



3435 Liberty Drive
Springfield, IL 62704
217-789-0125
www.icaanet.org

e-news

November -
December 2006



ICAA Winter Membership Conference



John Colgan presents the Legislator of the Year award to Rep. Marlow Colvin

The ICAA Winter Conference was held December 11-12, 2006 at the Embassy Suites Lakefront in downtown Chicago. In addition to the usual ICAA business, State Representative Marlow Colvin stopped by the ICAA Business Meeting to be presented with the ICAA Legislator of the Year award for his support of such important Community Action issues as Affordable Energy and the Family and Community Development Program.

Jon L. Walker, Professional Registered Master Trainer with the Texas Early Care and Education Career Development System, delivered the lunch keynote address on Monday, December 11. He was both informative and entertaining. Mr. Walker also did a workshop on Diversity in the Workplace.

Karl Pnazek, President/CEO of CAP Services, Inc. in Stevens Point Wisconsin, gave a wonderful presentation on Micro-Enterprise Development for Community Action Agencies. A Head Start PRISM workshop was presented by Katie Williams of ACF Region V.

Tuesday morning began with a fiscal procedure presentation by Amy Sherwood of Sikich, LLP. Her presentation was extremely informative and well organized. Focus Group meetings followed the fiscal workshop. Thank you to the following facilitators of the focus groups: Executive Directors - Dwight Lucas, ECICAA; Head Start - Jean Cunningham, ECICAA; Housing - Jennifer Jaeger, Rockford; LIHEAP - James Phillips, PCCEO; Weatherization - Rebecca Millburg, Sangamon County. The focus groups were a great opportunity to network, share ideas, and voice concerns. A focus group wrap-up session was held during lunch to share what was discussed in each group with the general membership.

In addition, the ICAF-PAC silent auction generated over \$480, more than has been raised in recent years. Look for more excellent silent auction items at the Annual Conference in May.

Overall the ICAA Winter Conference was very successful with great attendance and participation. ICAA thanks the Membership for its continued support!



Keynote speaker Jon Walker speaks to the crowd just before Frank Schwab, John Bowersmith, Vince Clark and Bob Wharton "levitate" John Burrill.



George Davis performs Christmas Carols at Lunch



Focus Group Spotlight - Head Start

The ICAA E-Newsletter will publish a Focus Group Report from the Winter Conference each month leading to the Annual Conference

ICAA's Winter Conference provided a forum for different program staff to network with other agency staff. The Head Start Focus Group provided a useful forum for Head Start staff. The ideas expressed below are from Head Start staff from the following agencies: Central Illinois Economic Development Corporation, East Central Illinois Community Action Association, Peoria Citizens Committee for Economic Opportunity, Project Now and Rockford. The focus group discussed five topic areas that were derived from a survey of the ICAA membership: New Prism Protocol, Statewide Wage Comparison Procedure, COLA for staff, and sharing ideas for counting Non-Federal Share or In-Kind resources.

How are agencies learning the New Prism Protocol?

- ◆ ICAA Mock Peer Review is a good way to prepare for Federal Review.
- ◆ Utilize Prism for Self-Assessment over two month period.
- ◆ Management staff are doing "books" on all protocols.
- ◆ Training for site staff using game show theme.

What are your thoughts on developing a Statewide Wage Comparison Procedure?

In general everyone expressed the need for a protocol for all Head Start Programs because hours/salary are not always comparable. In addition, it is sometimes difficult to obtain information from other agencies. Suggestions included:

- ◆ Utilize the Employers Association to get input on wages.
- ◆ A statewide comparison would also provide a timeline for all Head Start programs in the state.
- ◆ ICAA and the Illinois Head Start Association should develop a template for wage comparison.

How is your agency dealing with COLA increases for staff?

- ◆ One agency applied with the Department of Employment Security to become a reimbursable employer SUTA self-insured.
- ◆ Some agencies do not lay people off for summer.
 - ◆ Pay 50% of hours over summer
 - ◆ Staff do Head Start or other Agency activities
 - ◆ Training/Recruitment/Screenings
 - ◆ Orientations/home visits
- ◆ Obtain Training from the Department of Employment Security on becoming SUTA self-insured.

What are some ways that your agency obtains Non Federal Share?

- ◆ Sell facility to management Corporation and rent it back to Agency
Incentive--Tax benefit to management corporation
- ◆ Property rental
- ◆ Parents and community volunteers
- ◆ Events to bring parents into centers
- ◆ Involving children in parent meetings

Save the Date!

March 28-29, 2007 - LIHEAP Conference - Crowne Plaza Springfield, 800-589-2769
or 217-529-7777

May 6-8, 2007 - ICAA Annual Conference - Hilton Springfield, 217-789-1530

More information will be forthcoming on these big events!

Veto Session Report

Veto Session: Electric Rate Freeze and Minimum Wage Increase

As the General Assembly shuffled into Springfield for the Fall Veto Session, there were two major items of interest for low-income advocates: 1) The electric rate freeze; and 2) A minimum wage increase.

The Electric Rate Freeze: As most CAA people know by now, Ameren and ComEd have both proposed huge increases in their electric rates beginning in January of 2007. While ComEd increase is expected to be in the range of 20%, some Ameren customers can expect an increase of more than 50%! Obviously, low-income people cannot be expected to pay these increases since (in most cases) they cannot even pay the current rates. As a result, ICAA took a position on this issue and supported the three-year freeze that AARP, CUB, the Speaker of the House and the Governor supported.

As the second week of the veto session comes to a close, it appears no action will be taken. Instead they will wait until January when the General Assembly returns. This delay is mainly due to the fact that Senate President Emil Jones said he did not support the three year extension. President Jones met with House minority leader Cross on 11.28.06 and apparently came up with a compromise idea that would gradually implement the rate increases over a three-year period. However, a spokesperson for House Speaker Madigan said that the Speaker still wants the three-year extension. So, low-income people will be left hanging in the balance until January and there is still no indication that a compromise will be reached.

The Minimum Wage Increase: The first week of the Veto Session saw the Illinois Senate pass a one dollar an hour rate increase to the minimum wage. This would move the rate from the current minimum wage of \$6.50 to \$7.50 per hour. The Senate Bill would also eliminate the lower wages employers are allowed to pay for teenagers and would annually index the minimum wage to the cost of living.

As on the electric rate issue, there were major differences between what the legislative leaders and the Governor wanted. In this case, the Governor was in step with Senate President Jones but House Speaker Madigan did not want to move any legislation on this issue saying that it would not become law until July 1st anyway. Despite that objection, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) negotiated middle ground with the Governor and Madigan even though the two men never met or even talked to each other.

The middle ground was this: 1) The minimum wage would go up to \$7.50 on July 1st - the same as the Senate version; 2) The minimum wage in the House version would not be indexed to the cost of living but instead would go up by .25 cents per year for each year until 2010 - at which point the minimum wage would be \$8.25. Another difference between the two bills was the House version would allow employers to pay what was called a probationary wage for the first 90 days of employment. That wage would be .50 cents below whatever the current minimum wage was. As this newsletter goes to press, it was not clear as to whether Senate President Jones would agree to this compromise.

RCAP News

The Illinois Community Action Association (ICAA) has a new State Coordinator for the Illinois Rural Community Assistance Partnership (IL RCAP). The new Coordinator is Ken Rogers.

Ken Rogers has over 32 years experience in environmental protection work. As a Senior Public Service Administrator with the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency (IEPA), he served as the Compliance Assurance Section Manager for the Bureau of Water. Ken's duties while employed at IEPA included monitoring and enforcing the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System permit conditions for wastewater treatment facilities as well as monitoring and enforcement of the Safe Drinking Water Act requirements for water treatment facilities. He also administered the Community Water Supply Testing Program and certification programs for both wastewater and drinking water facility operators.

Ken joins the RCAP staff of John Bowersmith and Sarah Mueth to further supplement ICAA's commitment to provide assistance to communities with water or wastewater needs.



Ken Rogers hard at work



Housing Report

On November 15, Housing Action Illinois held its Annual Meeting at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Springfield. The Housing Action Board of Directors has Co-Chairs, one from the northern part of the state and one from the south. At this year's meeting, Robert Schroeder from Western Egyptian was honored as he left the Board and his position as Co-Chair. Fellow Housing Action Board member Keith Brown from BCMW moved up to the Co-Chair position. The northern Co-Chair is Mike Wasserberg from South Suburban PADS in Homewood.

FCD Training

Upcoming FCD Specialist Training for the Winter 2007 Session dates are:

- January 22- 25
- February 20 - 23

All classroom sessions will be held at ICAA headquarters in Springfield. Four units will be offered online, utilizing the UIS online learning platform, Moodle. The cost is \$340, which includes a \$50 technology fee.

We are also planning a FCD refresher training session in the very near future. Those agencies who have seats reserved for prior sessions will be honored.

Any questions, call Christine at 217/789-0125.

