

CONNECTIONS

MAY/JUNE 2008

THE FIRST WORD

In this issue of *Connections*, we're featuring the events of the recent Mennonite Health Assembly, which took place in St. Louis, March 27-30. This year, Assembly did something new, by meeting together with American Baptist Homes and Caring Ministries (ABHCM). The theme of the event was Communities of Healing and Hope.

With the best attendance in recent years, 406 participants were at the conference, and all received valuable tools and information to revitalize their work in caring for others. Keynote speakers spoke about how our actions affect others, while MHS Alliance consultants presented workshops and provided tools to promote sound leadership. A wide variety of workshop topics were specially designed toward all types of interests, from board members and leaders to providers of aging, mental health and developmental disabilities services.

All in all, it was an exciting weekend filled with a wealth of practical information, great worship, and plenty of networking opportunities. You'll read about just a few of the many highlights in this issue, including a report on the Alliance's Annual Business Meeting.

If you've never attended the Assembly, we encourage you to consider doing so next year. For those of you who were in St. Louis with us, we hope you've returned to your work with enthusiasm and renewed energy — just as we have!

Mim Shirk
Vice President



LEARNING LEADERSHIP AT '08 ASSEMBLY

This year a predominant theme of the Mennonite Health Assembly workshops was that of building and implementing effective leadership strategies. More specifically, many included discussion of integrating faith- and values-based initiatives — a topic our members have said is currently a key concern.

Resilience, Leadership and Assessment

Hope Witmer, Philhaven's Director of Services to Business and Industry, presented one of the many valuable workshops. Witmer talked about resilience — an organization's ability to deal with unexpected challenges over time — as an integral part of surviving in today's marketplace. "The world is becoming turbulent faster than agencies are becoming resilient," Witmer said, emphasizing the importance of successful planning.

In "Leading from the Inside Out," John Hendrickson, CEO of Frederick Mennonite Community, and Lee Schmucker, an MHS Alliance consultant, presented ways in which leadership works best. Summarizing the strategy, Hendrickson and Schmucker taught that employees don't willingly follow positions or hierarchies; they follow people who are strongly engaged in a process, and who have set a clear vision and goal.

Kirk Stiffney, MHS Alliance consultant, teamed up with Jessie Kaye, President/CEO, Prairie View, and Ron Sawatsky, President/CEO, Rockhill Mennonite Community, for a presentation on Executive Performance Assessment. They shared a comprehensive outline on structure, procedures and principles of the evaluation process. They emphasized ways in which evaluations play a key role in an organization's vitality, by helping to define and maintain an agency's well-being.

Meanwhile, Dennis Russell, CEO, and Peggy Hanson, Director of Human Resources, both of Friendsview

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Hope Witmer



John Hendrickson
Lee Schmucker

MHS ALLIANCE ANNUAL BUSINESS MEETING

The annual business meeting for MHS Alliance was held as part of the Mennonite Health Assembly in St. Louis. Ninety people attended, representing 41 member organizations. The session included the approval of last year's minutes, budget report and progress reports. Jay Shetler, treasurer, reported that the Alliance had exceeded budget goals for the prior year and indicated that "all pieces are in place for long-term strength."

Discussion on values in service Much discussion revolved around integration of Anabaptist values into health and human service organizations. As a part of this process, Tim Stair of Alliance staff had previously requested input from members. Of the 48 who responded, 75% specifically expressed the importance of community, mutuality and service, human dignity, care of the spirit, and ethical practices. Less than 45% of the respondents mentioned justice for the vulnerable, peace and reconciliation, and stewardship of God's gifts. After small group discussions about this input from members, a timeline was set for the development of an Alliance resource kit to help guide member organizations in demonstrating Anabaptist values.

"I am learning a lot of information in the workshops but, more important, I am meeting a lot of people. This will enrich my life."

— Angel Rivera-Berrios, Cayey, Puerto Rico

Survey recap and future plans

Rick Stiffney recapped the results of a 2007 survey of Alliance members, which showed "high satisfaction" with Alliance services. Administrative issues that were of key concern to CEOs included:

- ◆ Staff recruitment and retention
- ◆ Financial sustainability
- ◆ Succession planning/leadership development
- ◆ Maintaining commitment to faith and values

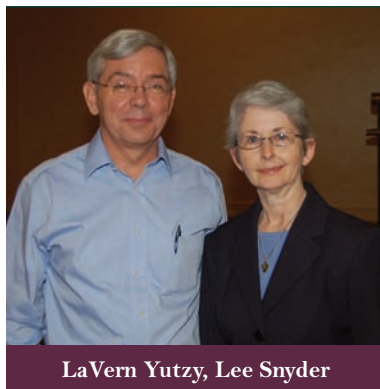
With that in mind, the Alliance is continuing its efforts to develop new programs and services to address these issues. Upcoming benefits were introduced, including:

- ◆ Property insurance
- ◆ Auto insurance
- ◆ A Collage Program for senior services providers, with processes to assess and enhance the comprehensive wellness of residents

Additionally, the following programs were announced as being in planning and research phases:

- ◆ Executive small group meeting series, with the goals of cultivating support, providing learning and coaching opportunities, and facilitating networking
- ◆ Collaborative investment management

Meanwhile, it was reported that a collaborative financing program will not be implemented, because research showed that the costs exceed the benefits.



LaVern Yutzy, Lee Snyder

CHANGES TO THE MHS ALLIANCE BOARD

At our annual business meeting, MHS Alliance officially completed the following changes to our Board:

- ◆ LaVern Yutzy resigned from the Board and as Chair, due to his retirement as CEO of Philhaven, Mt. Gretna, Pennsylvania.
- ◆ Lee Snyder, Mennonite Church USA appointee, Harrisonburg, Virginia, agreed to serve as Chair.
- ◆ Two Board members were re-elected: F. Jay Shetler, CEO of Glencroft in Glendale, Arizona, and Linda Peters, CEO of Bethesda Home in Goessel, Kansas.
- ◆ John Goshow, President and CEO of Penn Foundation in Sellersville, Pennsylvania, was newly elected to serve the two remaining years of Yutzy's vacancy.

SOCIAL JUSTICE FEATURED IN KEYNOTES

Two keynote speakers at the Assembly discussed issues related to racism and social justice.

In the first presentation, entitled “Caring with a Prophetic Accent,” speaker Hector Cortez, a consultant and former vice president of national programs for Esperanza USA, based his message on Matthew 26: 69-73. The scripture recounts Peter’s denial of his affiliation with Jesus. In the end, Peter’s accent betrays him. The message challenged the audience to think about whether we speak with a prophetic accent, as God intended. Cortez reminded us that “the New Testament never envisioned a church defined by political terms and values.” Rather, it spoke of the church as

one that was a “living, pulsating community grasped by the news that the light of Salvation had come in Jesus Christ.” Unless we speak with a prophetic accent, Cortez said, “we are standing outside the gates” while injustice occurs.

The second keynote presentation featured speaker Glenn “Woody” Dalton, Senior Pastor at Brethren in Christ Church in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Dalton talked more specifically about the racism that still exists in America. He noted that the government is often more visible than the church in making a stand against these issues, reminding us that “the government can only change behavior; it cannot change hearts.” The latter is a challenge for the church.

VARIETY OF TOPICS COVERED AT ASSEMBLY WORKSHOPS

Here’s a quick look at just some of the topics discussed in the 2008 Mennonite Health Assembly workshops:

- Administration and leadership
- Financial management and fundraising
- Care for the caregiver
- Equipping congregations to build a safe place for children
- Integrating Christian values with quality care
- Crisis communication
- Understanding and resolving conflict

“This is a wonderful gathering of Mennonite professionals. Given my locale, it is not a crowd I get to hang out with often, and here I can network with other social workers. This is a unique opportunity for me where I can make new relationships with other Mennonite professionals.”

— Jeanette Harder, Professor of Social Work at Nebraska University at Omaha

MANAGING A COMMUNITY IN CRISIS

This panel discussion was moderated by Emerson Leshner, CEO and president of Messiah Village, Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. Panel members included Kathy Andersen, CEO of Goodwin House; James Harder, President of Bluffton University; and Marilyn Lerch, a former campus pastor at Virginia Tech. All three were pushed into the forefront when death or serious injury severely impacted their respective communities. Discussion focused on ways to embrace faith and leadership when the unexpected happens in staggering proportions.



Emerson Leshner, Marilyn Lerch, Jim Harder, Kathy Andersen in a panel discussion.

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Retirement Community, presented "Promoting Values through Leadership Training." They highlighted the importance of leadership at all staff levels.

Looking for more assistance in these areas?

The Assembly offered a great chance for some MHS Alliance consultants to provide valuable, strategic information to members and non-members alike. For ongoing support beyond the Assembly experience, give us a call. We'll assign one of our experienced consultants to help.



Ron Sawatsky, Jessie Kaye, Kirk Stiffney



STAFF NEWS

Welcome to Deloris Rhodes, who joined the Goshen office in February as administrative assistant!



COMING ATTRACTIONS

Anabaptist Providers Group

Members Meeting May 16, Lititz, PA

Midwest Chaplains May 21, Goshen, IN

Health Assembly Planning Committee

June 13-14, Cleveland, OH

MHS Alliance Board Meeting

June 19-21, Columbus, OH

Midwest Development Network

July 15, Goshen, IN

Plains HR Network July 23, Hesston, KS

Midwest HR Network August 5, Maumee, OH

Values-Based Leadership Program

Sept. 23-25, 2008 and Feb. 24-26, 2009

Laurelville, PA

Mennonite Health Assembly

March 19-22, 2009, Cleveland, OH



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THE LAST WORD

Mennonite Health Assembly is always an exciting time of gathering in fellowship with like-minded people who are working to serve others. This year was certainly no exception — and many of the seminars and workshops emphasized topics that you, our members, have expressed as key concerns — including integrating faith values into your work.

Throughout the weekend, many leaders, caregivers and other industry experts provided their views. Attendees left with an armload of resources and tools to help them stay on a path toward success.

Whether you attended Assembly this year or not, remember that as a member of MHS Alliance, you have access to great resources year-round. From knowledgeable consultants to help you deal with specific situations, to leadership assessment tools, and ongoing services that help guide financial stewardship, we are working to make your work easier.



Thanks to all those who attended Assembly. We trust you found it as valuable and exciting as we did — and we look forward to supporting you in implementing new tools and solutions for your organization.

Rick Stiffney President/CEO