Sturgis, Mich., and a member of the team, focused on evaluating the nursing center. She remembers being “impressed with the thorough research done by MHS Alliance prior to their asking for our expertise. Each organization considering a review needs to weigh the process and the impact it could have on its operation.”



Theo Omo

The third member of the team was Curt Stutzman, chief financial officer at Virginia Mennonite Retirement Community, Harrisonburg. He noted, “A peer consultation is a highly intensive engagement on the part of the peer volunteers. This process provides the recipient organization with a fairly non-threatening interaction with peers in similar organizations. There are opportunities for testing ideas, gaining different perspectives, and developing peer relationships which could be of mutual benefit in the future.”



Curt Stutzman

As for the impact on Fairmount, Lile said the board and executive team met together to develop an action plan to implement most of the team’s recommendations. For example, one recommendation was to improve communication throughout the organization. So a communication plan was developed along with a emphasis on ways to increase trust throughout the organization. Eventually, these recommendations became a guide for the organization’s long-range strategic plan.

“I have seen the positive outcomes,” Lile concluded. “The peer team could identify with our challenges because they are in similar organizations. It is always helpful to have an outside perspective!” Just as Robert Burns foretold in 1786.

VALUES-BASED LEADERSHIP PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS REFLECT ON ITS BENEFITS

The Values-Based Leadership Program will celebrate the end of its eighth class when 34 leaders and their teachers gather in Laurelville, Pa., Feb. 23-25, 2010.



J. Nelson Kling

Three past and current participants provide snapshot assessments:

J. Nelson Kling, president of Mennonite Home Communities, Lancaster, Pa., has encouraged all members of his administrative team to participate. He sees these benefits: the networking with peers in other values-based organizations, a helpful personality profile exercise, and the emphasis on understanding the spiritual framework of his team's

faith-based organization. He said, "The program has the ability to keep organizations such as Mennonite Home connected to our mission and faith based principles. This connection is vital as we train new leaders."

Aundrea Leonard, chief operations officer at Rockhill Mennonite Community, Sellersville, Pa., graduated from the program. She said, "It was a worthwhile journey. I most

enjoyed how interactive the sessions were and had the opportunity to work with every individual in the class. I learned much about the values of the Mennonite community and how to apply them in my leadership practices."



Aundrea Leonard

Jennifer Hayes, vice president for marketing and development at



Jennifer Hayes

Greencroft Communities, Goshen, Ind., is a current participant. She said, "I came away from the first session with a deeper understanding of what leadership really means – specifically, as it pertains to understanding how my style may conflict with someone else's." Also, she has started meeting monthly with a leadership coach and is formulating a long-term leadership development plan.

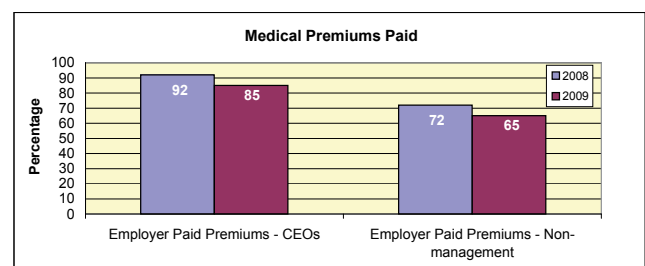
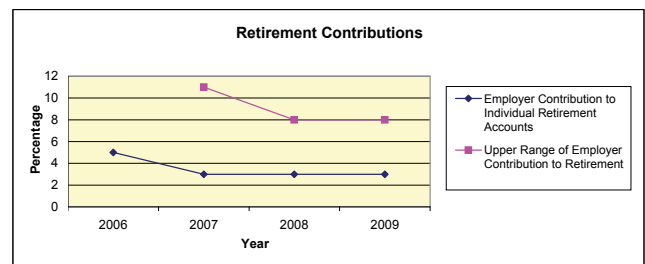
The next Values-Based Leadership Program class will convene Sept. 14-16, 2010, and Feb. 15-17, 2011. More information is available at www.laurelville.org/VBLP/.

EMPLOYERS' CONTRIBUTIONS TO BENEFITS DECLINE IN 2009

MHS Alliance has completed its 2009 salary and benefits survey, and the following significant trends related to benefits were noted for this year:

- From 2008 to 2009, the amount of premium that employers pay for family health insurance dropped from 92 percent to 85 percent for CEOs and from 72 percent to 65 percent for non-management staff.
- The median employer contribution to individual retirement accounts dropped from 5 percent in 2003 to 3 percent in 2007 and has remained at that level.
- The upper range of employer contribution to retirement dropped from 11 percent in 2007 to 8 percent in 2008 and 2009.

MHS Alliance Vice President Mim Shirk commented, "We are very pleased with the response rate of 64 percent of the membership. We are grateful to everyone who participated. We hope the report will prove to be valuable for the planning of our members."



Participating member organizations received a copy of the full report via e-mail in October.

Organizations that did not participate in the survey may receive a copy of the report for \$50 before Dec. 31 or \$100 after Jan. 1. Send an e-mail message to emily@mhsonline.org.

MEMBER NEWS



The new executive director at **United Zion Retirement**

Community, Lititz, Pa., is Philip Burkholder. His contact information follows: telephone, 717-626-2071; e-mail, pburkholder@uzrc.org.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

MHS Alliance Board Teleconference
Nov. 6, 1-4 p.m. (EST)

Peace Church Dinner
Nov. 8 (AAHSA)
Chicago, Ill.

Safety Officers Network
Nov. 10, 10 a.m. (EST)
Teleconference

Mental Health Council
Nov. 12-14
Newton, Kan.

Development and Marketing Networks Social Media Webinar
Nov. 18, 3 p.m. (EST)

PCRRG Annual Meeting
Dec. 3-4
Baltimore, Md.

Values-based Leadership Program Session II
Feb. 23-25, 2010
Laurelville, Pa.

Mennonite Health Assembly
March 4-7, 2010
Norfolk, Va.

Connect your faith to the health-care policy debate. For suggestions on action steps, see <http://peace.mennolink.org/resources/healthcare/>.



234 South Main Street • Suite 1
Goshen, Indiana 46526
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THE LAST WORD

Lots of theories address the topic of excellence in governance, but very few studies examine the relationship between board practices and organizational outputs. The key question is this one: Are certain board practices correlated with positive organizational results?

A recent study of the governing boards of nearly 100 non-profit community health systems offers some fascinating insights. The organizations analyzed were acute care-based, multi-service line, community-focused health systems – admittedly somewhat different from MHS Alliance member organizations.

I was most intrigued with this finding: The research demonstrates a very positive correlation between top-flight organizational performance and the role played by their governing boards. The best organizations have boards that regularly monitor organizational performance and pay careful attention to an organization's ongoing growth and development.

Mennonite Health Assembly offers board chairs, board members, and CEOs an excellent opportunity to sharpen their understanding of the relationship between board leadership and outstanding organizations. The program for Mennonite Health Assembly in Norfolk, Va., March 4-7, 2010, will offer a particularly rich range of workshops for board members that will be led by talented and experienced presenters.

I encourage you to take a concrete step to improve your board's leadership and your organization's performance by making a commitment now to be well represented at the 2010 Mennonite Health Assembly.

Rick Stiffney, President and CEO

