

President's column

By Melanie Mesko Lee, MCMA President, City Administrator, Hastings

I was recently reading the Cal-ICMA article by Frank Benest, "Leadership Lessons from My Teenage Daughter," and the items resonated with me. From the somewhat obvious (pay attention and listen) to those that may be more challenging (don't micromanage; let her solve the problem herself), they were good reminders of many of the things that are helpful to keep in mind.

So, in the spirit of "if one list is good, let's expand on that," I had a conversation with my own little people about their recommendations. Without further ado, a Top 10 list from the perspectives of a 10-, 8-, and 2-year-old.

10. Be curious. We work at asking a lot of questions in our house. This has helped me to continue to know my kiddos as they mature, learn new things, and develop their own strengths. From a work perspective, I try to listen more and talk less. Good outcomes come from being curious and asking good questions.

9. Be my cheerleader. All three kids are in various activities, and it's vitally important that we are there to support them. Not everything goes according to plan, but finding the positive in the situation and learning from it go a long way.

8. Avoid blanket statements. Three kids=three distinct personalities. Lumping my kids (or a department or profession or philosophy) into a catch-all may be easy, but it's generally not overly productive. Each person has a distinct perspective, which can bring value to the conversation.

7. Smiles make me happy. I'm not a morning person, but I've found that a smile in the morning with tired little ones goes a long way for setting the stage for the rest of the day. We all have our daily struggles, and a smile and a kind word also go a long way toward building relationships.

6. Help me when I ask for it (a.k.a., don't jump in to problem solve too early). Like

most parents, I want to protect my kids from pain. However, daily challenges can often build resilience that will outlast the temporary problem. As a leader, I am continually learning how to best establish expectations and hold staff accountable for the good of the organization and our goals.

5. Sometimes I get scared—and I want to be able to count on you.

This goes with #9, but also reinforces that a hug or a listening ear is essential to building that trust. I won't suggest you hug your councilmembers or employees, but establishing a trusting relationship is without equal.

4. Support me when I try something new. News flash ... change can be difficult!

Encouraging my kids to try something new, and understanding that it can be intimidating and that's OK helps them to be courageous and take appropriate risks. I think the same can be said for what we do as we navigate the sometimes challenging environment of introducing changes to be responsive service providers.

3. Slow down. There are nights when it feels like "quick-eat-dinner-so-we-can-get-to-practice-so-we-can-get-home-to-take-a-shower-and-do-some-homework-and-read-a-book-and-talk-about-your-day-and-put-the-iPad-away-so-we-can-get-to-bed-because-tomorrow-is-a-busy-day." Anyone relate? STOP ... BREATHE ... ENJOY. Days, months, years go by too fast. Relish the moment and be thankful for what is.

2. Talk with me. This probably is a summary of 10-3, and just may be worth repeating. Spend time with your people (partner, kids, staff, council) and learn about them. There are many perspectives and opinions ... some of which I agree with and others not so much. But the more I know about someone, the more I understand them ... and meet #8's goals.

Presidents column *Continued from page 1*

And the number one recommendation:

1. Cupcakes are good. Yep. No explanation needed. Life is short—do things that make you feel good. Maybe it's exercise or reading or taking a long bath with the door locked. Maybe it's having a cupcake and remembering how delicious they tasted as a kid before we learned about our "numbers" or thought about the calorie count.

As I write this, the holidays are quickly approaching, and I want to take this space to wish you and your loved ones the best. Positive relationships are so important to building our own resilience as we work together to make a difference. Your MCMA board continues to build relationships with our city and county colleagues, our next generation of professionals, and encouraging civility in our daily interactions. ☺

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are here
to help!**

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2014 Mid-Winter Workshop — Feb. 13 and 14

By Shaunna Johnson, Second Vice President, Administrator, WaitePark

It's almost that time again—when MCMA members brave the Minnesota winter together by convening for the Mid-Winter Workshop. An exceptional program has been planned for 2014.

First, the location. In reviewing participation levels, it became apparent that we get more members signing up when we hold this one in the metro area. This year's workshop will be Feb. 13 and 14 at the beautiful new Radisson Blu hotel in Bloomington connected by skyway to the Mall of America. Room rate is \$133. So bring your family, stay the night, and enjoy all the MOA has to offer! Subject to availability, the hotel will honor the same room rate on Wednesday and Friday for those who want a little longer trip.

Second, the program. To kick off Thursday afternoon, Mary Van Milligan, assistant to the city administrator, Woodbury, and Laurie Hokanen, assistant city manager, Chanhassen, will lead us in an hour-and-a-half book discussion of *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*, by Sheryl Sandberg, COO of Facebook. No, this session will not be just for women, but for all the aspiring "Next Generation" local government professionals and the "veterans" that want to support and inspire them! So don't be late!!

Then our keynote presenter will be Julia Novak, principal of the Novak Consulting Group, who is also the former city manager, Rye, N.Y., and deputy city manager, Rockville, Md. Julia will present a highly interactive workshop entitled "Finding Pathways from Polarization to Civility," discussing why civility

matters in local communities, and identifying trends that nurture incivility.

You may remember that MCMA has partnered with the League of Minnesota Cities to create a Civility Task Force, which I happen to chair. Among the pending recommendations is that MCMA support its members, chief executive officers, and key assistants in understanding the role that they can and must play in encouraging civility and addressing incivility when it occurs. Led by Julia, we will discuss how civility is threatened in public meetings and our workplaces, and identify actions we can take to find pathways from polarization to civility.

To wrap up on Friday, Dave Unmacht, former Scott County administrator and now executive recruiter with Springsted, will offer observations about civility in the communities where they've consulted, insights about what city councils and county boards are looking for in today's local government professional staff, and a bit of inspiration about the continuing importance of the local government management profession.

And even if you're not staying at the hotel, please plan to participate in the Thursday evening group dinner, where we'll be honoring those MCMA members who have retired over the past year.

By the time you read this article, official registration information will have been distributed via the MCMA listserv and posted on the website at www.mncma.org. Deadline for room reservations at the Radisson Blu is Monday, Jan. 13.

See you in Bloomington in February! ○

Appointments and other professional news

- **Steve Taylor**, assistant county administrator, Carver County, has been appointed county administrator, Sherburne County.
- **Bill Malinen**, city manager, Roseville, has been appointed city manager, Branson, Mo.
- **Luke Fischer**, city administrator, Watertown, has been appointed administrative services director, Plymouth.
- **Mike Robertson**, formerly city administrator, Prescott, Wis., has been appointed city administrator, North Oaks.
- **Brian Heck**, former city administrator, Shorewood, has been appointed city administrator, Montgomery.
- **Tessia Melvin**, assistant to the city administrator, Shoreview, has been appointed city administrator, Maple Plain.
- **Kris Wilson**, assistant to the city administrator, Shakopee, has been named to the ICMA Leadership Class of 2015.

Association of Public Management Professionals (APMP) Update

By Michelle Tesser, APMP President, Assistant to the City Administrator, Falcon Heights

Greetings! First off let me express how excited I am to be the APMP president this year. I've been an APMP member since 2007, and it was truly a compliment to be elected president for an association that has helped develop my public administration skills and expanded my network of peers, whom I would also call my friends.

This fall we had a successful conference that focused on "How to Communicate with Success." Presenters discussed topics such as: communicating to different audiences, best practices on writing a clear and concise staff report to council, communicating without words, and framing issues when public speaking to elected officials. We had a fabulous member turnout, and the membership enjoyed the material presented.

The board recently gave two scholarships to member recipients Claire Pritchard (Dakota County Fellowship), and Chelsea Petersen (Falcon Heights) to attend the 2nd Annual Women in Public Services Conference at Hamline University on Nov. 15. It absolutely was a worthwhile conference with great takeaways and is a conference the board recommends to all women in our field.

The board has been busy this year working on a new pilot project called *Casual Connections: Spill the beans*. Each quarter a handful of colleagues will be invited to gather at a local coffee shop to discuss what's happening in city/county government. This meet and greet will be a terrific opportunity for colleagues to get acquainted with others who are living the day-to-day experiences in government, and

a chance for those interested in or new to government to meet new people and expand their network. This will be a casual type of meet and greet. APMP will send invitations to those in the area of where the Casual Connections will meet. In presenting this new idea the board intends it to be an all-encompassing mentorship that would benefit those in the early, middle, and later stages of their career. We are excited for the exchange of ideas in a small group setting. Stay tuned for more details!

Our new financial partnership with MCMA has proven to be a match made in heaven. The APMP board is enjoying the perks of the partnership with financial classification secured and increased opportunities to our members. We are truly thankful to the MCMA board and those involved for the support and approval of our new partnership.

APMP will have a Holiday Social Hour with guest speaker on Thursday, Dec. 19 at 2:30 p.m. The location is to be determined. All MCMA and MAMA members are invited, details to come.

Finally, if you know of someone who is interested in joining APMP, please visit www.mncma.org and click on "Affiliated Groups" for information on how to become a member. We have monthly meetings every third Thursday at noon at the League of Minnesota Cities, where guest speakers talk to the group on popular trending topics. We also provide scholarship opportunities year-round, free ICMA webinars, and, of course, the opportunity to network. Please like APMP on Facebook! ☺

2014 ICMA 100th Year Celebration & Annual Conference — Sept. 14-17, 2014

By Shaunna Johnson, Second Vice President, Administrator, Waite Park

The ICMA Planning Committee is off to a great start planning the 100th Year Celebration of ICMA and its Annual Conference in Charlotte, N.C.! The Planning Committee met in Charlotte Nov. 22-24. We have a great location and program that is sure to be remembered as we help celebrate 100 years with ICMA!

The “Queen City” of Charlotte will be a great venue to host the next ICMA Annual Conference. During my stay in Charlotte, I made it a point to check out the various local establishments that would be of interest to many of you. The downtown area is very walkable and home to many forms of entertainment for all. From the NASCAR Hall of Fame to being home to the Carolina Panthers and Charlotte Knights, to the EpiCentre, to the U.S. National Whitewater Center, there are many things Charlotte has to offer you while you are here. There is an abundance of great restaurants and parks and walkways for everyone to enjoy. There are great hotel options that are also walkable, providing you with options for your stay in Charlotte. And, there is shopping—many great options nearby just outside the downtown area that are sure to satisfy anyone who enjoys shopping, like me!

In addition to a great location with great amenities, the ICMA Annual Conference pro-

gram is sure to be rewarding to all its members. While ICMA has chosen to celebrate its 100 years throughout the year, the Annual Conference will be the finale to this yearlong celebration. The Host Committee and the Anniversary Task Force have been working very hard to make this a conference to remember. They are seeking big-time acts to help us celebrate ICMA’s 100 years and make many of these venues affordable for our members. We want everyone to be with us to celebrate.

The Conference Planning Committee members spent the majority of our time putting together a great program. We heard from our members that they are looking for “quality” programming verses “quantity.” Our effort to address this, along with offering programming meaningful to all of our members, was our theme. Our programming recommendations are in the process of being put together in a draft that will be reviewed again by our committee members. It has been a great process that really is driven by all of our ICMA members. I would be happy to share more information on the topics as it becomes available, but want you to know that your input does matter.

I hope all of you will consider coming to Charlotte in September. It will be a great conference and certainly one to remember! ☐

Cal-ICMA Resources

By Melanie Mesko-Lee, MCMA President, City Administrator, Hastings

MCMA has joined with other state affiliates to offer Cal-ICMA web-based coaching opportunities to our membership. This is an important step in reaching out to available resources to continue to develop our members as astute professionals in the field of local government.

Webinars and articles are available and offer a wide variety of topics relevant to all stages of your professional career. More information is available on the MCMA website at www.mncma.org by clicking on the Cal-ICMA link.

Recently, the MCMA board took action supporting the partnership with the Minnesota Association of County Administrators (MACA) on our Cal-ICMA Career Compass initiative to make it available to all MACA members. MACA is an important partner in continuing to build the professionalism of local government managers in Minnesota. Whether we wear a county or city hat, we as colleagues share many of the same issues and challenges and the ability to broaden the Cal-ICMA resource serves us and the local government profession well.

If you haven’t had an opportunity to participate in a webinar or read one of the many available articles, I would encourage you to take some time to do so. This is a great resource available to our membership and now our MACA colleagues. ☐

Memorandum from the edge

By Jon Hohenstein, Community Development Director, Eagan

It's been about nine months since Dave Osberg started work as the Eagan city administrator. He recently mentioned he looks forward to the day when he will no longer be referred to as the "new" administrator. That is happening over time as he has more and more shared experiences with the City Council, staff, and the community, and as he forms relationships with residents, community leaders, and business people, but it isn't going to happen overnight when Tom Hedges, the "old" and only other city administrator, had been in the job since 1976.

For example, when the old city administrator was new, Gerald Ford was the president of the United States. The Dow Jones average hovered around a then-healthy 1000. Average annual income was \$16,000. Most gas had lead in it and cost 59 cents a gallon. People were growing facial hair in honor of the country's Bicentennial, not for a World Series run or Movember. VHS was fighting it out with Betamax to be the dominant videotape format, in the same way as cassettes had just replaced 8-tracks as the mobile audio format of choice. Stretch Armstrong was about to become the hot Christmas toy. Apple Computers had just been formed, and none of their products had an "i" in its name. Bruce Jenner was running decathlons and he had never heard of a Kardashian. And a substantial percentage of MCMA's current membership had not yet been born or, if they had, they were tackling tough academic questions like, "What does the cow say?" Compared to that, it would be hard not to be new.

Besides, there are worse things than being the new city administrator. For example, if someone were called the "current" city administrator, it would make more sense to rent housing than to buy it.

But fair is fair. A local government manager is probably only really new the first time he or she serves in that role somewhere. So it is probably better to describe Dave as a slightly used city administrator, who previously belonged to a historic river town. He seems to have been well maintained, since there are no signs of serious accidents or excessive wear. His chassis is in decent shape for his model year, and there does not appear to be much, if any, rust.

But what has mattered more than new, used, or old, is the way Dave has approached the responsibilities of leadership, the realities of change, and the ongoing needs of the community. What has been most important is that he behaves enough like what the Council, staff, and residents are used to an administrator being that change doesn't need to be threatening. On the other hand, he is enough different from what people are used to that we can feel open to trying new things and seeing things through new eyes. It's kind of like getting the benefits and updates of the different version of the software without rebooting the entire system. Now if I can just get IT to fix the things I break on my computer without having to start over every time, we'll be getting somewhere.

One of the significant moments where that similarity and difference was made clear came during an all-employee meeting, when Dave talked about hockey coach, Herb Brooks, and the movie *Miracle* about the growth and ultimate success of the 1980 U.S. Olympic Hockey team. He described the scene in which Brooks confronts selfishness and self importance among the players and tells the team to always remember that the name on the front of the jersey, USA, was more important than the name on the back of the jersey, the name of the player. Dave then said, "The name on the front of our jerseys is the City of Eagan, and that is what is most important." He said "our" jerseys, and it sounded right.

While Dave will always be newer than the last city administrator (unless he stays in the position until 2049), at that moment, whether he was new or not became a lot less relevant. And whether any of us is new in our position or not, it is always good advice to remind ourselves and others about the importance of the name on the front of the jersey. You can take that from our city administrator. ◻

**Be sure to
check out
MCMA's
web site:**

www.mncma.org