

RISSA

Leadership Links

Newsletter of the **Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association**

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WINTER 2011

Leadership Links

ELIZABETH BURKE BRYANT IS 2012 PAUL CROWLEY AWARD RECIPIENT



Elizabeth Burke Bryant, in a ceremony held in the State Room at the State House on March 2, became the fourth recipient of the prestigious RISSA Paul Crowley Award which is given to a Rhode Island citizen who, in his or her professional and/or personal capacity, has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to improving the quality of education for the children of Rhode Island with the same zeal and perseverance as Representative Paul Crowley did throughout his career as a state representative. Elizabeth's husband, mother and board president were all present along with a strong contingent of RISSA members, members of the Crowley family including Diana, Paul's widow, and legislators to watch as a series of state leaders, including Governor Chafee, lauded her achievements. The words of praise showered on her indicated clearly that RISSA had, once again, made an outstanding choice to receive this special award. Elizabeth has designated Central High School in Providence to be the recipient of the \$1,000 scholarship that comes with the award. Special thanks also go out to Chef Martha Sylvestre and the students in the Cranston CTC Culinary Arts program for an outstanding presentation of refreshments. A special thanks to our sponsors who subsidize all the costs associated with the award including the scholarship.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



It has been quite the winter. It appears we were in a cycle of snow storms that reminded some of years past or when they were a child...high snow banks, lots of shoveling, and unpredictable forecasts. One wondered if we were ever going to have five day school weeks again. Fortunately, that has changed and spring is right around the corner. Crocuses and snowbells are popping up here and there and the daylight hours are increasing in number. Like most recent years, all of us will be tightening our budget belts more and trying to figure out how we are going to move forward. The funding formula passed last year, R2T initiatives in the areas of teacher/administration evaluation, curriculum and standards, mentoring, and information systems and assessments are underway, Unified Chart of Accounts (UCOA) is being released, and the new high school regulations just passed last week. All of us are taking a very active role whenever possible in testifying at the State House, attending workshops and meetings and meeting with state and local leaders to build partnerships. RISSA continues to make inroads and progress toward positive contributions to public education. There is a lot going on and a huge horizon full of endless possibilities, possibilities that we can help realize if we work together and stay strong.

There is no doubt that we live with enormous pressures and, because of that, we must continue to support each other collectively and individually. Each community has its own idiosyncrasies, but in the end our differences are far outweighed by the similarities in the personal journeys we encounter day to day. The tides go in and the tides go out. There may be some uncharted waters we will experience, but if we keep to our beliefs and our mission we will always know which winds to follow and which to ignore. And when we are uncertain and really are not sure what to do, we know we can reach out to those around us to make certain the ship does not sink.

Sometimes not saying something speaks volumes. Our actions will and do speak louder than our words. Picking up the phone to check in on a neighbor, dropping a note, or just letting someone know you have a confidential ear to share can do so much. RISSA will continue to promote what is best for students and education. We will be present to support our members and others to move our goals forward so that Rhode Island has the best public education system for all kids. And we will continue the journey to do our best and be the best as we hold our course. Contact us if you need anything and thank you for all you are doing for the children of Rhode Island. Remember, spring is almost here!

AASA GOVERNING BOARD NOMINATIONS COMING SOON

AASA members of RISSA are asked to please watch their e-mail the week of March 21 for information on the nomination and election of an AASA Governing Board Member to serve a two year term. Bob O'Brien's first elected term is coming to a close and he is eligible to be elected again for a second and final term. A list of eligible nominees will be provided as will a calendar for the process.

The RISSA Executive Committee voted on March 3 to disaffiliate RISSA from the **Learning First Alliance/Rhode Island (LFA/RI)** effective immediately.

AASA: National Conference on Education

Next up: HOUSTON 2012!

Please be aware that, in light of a continuous patter of diminishing attendance, AASA is exploring options for increasing the attendance at and support for the NCE. One such option is joining with NSBA in San Diego in 2013. Final confirmation of this proposal is pending. The plans for 2014 and beyond also have not been finalized.

FUTURE AASA NATIONAL CONFERENCES

2012	<u>Houston, TX (new site)</u>
2013	<u>SanDiego with NSBA (tentative)</u>
2014	<u>???? (AASA only at Nashville)</u>
2015	<u>???? (AASA only at Atlanta)</u>

SIPALA HONORED AT NCE (AASA) AS RI SUPERINTENDENT OF THE YEAR



With a small, but very vocal, contingent of RISSA members cheering her on, Kathy Sipala was introduced as the Rhode Island Superintendent of the Year at a General Session of the National Conference on Education in Denver on February 17. That recognition was only part of a day filled with events honoring 48 superintendents including the National Superintendent of the Year. The day culminated four months of well deserved recognition for Kathy that included a RISSA General Membership meeting, press coverage, school committee and community recognition including a special event held at the Towers in Narragansett. The overwhelming acclaim of her selection is a clear indicator that she was an outstanding selection for the honor. Her leadership in Narragansett as well as in RISSA has continued at full speed since the announcement of her selection in October. Kathy will also have the opportunity to award a \$1,000 scholarship, funded by the RISSA sponsors, to a graduating senior from Narragansett High School. She will also be invited by AASA to a colloquium for the Superintendents of the Year next Fall.

VISIT THE RISSA WEBSITE AT

www.rissa-home.org

NOTE: RISSA will be working with a partner to redesign and update the website. If you have suggestions for what you would like to have on the site, please send them to jlpin@cox.net . More to come.

2010-2011 CORPORATE SPONSORS

Thanks to the following sponsors for their generous support.

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The 2010-2011 “Leadership Links” editions will continue to feature information from our partners at the [Kids First/Healthy Schools Coalition](#).



News from the RI Healthy Schools Coalition & Kids First
by Dorothy Brayley

A Lesson from Newport: It Helps to Know More About USDA Commodities

Conversations occurring amongst members of the Newport Nutrition Advisory Group (NAG), a subcommittee of the district’s Wellness Committee that actively participates with Superintendent Ambrogio in overseeing the district’s Food Service Management Contract, inspired Kids First and RIDE to organize a Commodities 101 (*a.k.a Demystifying Commodities*) workshop in January. All RI Health and Wellness Subcommittee Members were invited to attend this workshop, followed by the Rhode Island Commodities Food Show, on Tuesday, January 11th at West Warwick High School Cafeteria. **Over 50 district stakeholders were in attendance, including representation from the Wellness Committees of eight school districts and one charter school.**

The Commodities *processing* Food Show happens every year and up until this year it has been attended primarily by RI Food Service Directors. Large food processors (Tyson, Pilgrim’s Pride, JTM, etc.) exhibit their processed foods (chicken nuggets, patties, sausages, cooked burgers, beef crumbles, pizza, etc.) that can be made from diverted raw USDA Commodities. Your Food Service Directors collectively decide on the processors and the items that will be purchased utilizing your districts’ Commodities entitlements. It’s a complicated process and it does seem best left up to the food service professionals (given all you have to do!). However, when others like NAG members became involved and asked questions, we’ve learned that the process and the choices CAN be improved. It’s the district’s money, the district’s children and more district stakeholders really should have a say.

The Commodities 101 presentation gave attendees a better understanding of how this federal USDA Foods Program (formerly named the USDA Commodities Program) for donated government foods impacts Rhode Island's school meals program. It provided an open forum for Wellness Committee members to ask questions and learn about the process. Lots of information was shared at both the workshop and the Food Show and we look forward to continuing the conversation about RI Commodities as we all work together to help improve the variety and the nutrition of the center-of-the-plate menu items in your school meals. We challenge school administrators and their business officials to ask more questions of their food service management companies as to the Commodity Foods they are selecting for your district. Together, we can improve our State’s Commodities selections!

Please visit <http://www.kidsfirstri.org/newhwc.htm> to download the Commodities 101 PowerPoint presentation and/or view the video of the workshop, as well as post your comments on our new *Eat Healthy, Be Healthy* blog.

Your District Can Apply for Healthier US School Challenge... and Win the Award!

Did you know that compliance with the RI Nutrition Requirements (RINR) puts your districts’ schools in a good position to win an award from the USDA Healthier US Schools Challenge (HUSCC)? Ask your food service director about making the application for your elementary schools and about winning the recognition and the cash prize. In addition to the stringent nutrition requirements which your district most likely already meets, there are a few non-food related requirements to meet (*i.e. physical activity, nutrition education.*) Overall it is very do-able for RI schools. We can be the only state in the nation with a high percentage of HUSCC Schools!

On February 10, eight Pawtucket schools will be honored by the USDA as the latest Pawtucket recipients of the Healthier US Schools Challenge Award, a program established as part of First Lady Obama’s *Let’s Move* campaign to recognize schools that are creating healthier school environments through promotion of good nutrition and increased physical activity. **Although only 1% of all schools nationwide have won this prestigious award, 10 Pawtucket schools are now winners and four Newport Schools have applied.**



MORE INFORMATION...



District Wellness Committees – How Are We Doing?

We have much to be proud of in regards to our RI Districts Wellness committee work and accomplishments. Since the Wellness Committee Law was passed in 2005, you have all made GREAT strides in engaging your staff, your food service, and community members in a “*living process*” for continuously assessing your district’s nutrition, physical activity and staff wellness environments and for setting new goals and achieving them each year! We at Kids First and the RI Healthy Schools Coalition applaud each of you. As most of you know, Karin Wetherill and Carole Toselli of Kids First have been assisting your committees, as well, they have observed firsthand all the great work being done. They also do contact you if your committee has stalled a bit and we hope that you don’t mind the gentle prodding. Always remember we are here to help and try very hard not to get in the way nor push your committee to places it is not interested in going. Karin and Carole’s work is funded by the RI Department of Health, Initiative for a Healthy Weight project. Every six months, we are obligated to draft a report for the Department of Health which summarizes the progress that District Wellness Committees are making. It is always very impressive! I just submitted the report for the period, July 1-December 31, 2010. (It is 12 pages – if you want a copy, please just ask me.) What I would like to share with you here is a general chart to show you that, overall in RI, we truly have the great majority of our school districts still very engaged in a “*living*” *Wellness Improvement Process*. Congratulations to us all!

District Health and Wellness Committee Activity Summary Table: July 1 – December 31, 2010

Health & Wellness Committee Status/Activity Level	Number of Districts (N=36)
Active Engaged Committees, High Activity Level	21
Active, Engaged Committees, Low Activity Level	3
Committees Re-established, Re-gaining Momentum	4
Inactive Committees, High Wellness Activity Level	3
Inactive Committees, Low Wellness Activity level	5

RI Farm to School: Where Does Your District Stand?

We should all be proud of how our schools’ food purchasing is contributing to the RI economy AND inspiring other institutions to follow suit, like hospitals and worksites! **During the 2010 Rhode Island Harvest, our RI schools have collectively purchased 204,129 pounds of RI grown fruits, vegetables, eggs, honey and milk, so far!** Your schools are still buying some 2010 Harvest storage crops like potatoes and carrots, so we’ll keep tallying until the 2011 Harvest starts coming in around late April. Did you know that one innovative RI produce distributor (Roch’s Produce), who is now supplying the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program and the School Meals Program with fresh foods from RI farmers, was able to add 24 new RI jobs because more of our school districts’ food dollars are now staying in RI? As well, there are RI farmers who are expanding their farms and revenues and adding jobs, too! Buying local foods with our federal food dollars and our community’s food dollars (*from paid meals*) is making a positive difference in the Rhode Island economy. Thank you!

At Kids First, we’ve been experimenting with tallying district’s local purchases so that we can report to you how well your food service contractor is doing. Below is a chart that takes the district’s local purchases reported to us and verified by your food service directors, converts them to pounds, and then divides those purchases by the district’s average daily lunch participation. Take a look to see how your district’s local purchasing compares to others. Please feel free to give us feedback on these figures (dbrayley@kidsfirstri.org).



EVEN MORE INFORMATION...



District	Total Lbs. Purchased, RI Grown Foods	Average Daily Student Participation (Lunch)	Total Lbs., RI Grown Foods per Lunch Participant
BARRINGTON	2,630	917	2.87
BRISTOL-WARREN	4,890	1,662	2.94
BURRILLVILLE	2,619	1,229	2.13
CENTRAL FALLS	10,484	2,825	3.71
CHARIHO	2,083	1,123	1.85
COVENTRY	2400	2103	1.14
CRANSTON	10541	3549	2.97
CUMBERLAND	1966	2218	0.89
DAVIES VOC TECH	1384	816	1.70
EAST GREENWICH	2620	699	3.75
EAST PROVIDENCE	6565	2888	2.27
EXETER-WEST GREENWICH	522	596	0.88
FOSTER-GLOCESTER*	450	1318	0.34
JAMESTOWN	2160	164	13.17
JOHNSTON	1130	1402	0.81
LINCOLN	2472	1313	1.88
LITTLE COMPTON	536	109	4.92
MIDDLETOWN	3180	1198	2.65
NARRAGANSETT	620	479	1.29
NEW SHOREHAM	70	47	1.49
NEWPORT	6839	1133	6.04
NORTH KINGSTOWN*	0	1562	0.00
NORTH PROVIDENCE	1972	1488	1.33
NORTH SMITHFIELD*	0	472	0.00
PAWTUCKET	30738.25	6456	4.76
PORTSMOUTH	2376	780	3.05
PROVIDENCE	81955	19897	4.12
SCITUATE	1911	544	3.51
SMITHFIELD	1872.25	965	1.94
SOUTH KINGSTOWN	920	1199	0.77
TIVERTON	2200	1956	1.12
WARWICK	4290	3479	1.23
WEST WARWICK	3377	1884	1.79
WESTERLY	720	1364	0.53
WOONSOCKET	5040	4387	1.15

Is It Just Me OR...

- does it seem unusual, to say the least, that such major moves as the closing of schools and elimination of specific school administrative positions should be done by a mayor and not a superintendent and school committee?
- does the present climate and recent series of events scream for the passage of legislation to change the teacher notification date from March 1 to June 1?
- has the Wisconsin (and Ohio) movement against collective bargaining spawned a dramatic increase in teacher bashing on blogs and in letters to the editor?
- is the volume of work you are being asked to accomplish increasing exponentially?

(NOTE: Comments are the Editor's and do not constitute the opinions of RISSA.)

UPCOMING RISSA MEETINGS

Special Meeting: UCOA for Superintendents:

Thursday, March 10

Continental breakfast at 8:00 AM; meeting at 8:30 AM

New England Institute of Technology

Special Meeting: The New Data Systems

A Collaboration of RISSA/RISTE/RIDE

(The audience for this meeting is superintendents, central office administrators and technology directors.)

Tuesday, March 15

Continental breakfast at 8:00 AM; meeting at 8:30 AM

SORICO

Annual Meeting

Friday, May 13

Continental breakfast at 8:00; meeting at 8:30 AM

Johnson & Wales Culinary Museum

End of the Year/Retirees' Celebration

Thursday, May 26

3:30 to 5:30 PM

Conanicut Yacht Club in Jamestown

5th Annual Retirees' Breakfast

Thursday, June 1

Continental breakfast at 8:00 AM; meeting at 8:30 AM

Johnson & Wales Culinary Museum

COMINGS AND GOINGS...and other stuff

- Congratulations to **Bob O'Brien** on receiving the **Confucius/Lenovo Achievement Award** from Bryant University. The award was presented at the Chinese New Year Celebration held on February 6 at Bryant. Bob received a computer as part of his award and donated the computer to his district. The award recognized Bob's outstanding work in bringing the Confucius Classroom and a focus on China to not only his district, but also to Rhode Island.
- In other Confucius Classroom news, **Roy Seitsinger** has received approval to have West-erly host the classroom that was originally scheduled to be at SORICO.
- Best wishes to RISSA member **Mike McKee** who has left the position of Director of SORICO because of the change in operations at the Collaborative. The superintendents will continue to meet and try to use their common resources with the hope that SORICO may eventually be restored to an active status.
- It was disturbing to learn that **Lonnie Barham**, Chief Operations Officer in East Providence, was terminated without cause on February 18th. Lonnie had just recently become a RISSA member. Best wishes to Lonnie on the next phase of his career.
- Another piece of bad news comes in the elimination by the mayor of **Kim Rose's** position in the Providence Public Schools. Kim has been a strong contributor to RISSA in her workshop presentations and in her committee work which allows us to have a Providence presence at our discussions. Best of luck to Kim whose quote in the ProJo indicated just how classy a person she is.
- The mayor has also eliminated another position that was held by a RISSA member which will further deplete our representation from Providence. The importance of having a Providence voice in RISSA cannot be overstated.
- Please make sure to mark your calendar for Friday, **May 13th** and plan to spend the day at the **5th Annual RISSA/RIASBO Meeting**. The focus topic for the day is: **Unleashing Innovation: Doing More with Less**. The agenda is the best ever and features national (Rick Hess, Steve Sobel) as well as local presenters. Superintendents should urge their business administrators to attend. The event will also feature another outstanding Exhibitor's Showcase with 40 displays, a drawing for some great prizes and a social hour.
- Current superintendent searches for next year include **Cumberland** and **Portsmouth**.
- There will be a \$10 increase in **AASA dues** for 2011-2012 voted by the Governing Board.
- **RISSA sponsorship levels** are at an all time high. Commitments are currently at \$31,500, a level of support that continues to allow RISSA to increase scholarships, recognition and the funding of ancillary expenses. There are other partnerships pending that could bring the total even higher. Members are encouraged to notify the Executive Director if they know of a potential sponsor. Many of the current relationships were established through connections made by members.
- Due to weather issues, the **RISSA Strategic Planning Initiative** has been delayed and will begin on March 17. It is hoped that some portions of the Plan will be available for approval at the Annual Meeting on May 13. When you are asked for feedback, please make every effort to contribute. The continued growth of the organization will depend significantly on this Plan.
- Thanks to **Carol Blanchette, Assistant Superintendent in Chariho**, for leading the **Central Office Critical Friends Group**. Next meeting of that group is on Friday, April 22 at 1:00 PM at SORICO.

NOTES FROM OUR LEGISLATIVE ANALYST

Tim Ryan, former Superintendent of Schools in Portsmouth, is RISSA's Legislative Analyst/Lobbyist.



Legislative Update

The 2011 Rhode Island Legislative session promises to be an interesting one, particularly in terms of educational issues. Governor Chafee won the election in November with less than a majority of votes and relied on the considerable support of teachers unions. There has been widespread speculation as to whether and how that support might be recognized.

One of the signs was to see if Judge Flanders would be reappointed as Chairman of the Board of Regents. His re-appointment would be seen as a strong endorsement of the direction RIDE has taken under Commissioner Gist, who enjoyed the Judge's strong support. The fact that he will be replaced by former Rep. Caruolo may be the first hint of the Governor's view of that direction. Recommended as new members to the Board were former URI President Robert Caruthers, who like Caruolo, is seen as an independent, and two individuals who would appear to be supporters of the unions.

Governor Chafee has consistently expressed concern over the expansion of the number of charter schools, which has been supported by the Commissioner and former Chair of the Board of Regents. When the unions express opposition to charters, they are primarily referring to the mayoral academies. These schools are part of a franchise operation and, unlike other charters in Rhode Island, are exempt from collective bargaining and retirement requirements. The unions will make every effort to restrict their expansion and try to roll back the legislation that got thorough last year.

Binding arbitration for teachers, protecting the pension fund from further changes, education funding and union jobs will be key priorities for NEA and AFT this session.

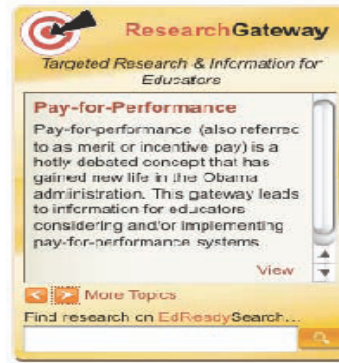
The budget remains a serious problem with a structural deficit and a gap in funding the state and local pension systems. Last year, the House passed a plan that would have re-amortized the state debt, only to have it be rejected by the Senate. Cuts in education aid and further pension changes seem to be among the few options for dealing with budget shortfalls barring a drastic improvement to the state's economy.

RISSA continues to make its voice heard at the State House. On January 25, Legislative Committee members met with Senate Majority Leader, Dominic Ruggerio, and Hanna Gallo, Chair of the Senate Education Committee, as part of its annual outreach to the leadership. The Committee has already met with Representative Joseph McNamara, Chair of House HEW, and Senator Lou DiPalma, who has introduced legislation to move the teacher termination notification date from March 1 to June 1. The Committee will meet in March with Representative Valencia and House Leader Mattiello. Through regular reports, I will keep RISSA members updated on legislative proposals and actions that directly impact our schools.

The Legislative Committee will also partner with other advocacy groups whenever possible. At its last meeting, Dan Beardsley from the League of Cities and Towns and Tim Duffy of the Rhode Island Association of School Committees were in attendance and common ground was established for addressing the upcoming legislative session. Initial plans for a joint RISSA and RIASC meeting were discussed.



New resource on www.rissa-home.org



RISSA has teamed up with Educational Research Service (ERS) to bring you the Research Gateway.

Access the *Research Gateway* directly from the www.rissa-home.org homepage! This new *Gateway*, which updates weekly, acts like a spam filter with a quality guarantee—ready to get you up to speed quickly. Experienced ERS researchers have combed the Web and electronic libraries and databases to find the top 10 articles or reports on the topics most important to school leaders. Many of the articles are absolutely FREE! New topics are emerging often, so keep coming back!

The Research Gateway is on target—others miss the mark. RISSA knows administrators have too little time and too much information. By offering the *Research Gateway*, we provide only the most trusted and targeted information on the hot topics you need. We save you hours of needless searching and sorting through the thousands, even millions of hits you get from Google or other search engines. Visit www.rissa-home.org today, and experience the *Research Gateway*!



Rhode Island School Superintendents' Association

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTES



The trip to Denver turned out to be a real surprise. The weather was terrific! As the pessimist who worried about what the weather would be during the National Conference on Education, I must admit to having erred. I still think the potential of bad weather kept many away. That was another surprise. Attendance was even lower than last year. The initial number registered was about 1,400, a far cry from the early 1990's when attendance was in the five figure range. Yet another surprise was that some aggressive and long overdue actions have been initiated to improve the NCE picture. While next year's meeting is still scheduled for Houston (probably not a big draw), the 2013 NCE may well mark the beginning of a working relationship with the National School Boards Association (NSBA). While plans are not finalized, it looks like it is a real possibility that the NCE event will be in San Diego with NSBA. Another move that was announced in Denver was a coming together (not a merger) with National Association of Elementary School Principals to share space and some back office resources. All of these measures reflect a continuing financial crisis that the staff at AASA, under the leadership of Executive Director Dan Domenech, has been working hard to address. The AASA Governing Board was apprised of these changes and also asked to approve (they did) a small increase (\$10) in AASA dues.

I had the opportunity during the NCE to meet with my colleagues from New England. All six Executive Directors attended our annual luncheon and shared concerns, many of which were very similar. While financial issues were a common thread, one issue that is much worse in other states is the number of superintendent vacancies. Three of the states had significant percentages (as much as 33%) of superintendent vacancies anticipated for the next school year. Many of the collective bargaining issues here in Rhode Island are the same ones being discussed throughout the region. Pension reform is another area of commonality. There is great concern about unfunded liabilities.

Another of my colleagues, Myles Turner from Wisconsin, spent much of his time in Denver on line and on the phones dealing with the fallout from their governor's attempts to eliminate collective bargaining. The saga continues and it has been more than two weeks now. The outcome of this attempt is being very closely watch across the country because the potential ripple effect could be enormous. That said, based on how Wisconsin is playing out, I am not sure any other governors will take such a giant leap.

Back home, we are all watching the reconstruction of the Board of Regents. It will certainly have a different makeup with an expectation that there may be changes in pace if not in direction. I am sure we will all be watching with great interest not only the local developments, but also any reactions from the US Department of Education if there are changes to what has been promised in Race to the Top.

I want to close by urging you to participate in our May 13th Annual Meeting. This is the 5th joint venture with RIASBO and the meeting improves and grows with each year. This edition of the Annual Meeting promises to be the best yet. Kathy Sipala and I had the opportunity to hear the key note speaker, Rick Hess, in Denver. Kathy also spoke to him after his presentation to make it clear what it was we wanted from his presentation. The focus topic of our meeting is **Unleashing Innovation: Doing More with Less**. This is a continuation of the focus of our November professional development day and is also the focus of a book by Mr. Hess. Our closing keynoter is Steve Sobel who comes with a reputation as an upbeat presenter, an element we all enjoyed at last year's meeting. I also urge you to make sure that you encourage your RIASBO members to attend.