

**Volume 11
 Issue 1**



*Sitback, relax,
 grab a cup of
 coffee and catch up
 on the latest news
 from the
 SEPA SHRM
 Chapter*



**CHAPTER
 HOTLINE**
*Please feel free
 to contact our
 chapter hotline
 at 215-698-7116
 with noteworthy
 news.*

MESSAGE FROM THE BOARD

By Greg Hartley, PHR, President

Recently, while going through some boxes I came across a piece of paper with a quote on it. I am not sure who or where it came from, but I thought it said a lot in just a few words. The quote read, "We ran an ad for employees, and human beings applied." Sometimes with all the deadlines, compliance issues, regulations, and internal company red tape we may forget that employees are human beings.

Over the past few weeks, the news broadcasts have been filled with reminders of the human side of human resources. On the fourth anniversary of September 11, we saw stories of how people helped their co-workers to safety, but lost their lives when they went back to help others. We watched homes and businesses completely destroyed by hurricane Katrina, followed by companies offering jobs throughout the country to those workers who have been evacuated. Then there is the rallying call from SHRM national for HR professionals to assist with the recovery efforts in the Gulf Coast. (For more information go to www.shrm.org)

These events effect all our work environments in some way. It could be directly, such as a company with branch offices in New Orleans, or it could be indirectly, such as the increase in fuel costs due to the destruction of refineries in the Gulf. Of course there are smaller events or situations which occur every day at work which we as HR professionals have to be prepared to respond to. The best way to do that is by keeping up to date on topics, and continually learning new things so you are ready for change. That's where your SEPA SHRM chapter can help. We want our chapter to be a useful tool by:

- **Providing our membership with monthly meetings that have important and useful topics.** If there is a topic that you would like to see covered please let a board member know.
- **Providing leadership development opportunities.** We are proud to have recently hosted the 3rd Annual SHRM PA State Leadership Conference on September 23 and we continue to sponsor Temple University's Ambler campus student chapter of SHRM.
- **Allowing time at each monthly meeting for members to voice any 'hot topics' that other members can assist them with.**
- **Maintaining an interactive, informative and user-friendly website.** We continually make updates and changes to our website, and appreciate any suggestions members may have for improvements.
- **Recruiting and developing board members who are ready to assist chapter members.**

By being there for you, we hope to help you be there for your employees in times of need. As the quote suggests employees are human beings. I would like to add that so are volunteers. Before closing I would like to thank some volunteers who help make our chapter so successful. First I want to thank the Board members for keeping me on track and making my term so far as President a great experience. It wouldn't work without them. Next, I want to thank the SHRM PA State Leadership Conference committee for their many hours of planning and organizing to ensure a successful event. Finally, a special thanks to Susan Warner, not only for her work as your Chapter Administrator, but also her efforts in organizing the SHRM PA State Leadership Conference committee.

Our chapter is very lucky to have such a great group of individuals who volunteer their time and energy. Please feel free to contact a Board member with any questions, suggestions, or concerns you may have.

"When you go out into the world, it is best to hold hands and stick together." Robert Fulghum

All I Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten

SEPA SHRM PRESENTED: THE 3rd ANNUAL SHRM PA STATE LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

September 23rd 2005—Holy Family University

HIGHLIGHTS

Evening Networking Mixer

General Session: Ethical Issues for Volunteers by Keith Greene, V.P. Member Relations, SHRM National.
 Breakout Sessions: Core Leadership Areas Exhibitors

Closing General Session: "Leadership: From Credible HR to Operations & More—What the books don't tell you!" by James A. Gloner, Sr. VP North Phila Health System.



We'd like to thank the committee for their hard work in making this event possible. Please look for our full report in our next newsletter!.

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**MARK
YOUR
CALENDAR**



- Oct 18** “The HR Function—Going from (In) Credible to Credible.” Speaker Tracee Hunt, V.P. HR, Coca Cola Company, Phila.
- Nov 15** “Baby Boom-erang—The Graying of the Workforce & Managing an Older Workforce.” Speaker Jonathan A. Segal, Esq., Wolf Block
- Dec 20** “Table Topics” Interactive Annual Holiday Breakfast Meeting & HR Jeopardy Game!

Unless otherwise noted, chapter meetings are held the 3rd Tuesday of each month at Best Western Northeast on Route 1, 3 miles south of PA Turnpike exit 28 or 4 miles west of I-95. Meetings begin at 8:00 a.m. and end at 10:30 a.m. They include breakfast, professional networking sessions and a professional development program. Cost is \$12.00 for chapter members and \$17.00 for non-chapter members. Full time students receive special rates. Reserve your spot today by calling the Chapter Hotline at (215) 698-7116 or pre-register on line at www.sepashrm.org.



**SEPA SHRM
SAYS,
“KEEP UP THE
GOOD WORK!”**

Congratulations to SEPA SHRM chapter members Renee Rosenfeld, Assistant V.P., HR at Holy Family University, and Linda Richardson, HRIS Manager at Telerx, on their HR departments winning the 2005 HR Department of the Year Award. Linda also served as co-Chair of the binder committee for the 2005 SHRM PA State Leadership Conference.

The HR Department of the Year Award program is produced and sponsored by the Rosen Group and is designed to identify and recognize HR departments that have demonstrated service excellence to their organizations. Recipients this year will be recognized at a formal ceremony on Oct 20th, at the Sheraton Society Hill. For more information on the HR Department of the Year Awards program, please email info@hrawards.org.

SEPA SHRM TREASURER’S REPORT Submitted by Dick Handschumacher, SPHR

Aug 31, '05

ASSETS

Current Assets

Checking/Savings

First Trust Checking

30,519.31

zOld First Trust

1,000.00

Total Checking/Savings

31,519.31

Total Current Assets

31,519.31

TOTAL ASSETS

31,519.31

LIABILITIES & EQUITY

Liabilities

Current Liabilities

Other Current Liabilities

Monies on receipt to Be Paid Ou 68.00

Total Other Current Liabilities 68.00

Total Current Liabilities

68.00

Total Liabilities

68.00

Equity

Opening Bal Equity

26,074.57

Retained Earnings

16,419.03

Net Income

-11,042.29

Total Equity

31,451.31

TOTAL LIABILITIES & EQUITY

31,519.31

LEGAL AND LEGISLATIVE REPORT

Key issues to follow as Congress resumes session... By Roz Schaffer, SPHR, VP, Legislative Representative

As Congress returns from the August recess, there are several key issues that require attention. Eleven appropriations bills need to be passed before the end of the fiscal year on September 30th. Among them is the appropriation bill for the Department of Labor, Health and Human Services and Education departments (HR 3010). This bill has passed the House but needs to be passed by the Senate. With two Supreme Court Justice vacancies, there is little time available for debating bills. Congress is scheduled to adjourn during the first week in October. There is talk of extending the session into November and passing an omnibus spending bill in lieu of separate bills. If that happens, any controversial amendments to the individual bills would be stripped out to expedite passage of the combined bill.

Unlike last year, when the controversial DOL regulations regarding the FLSA held up passage of the appropriations bill, there are no amendments that are likely to hold up passage this year. The proposed changes to the FMLA regulations that have been anticipated since March have not been published as of yet.

Pension reform is another key issue. After United Airlines announced that it was defaulting on its pension plans in the amount of \$9 billion, Congress became concerned about the impact of the default on the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC). This default, on the heels of defaults by other major corporations such as Motorola and US Airways, have left a \$23.5 billion deficit at the PBGC. Additionally, several other large pension funds, such as those of General Motors and the State of California have been hinting at default. The House Education and the Workforce Committee approved HR 2830 in June and sent the bill to the House Ways and Means Committee. The Senate Finance Committee approved the National Employee Savings and Trust Equity Guarantee Act (NESTEG) in July and sent the bill to the Senate Health Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee.

Last year, pension reform was passed to change the formula used to calculate pension plan liabilities to be based on corporate bond rates. These rates are typically higher than the 30-year Treasury bond rate that was used. Thus, a corporation would not have to contribute as much money into the plan. Under the legislation passed last year, this provision reverts back to the 30-year bond rate in January unless new legislation is passed.

Health care reform has been addressed by Congress this year. In July, the Patient Safety and Quality Improvement Act was signed into law.

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SHRM PA STATE LEGISLATIVE ALERT

PA SB 69 - NEW PA EMPLOYER IMMUNITY LAW PASSED: By Susan Warner, J.D., SPHR, HRTS and Jonathan Segal, Esq., Wolf Block (This should not be construed as legal advice or as pertaining to specific factual situations. Please consult with your attorney for legal advice.):

Although there are gaps in this new law, it is clear that it is intended to protect PA employers when providing legitimate, job-related information. Therefore, if you have been providing "neutral only" references, it is time for you to revisit your policy on reference-checking and develop a procedure for providing appropriate information to potential employers. Remember that you want to minimize the risk of any lawsuit but we can almost never totally "avoid" such risk. Following are some brief Guidelines for providing substantive references in Pennsylvania under the new PA Employer Immunity statute, coupled with our existing Conditional Privilege:

1. Most importantly - DEFINE "performance" in your policies, procedures, handbooks, and performance evaluation instructions to INCLUDE inappropriate behavior" and breaking of company rules -- and give examples of such behavior in your materials;
2. Do NOT include a "neutral reference" policy in your employee handbook if you intend to provide substantive references.
3. Respond only to written inquiries, unless you personally know the person who is asking for the reference. It is best if the request is in writing;
4. Only provide information which is supported by the record;
5. Consider providing substantive references only to employers who reciprocate in terms of their candor, unless the issue is one of potentially serious physical or mental harm to others or relevant, recent convictions. In these cases, the potential legal risk of disclosing should be balanced against the potential legal and moral risks of not disclosing.

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It amends the Public Health Service Act by establishing a confidential reporting structure in which physicians, hospitals, and other health care professionals and entities can voluntarily report information on errors to patient safety organizations (PSOs). PSOs, in turn, would analyze the data to develop patient safety improvement strategies. The legislation stipulates that patient safety information will be confidential and legally protected and provides penalties for unlawful disclosures. It also preserves confidentiality of patient information under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). The act does not shield information available outside of a patient safety evaluation system, such as medical and billing records.

There are other proposals on the table as well. The Fair and Reliable Medical Justice Act (S 1337 and HR 1546) would create a new court system that specializes in medical malpractice litigation. A strong lobbying effort by the trial lawyers' association will make it unlikely that this bill will see passage without a major initiative by Congress.

Another bill, the Better Healthcare through Information Technology Act (S 1355), that would make it easier for healthcare providers to use information technology to improve quality and reduce costs, is more likely to pass.

I encourage all SEPA SHRM members to write to legislators via the SHRM website at <http://www.shrm.org/government/writecongress.asp>

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6. Information that appears on "Performance Evaluation" forms should be the safest to provide (articulated in concretely described terms -- not "opinions" or "conclusions");
7. Focus on performance behaviors, not labels. For example: a. Don't say "lazy." Say "missed a number of material deadlines." b) Don't say "engaged in sexual harassment." Say "told a number of inappropriate jokes of a sexual nature."
8. Do NOT "accuse" of a crime unless the person has been convicted. "Suspicion of 'such and such' after reasonable investigation that has been documented" is as far as one should go -- and then only if necessary to protect from potential harm. Here too, balance the potential legal risk of disclosing against the potential legal and moral risks of not disclosing.
9. Communicate only as much as you need to in order to get the message across. Don't over do it.

Chapter Members & SEPA SHRM-sponsored Villanova Participants Earn SHRM Certification

The SHRM certification awarded by the Human Resource Certification Institute (HRCI) signifies that HR professionals possess the theoretical knowledge and practical experience in HR management necessary to pass a rigorous examination, demonstrating a mastery of the body of knowledge in the field. The following SEPA SHRM members and SEPA SHRM-sponsored Villanova participants deserve our congratulations for earning their PHR or SPHR certification:

Lisa Griffin, SPHR
Marquand Brown, SPHR
Lisa Luna, PHR
Sally Rio, PHR
Bridget Flanagan, PHR

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