



N.E.W. Times

North Dakota Eligibility Workers Association

Volume 22, Issue 1

March 2008

2007 – 2008 OFFICERS

Bev Fuhrman.....President
Cathy Meyer.....Past President
Nancy Dukart.....President Elect
Sue Satterthwaite.....Secretary/Treasurer
Deb Weigel.....Secretary/Treasurer Elect

BOARD MEMBERS

Wanda Guenther.....CREW
Carolyn Schrenk.....JAM/FAR
Rhonda Nicolai.....JAM/FAR
Lois Janke.....SWIM
Leisha Peterson.....TOWER
Cindy Dahl.....TWIN
VACANT.....TWIN

Submit articles to **Suzanne Kilichowski**, Grand Forks County Social Services

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INSIDE

Page 3 NDEWA Board Report

Page 6 Regional Reports

Page 10 Stakeholders Comments

Page 12 Letter to Kent Conrad

Letter from the President

When I was at the last regional meeting, I asked myself - Why am I a NDEWA member? So I thought I would share some of the reasons: At the meetings there is the opportunity to discuss changes; additional training in programs; and uplifting speakers to help reinforce the importance of our job and how people benefit. By attending the quarterly regional meetings it allows us a break, it has been proven that breaks keep your mind and emotions centered and prepared for anything.

Being a NDEWA member has benefits, such as: You are part of a professional association; Belong to a network of professionals; Are represented in key policy discussions; Stay informed; Develop your skills and leadership abilities; and Receive a \$1000 life insurance policy.

The Board is in full swing with their fund raising with our six-pack coolers (\$5 each) and tape measures (\$4 each or 3 for \$10). The raffle tickets will be available at the Spring Showcase from your regional board member.

The NEW PATHS National Training Conference will be held in Anaheim, CA August 19-21, 2008. They are still looking for presenters. If you are interested or know of someone, please complete the Call of Presenters form. The conference the registration and Call for Presenters forms are on their website: www.nationalnew.org. Please e-mail Susan Faye Crockett, NEW PATHS Board member, if you have any questions.

I would like to take the opportunity to welcome our new CREW regional Board members Deb Weigel.

Bev Fuhrman

Thank You!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of NDEWA for allowing me the privilege of being your President. It was an enlightening, enriching experience, not only learning how OUR organization works, but the professional development I gained working with other EWs across this great state of our. Please consider serving on our State Board, it's a wonderful experience.

Carol Wolkenhauer



President-Elect: Nancy Dukart

I started employment with Stark County Social Services in September 1987 as Administrative Assistant/Clerical Supervisor and served in that position through August 1989 when I transferred to Eligibility. I was an Eligibility Worker I from September 1989 through June 2000. In July 2000 I started my current position as Eligibility Worker II/Lead Worker in which I work a caseload in Food Stamps/Medicaid/Child Care and LIHEAP and do lead worker duties.

I am a member of NDEWA/NEW and member of SWIM (SW Income Maintenance), and was honored to be named 2004 NDEWA Eligibility Professional Worker of the Year. I am currently serving on the EW Work Group, holding the position of secretary, and also on the ETC Task Force. I am currently a member of NDCSW, having received my 20-year service award in 2007. I am also a member of the West River Conference of Social Welfare, having held positions of President, Pres-Elect and Past President and also Board member for two terms. My other volunteer work includes being Treasurer for the Amen Food Pantry in Dickinson, working as the liaison between that group and our office.

I am married to my husband of 34 years, Tony, who is a finish carpenter by trade. We have two grown children, Kyle and Sarah. Kyle and his wife, Jen, have three children, Alexander, Henry and Julianna. This Proud Grandma works very hard at spoiling them any chance she gets. My daughter, Sarah, is deaf and runs a pet grooming business, The Grooming Gallery, in Dickinson. This extra "job" keeps me busy helping her with various things her hearing impairment prohibits her from taking care of. Sarah and husband, Tom, have no children, but have a 'large' variety of animals so life is never dull in that household. In fact, my two current 'children' at home are my Pomeranian, Spice, and our African Grey, Toba Bird, who keep us entertained daily. I love to read, do counted cross-stitch and my newest love, quilting. Oh, and I fish a lot with my husband, mostly to keep him smiling.....he thinks I am his fishing buddy.

NDEWA Board Meeting Minutes

(Unapproved minutes)

NDEWA Board Meeting

January 3-4, 2008

Comfort Suites, Bismarck ND 58501

Present: Bev Fuhrman, Nancy Dukart, Cathy Meyer, Sue Satterthwaite, Deb Weigel, Leisha Peterson, Lois Janke, Carolyn Schrenk, Cindy Dahl, Wanda Guenther, Ronda Nicolai. Introductions were made. Wanda Guenther from Morton County is the new regional rep from CREW.

Secretary Report – the minutes from the October meeting were reviewed. Leisha made a motion to approve them and Cindy seconded. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report – the report from October 25 through December 31 was reviewed. There was discussion about the interest percentage earned etc. It was decided that we look at other types of accounts for some of the money such as a money market account to see what would work better for earning more interest. Leisha made a motion that Sue will talk to BNC to see what options there are for the best interest for our accounts, so the majority of the money is in the higher interest earning account. Cathy seconded. Friendly amendment is that Sue will go ahead and make the change. Cathy agreed with the amendment. Motion carried.

Nancy made a motion to approve the Financial Statement, Cathy seconded. Motion carried.

Bev asked for any bills to be submitted. Cindy Dahl had one for cards for the Sunshine committee.

Other Business:

The stakeholder letter was sent to Carol Olson and Blaine Nordwall. Cathy has not had a response other than Blaine said he forwarded it to Carol Olson.

Nancy had another letter from the Director's Association addressing the needs of EW's with regard to training, program changes, etc. She is thinking that with Larry Bernhardt as Chairperson of the Director's Association that this would be a good time to ask that association to encourage counties to continue their support and NDEWA so that workers can attend meetings and receive trainings and assistance through the organization. We are losing members and agency members and support and want to see this back to where we were and more.

Board Member list – There were a couple of typos on the board member listing and Wanda Guenther needs to add her information. Sue will update the listing for everyone.

Showcase – Bev checked with Arlene regarding a booth for the showcase and received approval to have one. This brought up discussion regarding the membership of NDEWA for the NDCSW and West River Conference. NDEWA has a membership card now.

Leisha made a motion to take the last cookbook and make a basket to present as a door prize for showcase. Deb seconded the motion. Motion carried.

There was further conversation of West River and the booth. NDCSW has changed so that all agencies must be a member to have a booth even if the agency gives a donation and a door prize. The fee for a membership is \$15.

For donations we will give the following:

Showcase – a door prize of a cookbook basket and a donation of \$50. We will also have a silent auction at showcase.

West River - \$50 donation and a door prize, a cooler and tape measure and 6 pack of water Nancy will do this one. And the booth.

National Conference – A booth, sunflower seeds or soybeans with NDEWA labels.

NDCSW - \$50 donation and a silent auction item. Cathy will get the silent auction item for the conference.

NDEWA live auction will be planned for the annual meeting.

Review of the by-laws.

Deb got the information from BNC on the amount for CD's and we can get them for six months at \$4.03. We could have three \$1000 CD's, and a minimum amount in checking and make it a no interest free checking account, then have a money market of \$1000. Sue will do this at the Stanley branch office on Monday. The Bismarck bank was going to call Stanley to let them know that this will be done.

Meeting adjourned until tomorrow. Meeting will start at 8:30. The audit committee will audit the books before that. Meeting reconvened Friday at 8:30 a.m.

The next two bios for the newsletter will be Nancy and Lois.

Committee Reports

Audit - The audit committee completed the audit and the form is signed and in the book. No error were found

Awards – Cindy has not received the awards committee book from Meroe as yet. She will contact Meroe for it.

Historian – no new history

Legislative – no report

Membership – Sue handed out the membership lists.

Newsletter/recognition/communications committee – an updated report is attached. We would like to send a card for Michon Sax's retirement and Marlys Sagvold as well. We should also send one to Blaine Nordwall.

Nominations – no report at this time.

Program – Bev will talk to Marshall or Kathleen from Social Service Coordinators to see if they can come for the annual meeting.

Ways and Means – the current items are the coolers and tape measures. At the showcase we would like to do a 50/50. The question was raised whether we want to continue with the raffle. We will have the cash raffles of \$200, \$100 and \$50. We need to have those so we can sell at them at or after the showcase.

Ronda will get the permit for the raffle. Each region gives \$50 toward the raffle.

There will be silent auction at Showcase. Each board member will bring an item for this auction.

National - no report

ETC task force – Nancy reported on the last meeting. Copy of minutes attached. (get from website)

Regional Reports

CREW – report attached

Because of low attendance in regional meetings, there was discussion on what can be done to increase attendance and interest. It was brought up that there are studies that show that taking a day out of work to attend a meeting is beneficial to both the employer and the employee. We need to again contact the Director's Association to ask for their support of the organization and encourage each county to encourage workers to take advantage of NDEWA to network and revitalize themselves.

We will have a skit at showcase to show to pros of attending regional meetings. This will be a way to get the information to a large number of eligibility workers.

Jam/Far – no report. Next meeting will be in Casselton on Jan. 28

SWIM – no report.

TOWER – report attached

TWIN – report attached

Next meeting is April 22 starting at 8:30. This is an all day meeting.

Leisha made a motion to adjourn – Cathy seconded. Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,
Sue Satterthwaite



***Spring
is
Near!***

Dried Beef Cheese Ball

Dora Colton

(I always double this recipe)

- 1-8 ounce package cream cheese
- 1 small onion finely chopped – optional (I DO NOT USE!)
- 1-teaspoon accent (I use onion salt)
- 1- teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 3 oz jar dried beef chopped and divided into 2 equal portions

Mix the 1st 4 ingredients and half of the dried beef mixture Roll this into a ball and roll in the remaining half of the dried beef Refrigerate until firm. Serve with your favorite crackers

I have found putting the dried beef you've reserved for rolling into a Dinner plate with an edge works well. Then I pick it up and put it into plastic wrap and scrape the remaining beef off the plate onto The cheese ball and forming into a better ball with the plastic wrap Works well.

Submitted by Dora Colton

Regional Reports

TWIN REGION

No report at this time.

JAM-FAR REGION

The JAM-FAR Chapter of ND NEW PATHS met at Woell Mansion, Casselton ND on January 28, 2008. There were 7 counties represented (Cass, Stutsman, LaMoure, Kidder, Sargeant, Ransom, & Griggs) as well as the Department of Human Services.

Registration was from 9:30 – 10:00 AM with coffee, juice and goodies offered.

At 10 AM Scott Burlingame & Val Nielsen spoke to us about the Freedom Resource Center and the services they provide.

At 11 AM Jane Strommen & Lucille Kingsley spoke to us about the Community of Care & Faith in Action Program. They are part of the Good Samaritan Society.

It cost \$100 for the meeting room today and Cindy Waldahl got \$25 donations from each of the following Casselton businesses: Maple River Winery, Pizza Ranch, Red Baron Lounge & Pizza Pub, and Club 94. Thanks!!! We appreciated the generous donations from these businesses so we could have a meeting spot today. We kept these businesses in mind, as we broke for lunch on our own, from 12:00 – 1:00.

After lunch we drew for the Microwave oven – donated by Cathy Meyer for a fundraiser – We all paid \$5 for these chances to win. Cathy not only donated – but also bought a chance on her own donation – thanks Cathy! Gloria Coufal was the lucky winner of this awesome prize!

We also did the door prize drawings – the winners were as follows: Julie Ell – canvas bag, Janice Johnson – wine (donated by Maple River Winery –yes besides the \$25 donation!), Dora Colton – crystal serving plate and Judy Marty – picture frame. Congratulations winners!

At 1:15 PM Bob Klein and Sue Moffit, from FM Ambulance Service and Casselton Ambulance Service, spoke to us about Emergency Medical Services and the challenges of providing emergency services in rural communities.

All of our speakers were fantastic today and they all donated their services. We appreciate them very much – thanks!

President Cindy Timm called the business meeting to order at 2:30 PM. She asked for corrections or additions to the minutes received via e-mail attachment. Michelle Watne made a motion seconded by Carolyn Schrenk to approve the minutes as printed. Motion carried.

The Treasurer's report was given with a beginning balance of \$220.53, income of \$220.24, expenses of \$311.12 and an ending balance of \$129.12. Claudia Bollinger and Carolyn Schrenk had been appointed to do an audit of the books. They conducted the audit and found everything to be in order. Thanks audit committee! Michelle Watne made a motion seconded by Tammy Geiger to approve the Treasurer's report and the Audit report. Motion carried.

Discussion was held on continuing to build up our checking account balance. Cathy was officially thanked for her generous donation. A balance of \$100 was raised on the Microwave oven – thanks again Cathy! For the next meeting we will bring white elephant items again for \$5 each – or the next host counties can come up with some alternative and let all of us know the rules when the agenda comes out.

Carolyn Schrenk reported on the State NDEWA Meeting. She reported on Spring Showcase, West River Conference of Social Welfare and the National New Meeting August 19 – 21 in Anaheim California. Our membership in ND has fallen below the 200. This a great concern to the board. They'll be doing a skit on the reasons why people don't join NEW, at the Spring Showcase. It's time to choose an Eligibility Worker of the year again. The forms for nomination are on the EW Technology Team website. Raffle tickets will be available soon and each member will receive at least one book of tickets to sell. Prizes will again be cash.

Cindy Timm reported on the EW Task Force. They're still trying to impress upon the state their concern for the workers in the counties with all the changes there's been and that ADEQUATE training is necessary. And if it's major training then it shouldn't be done through IVAN. There are still some problems with the CCAP as training was confusing, then policy was changed immediately afterwards and no new training was provided with those changes and there have been no updates to policy yet. There are still problems with other reports, forms and notices as well. The Task Force is also trying to get a penalty back in place for TANF. When the report is not turned in by the due date of the 5th of the month and it comes in the end of the month instead, and it's a difficult case besides, it's VERY difficult to get the cases all done – so if there were a penalty attached for being late it might possibly help this situation. The Active error rate for FS is currently 3.24% - this is good, but the negative error rate is 4.52 % and this is NOT so good.

Cindy thanked Cass & Traill for the great meeting. The next host county is Stutsman.

With no further business, Tammy Geiger made a motion seconded by Norma Howes to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted:
Dora Colton, Secretary

CREW REGION

No report at this time.

TOWER REGION

The Tower Region's 1st quarter meeting was held in Stanley on February 22, 2008. 29 members were present. Bev Fuhrman called the business meeting to order. The Secretary and Treasurer's reports were approved as written. The membership list was reviewed for corrections. No corrections were noted.

OLD BUSINESS

- A motion was made to donate \$100 to the NEW Scholarship fund.
- Door prize at the annual meeting was discussed and a motion was made and seconded for Jan Jensen would make a piece of haranguer.
- A motion was made to donate \$50 for the NDEWA raffle.
- The annual meeting will be at the Conference of Social Welfare in Dickinson in September.
- The National Convention is in Anaheim, CA, August 19-22.
-

The membership drawing was completed. The names that were drawn for the renewal was Linda Suedkamp and Phyllis Sylte's for the new member

NEW BUSINESS

- Steering Committee members for 2008-2010 are McKenzie-Kristi, Mountrail-Sandra Vance, Williams-Lana Linde, McHenry-Sue Fretland and Ward-Linda Suedkamp.
- Unanimous ballot was cast for Catherine Howery for Sec/Treas for 2008-2010.
- The pre-session for the Spring Showcase is going to be on the Best Practices for programs on Weds. April 23.

The 2nd quarter's meeting will be held in Williston on May 9, 2008. Meeting adjourned.

PRESENTATIONS

- Wayne Stanley, Stanley Public School Superintendent, gave a brief presentation on how his life changed since he was burned while battling an oil fire outside of Sherwood.
- Candice Grilley, Mountrail County Social Services LSW, gave a presentation on Navigating FACSES.
- Deanne Hale performed the traditional and sacred Polynesian dances.
- Mountrail County Social Service staff made a delicious Polynesian Lunch.

SWIM REGION

President Jane Heiser called the SWIM Business Meeting to order on February 7, 2008. The meeting was held at the Elks Club in Dickinson hosted by Stark County. Eleven members were present.

MINUTES of the last meeting were previously e-mailed to members. Marlene made a motion to approve the minutes as read. Noreen seconded and motion carried.

TREASURER REPORT had previously been e-mailed to members. Marcy moved to approve, Karen seconded and motion carried.

EW TASK FORCE REPORT was not given, as Nancy Dukart was absent from the meeting.

Lois gave NDEWA REPORT. NDEWA sent a letter to Blaine Nordwall and Carol Olson regarding eligibility workers' concern about the complexity of the economic assistance programs. NDEWA also gave some recommendations to be implemented that would assist the eligibility workers. Discussion was held during meeting about what to do for a fundraiser and how to increase membership as membership is down.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT was given by Leone. ND legislature has a user friendly web site that gives detailed information about the interim session, their studies, committees and activities. Discussion was held regarding PERS health credits. It was decided to continue to research this issue.

OLD BUSINESS: SWIM dues are due for 2008.

NEW BUSINESS: SWIM received a letter from Doug Wegh, Director of Hettinger County Social Services, thanking SWIM for the \$100 Christmas donation. The donation was used to help the needy in Hettinger County.

Marlene reported she had written a Thrivent grant and received \$300.00, which Dunn County used to assist the elderly, and disabled at Christmas time.

President Jane Heiser thanked Marlene for presiding over the 10-23-07 meeting, as Jane was not able to attend that meeting.

Jane read a resignation letter from Marcy Decker. Marcy resigned as Secretary Treasurer of SWIM because other duties as assigned in her job will not always allow her to attend meetings. Jane asked for a volunteer to fill Marcy's position for the next two years. Deni Lorenz volunteered to continue as Acting Secretary Treasurer thru 2009. Marlene made a motion that Deni continue as Acting Secretary Treasurer thru 2009. Lois seconded. Motion carried.

DOOR PRIZE: Jane will purchase door prize for 04-08 meeting.

Marcy moved to adjourn the meeting. Lois seconded. Meeting adjourned.

After lunch Gloria, Direct Service Coordinator at the Domestic Violence Shelter, gave a very interesting and informative presentation. Gloria stated the Domestic Violence Shelter can house up to 18 people and the shelter is often full or nearly full. The shelter houses individuals who have left a domestic violence situation and it also houses homeless families. All basic care needs including transportation are met while the families are staying at the shelter. Individuals can remain at the shelter for up to 2 years if they continue to try to meet their goals.

Sherri Adams from SW District Health Unit gave a presentation on MRSA (Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus aureus). This was some very interesting information regarding this infection.

Deanna Baranko and Trina Gress from Community Options gave us some useful information regarding their organization. Community Options is a private for profit organization. They work directly with our TANF clients.

Sheila and Mary from Job Service gave a review of their role in working with TANF clients.

Submitted by:
Deni Lorenz ACTING SEC/TREAS SWIM

TANF Best Practices Needed NOW!

The National Eligibility Worker's Association (NEW: PATHS) received a grant from the Office of Family Assistance (OFA) to develop a handbook of best practices for the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. Most published "best practices" focus on programmatic or agency procedures – things that are often out of the immediate control of the staff that are key to implementing your TANF program.

The handbook will feature **proven techniques** that have assisted families to become independent from program support and that allow workers to maximize their time and resources.

Our best practice guide focuses on five major components of TANF and we ask that you share your practices about any or all of them.

For more information, go to www.tanfbestpractices.org or contact Suzanne Kilichowski, skilichowski@nd.gov.

NORTH DAKOTA ELIGIBILITY WORKERS ASSOCIATION
STAKEHOLDERS COMMENTS
OCTOBER 2007

The North Dakota Eligibility Workers Association (NDEWA) would like to express our thoughts concerning recent changes pertaining to financial assistance programs and the ever-expanding duties of eligibility workers throughout the state.

Programs and policies are becoming more complex at a time when the current eligibility work force is reaching a state when a major transition in the work force in the next 5 to 10 years is eminent. Eligibility workers that have been in the system for years are constantly remarking that they could not imagine starting an eligibility job now. A worker processing a food stamp, medical assistance, and child care case will go on to four separate computer systems to determine eligibility and issue benefits for one household. More often than not our clients ask us if they are eligible for benefits during their office visits. Due to time constraints we are not able to answer that question while they are in our office. This puts our clients at a disadvantage because we cannot explain what they need to do to keep their cases open while they are in the office. If we do not know what program they are eligible for we cannot advise them on what their next course of action should be. Redundancy in computer input is very frustrating.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Develop a consolidated computer system. A more streamlined processing tool will allow us to better serve our clients.
- Consult with on-line generic eligibility workers during the development process of program/policy changes to determine the best most effective way to affect the change. Most of the current state program administrators have not worked at the county level for many years. Input from on-line workers at the early stages of a change may result in a smoother transition for all parties.
- Give more priority to recommendations made by eligibility workers. Task force groups comprised of eligibility workers meet, usually in Bismarck, to make recommendations and express the needs of workers throughout the state. On occasion those recommendations are not implemented because they are not considered a priority.
- Try to develop computer enhancements so that they are not done “quick and dirty” first and another way at a later date. Learning to process a case one way and later having to learn another process for the same issue at a later date does not seem to be time effective.

Over the past year we have had experienced workers quit their jobs and take early retirement instead of dealing with the frustration of learning the major changes with the food stamp and child care assistance programs. This does not even address the changes that have been implemented by the TANF program and changes we see on the horizon with the Medicaid program.

It is our intent to provide the best service possible to the most vulnerable of our population. Unfortunately we find we have less time to listen to our clients and assist with their needs because we are forced to spend more time processing cases and computer input. Our focus has moved from our clients to our processing systems.

If you have any questions regarding this correspondence please contact us. We are happy to assist in any way we can with any issues or questions you may have in the future. We thank you for your time and consideration.

--Continued on Page 11

Sincerely,

Cathy Meyer
President NDEWA
Cass County Social Services
(701) 239-6741

North Dakota Eligibility Workers Association Board

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Secretary/Treasurer
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Hettinger County Social Services
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February 20, 2008

Senator Kent Conrad
530 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510-3403

RE: Complexities within the
Economic Assistance Programs

Dear Senator Conrad:

We have been struggling for several years with the complexities of the Economic Assistance Programs, those being Medicaid, Food Stamps, Child Care Assistance, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF). We have been working with the North Dakota Department of Human Services during this time to try to make sense of the programs and do whatever we can, within a state, to make programs easier to administer.

However, we find that most of the roadblocks seem to exist at the Federal level, where each of the Programs has developed their regulations and policies to fit for their own Program. This creates an almost impossible situation when you get to the front lines where Eligibility Workers have to interpret the rules for each program and implement them. Add to that complexity that Eligibility Workers need to know the rules for each of the programs since most the workers administer all or most of the economic assistance programs through County Social Services in North Dakota.

I am enclosing a two-page document that shows how each of these four major programs expects income, assets, or expenses to be handled. As you can see from the document, rarely are there similarities between programs.

I am asking for your assistance in trying to simplify the rules and regulations among these Programs. Since the regulations and rules are made at the Federal level, we need your help to get them changed so as to be similar among Programs.

Thank you for your consideration of this request and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mr. L. J. Bernhardt
Agency Director

ENCL – 1
CC: ND Department of Human Services