

2007 Conference Encourages Officials to 'Make a Difference'



“How does the MTA Conference keep getting better and better, year after year?”

If remarks such as those on the Conference evaluation forms were any indication, attendees at MTA's 2007 Annual Educational Conference, held January 23-26 in Detroit, ranked the event as one of the most successful MTA conferences to date. Nearly 1,300 elected and appointed township officials and employees took over the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center, learning from more than 50 educational sessions—and from each other—how they can make a difference in their communities every day.

STARTING THE WEEK OFF RIGHT

Tuesday was packed with pre-Conference educational sessions for township officials, attorneys, auditors and assessors. The Conference officially got underway Wednesday, January 24, kicked off by the always inspiring Opening Session.

Following the presentation of colors and 55-township 2007 Parade of Flags, 2006 MTA President **Arlene H. Hill** spoke on the direction of the Association, and why MTA is an important organization. “As I come to the end of my year as president, I am even more convinced that MTA is essential to Michigan’s citizens—not just to township residents or elected township officials, but to *all* Michigan residents,” she said. “We know that in every realm of life—whether the clothes that we wear, or the food that we eat—variety makes life interesting.

“MTA gives us a chance to present another way of life. For some of us—maybe a majority of us—that [township] way of life just fits.”

MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill’s address to the audience drew rave reviews, as he focused on the importance of the Conference’s theme: *Township Officials: Making a Difference Every Day*. “That theme resonates to why we have townships in Michigan—and why we *need* townships in the 21st century,” Merrill said. “If you look





“The conference continues to provide knowledge and training, whether you are new or a veteran official.”

at a map of Michigan, townships look like a blanketed quilt—and townships serve much of that same purpose: to ensure that there are elected, accountable citizens running their local government; to ensure that every single township has stewards for the best interest of their community that protect the values, the preferences of their citizens, who will be advocates for that area; and to ensure that there is a strong quality of life, that the needs of the citizens are being met and that the citizens feel a strong connection to their government.”

Merrill left attendees with a charge to “make this theme your ►

Photo captions:

(above left) Officials participated in “round table discussions” with fellow office-holders.

(above right) Several sessions, including the Elections Update, were filled to capacity.

(Below, from left) Attendees hula-danced, and enjoyed ukulele music and a Hawaiian-themed buffet at The Par Plan Luau; MTA’s newest Life Member, Pat White, addressed attendees at the Annual Banquet; Michigan State Police officers at the popular session, “Townships and Troopers”; Networking is always a big part of the Conference; Members find time for fun during session breaks; Officials helped one another figure out the week’s jam-packed schedule; Attendees and exhibitors connected at the MTA Trade Expo.



Time for Learning ...



Workshops offered attendees new knowledge as well as refresher information on a wide range of topics.



Conference Keynote Steve Ford (left) conducted the popular session "Getting Beyond the Vision," in which he described the tools and tasks that can be used to create a "script" for life.



Officials return to their townships armed with new information to better their communities.

mantra for the year," he urged. "Understand that *this* is what your public expects of you. I ask of you, if nothing else, to make sure that, every single day, you make a difference in someone's life. And I thank you for everything you do on behalf of the citizens of Michigan."

Following the graduation ceremony for the third Township Governance Academy class (*turn to page 25*), Keynote Speaker Steve Ford, son of the late President Gerald R. Ford, shared family memories and lessons learned throughout his life as "first son" and as an actor. He explained the necessity of having "thick skin" when serving in the political arena, and how important it is to be grounded in values—something that his parents taught him early on. A montage of photos from his family's life in the White House captivated the audience as he unraveled decades of history, as well as precious snapshots dating back to his family's humble beginnings in Grand Rapids and his father's football-playing days at the University of Michigan. Not only did Ford's family roots in Michigan resonate well amongst our members, but also his understanding of grassroots government, advocating for strong state and local government and a weaker federal government.

NEVER A DULL MOMENT

Attendees made the most of the remainder of the week, packing into workshops, and networking with old and new friends during breaks and in the evenings.



Jamnick

Jamnick Returns to MTA Board

Ypsilanti Charter Township (Washtenaw Co.) Supervisor **Ruth Ann Jamnick** returned to the MTA Board of Directors, after being elected at the District 25 Caucus during MTA's Annual Conference. She will serve Livingston, Washtenaw, Wayne and Monroe Counties.

Jamnick previously served on the MTA Board from 1989 to 1997, after which she completed three consecutive terms in the Michigan House of Representatives, representing the 54th District.

Jamnick has served on the township board for 22 years in a variety of capacities, including treasurer—a position she was elected to seven times. She has also served on several county-wide committees, including the Washtenaw County MTA Chapter, Washtenaw United Way (past chair), Ann Arbor/Ypsilanti Urban Area Transportation Group (past chair), Washtenaw Development Council, Accommodations Ordinance Commission and as township delegate to the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments.

"I am pleased to be returning to serve on the MTA Board," Jamnick said. "I have been given a wonderful opportunity to serve the residents of Ypsilanti Charter Township in both local and state government, and look forward to continuing work on the numerous issues that affect our township."

“As always, there is such a wealth of knowledge gained at the Annual Conference. After nine years, it amazes me that we always have the opportunity to utilize what we learn here in such a positive way back home.”

Officials were able to choose from more than 50 educational sessions—on timely topics including *Better Outcomes Through Consensus Building* and *Outdoor Burning Regulations—Protecting Michigan’s Air and Your Community’s Health*—to enhance their current skills—and learn some new ones. As one attendee put it: “All of the classes I attended were very helpful—I just wish I could have attended more!”

The 2007 Trade Expo remained a popular fixture, boasting many new exhibitors anxious to meet with attendees. “The personal contact with vendors—both current and future—is always beneficial,” an attendee noted.

The Annual Banquet was both an elegant and fun-filled affair, with attendees, guests and more than 40 special legislative guests enjoying a delicious three-course meal, before turning their attention to the awards portion of the evening. **Don R. Hilton Sr.**, 2005 MTA president, received the Past President Award, while **Pat White** became an MTA Life Member. Rep. Chris Ward (R-Brighton) was presented with MTA’s 2006 “Legislator of the Year” award. Three “Excellence in Township Government” awards were also presented, honoring the efforts and projects of local governments from around the state (*see page 23 for the first in a series of articles about the award winners*).

The evening entertainment—Michael and Amy’s dueling pianos—was declared “awesome!” by banquet guests.

The week concluded with the adoption of MTA’s 2007 Legislative Policy Platform (*see pages 35-40*) at the MTA Annual Meeting on Friday morning, and the election of MTA President Larry Rutledge and other MTA officers (*turn to page 20*).

And the Winners are ...

Congratulations to **Nancy Sharum, Grant Township** (St. Clair Co.) clerk, for winning free housing at the 2008 Annual Educational Conference. Her registration was selected from all attendees who registered for the Conference before the December 15 early-bird deadline.

Congrats also go to **Roger Stedman**, treasurer for **Reynolds Township** (Montcalm Co.), winner of free registration to the 2008 Conference. His completed evaluation form was randomly selected from all evaluations submitted by February 7.



The Michigan Township Participating Plan hosted an exciting Hawaiian Luau event on Wednesday evening.



The talents of Michael and Amy wowed attendees and guests at the Annual Banquet.



Officials took advantage of one last time to kick up their heels and have fun at the Afterglow Reception, sponsored by the Burnham & Flower Insurance Group.

A Conversation with Larry Rutledge, 2007 MTA President

*"Township government is not only the most efficient form of government, it's also the government closest to the people," said 2007 MTA President **Larry T. Rutledge** when asked why township government is important to Michigan. Those aren't just hollow words. Rutledge's commitment to township government began in 1975 and has continued ever since. His belief that townships are important to Michigan's future runs as deep as his belief that, now more than ever, every township must recognize that membership in the Michigan Townships Association is essential to preserving our township heritage.*

*First elected to the MTA Board in 1996, Rutledge succeeds 2006 MTA President Arlene E. Hill. Rutledge, **LaSalle Township** (Monroe Co.) supervisor, recently spoke with the Michigan Township News about his beginnings in township government and his thoughts on the future of townships in Michigan.*

Q. What do you feel is the most important aspect of your role as MTA president?

As president, I hope to be a strong voice for our elected officials, but I also hope I will be helping to make decisions that will have a positive effect on all the citizens of Michigan.

Q. What are the top three issues facing townships today?

Protecting the future of revenue sharing; the high costs of road construction, along with the dwindling Act 51 funding; and unfunded mandates.



Outgoing President Arlene Hill shares some presidential advice with Larry Rutledge at the Annual Meeting.



Larry Rutledge addresses delegates during MTA's Annual Meeting, following his installation as 2007 president.

Q. How did you get started in township government?

I was appointed as township treasurer in 1975 to fill a vacancy caused by the death of the previous treasurer. I was told it was an "easy job" and that "anybody can do it" ... RIGHT! I also served as trustee, clerk and chair of the planning commission before becoming supervisor in 1988.

Q. How can we increase public support for township government?

We need to educate our students and citizens, as most people do not know what townships really are. The history and civics lessons being taught in our schools refer very little to townships.

Q. Who are your personal heroes?

There are three:

- (1) Congressman John Dingell, who has been an elected official for over 50 years, but still will take the time to personally listen to his constituents' concerns and do whatever he can to assist them.
- (2) My cousin, David Ausmus, who is more like a brother and who spent three months at Ground Zero following the 9-11 attack. He has proven to me many times that we should be proud to live in this wonderful country.
- (3) **Tim DeSloover**, our township fire chief, and his 27 totally volunteer firefighters. They leave their families night and day to risk their lives to protect and serve our community. I am very proud that they wear the LaSalle Township patch on their uniforms and fire gear!

Q. After your term as president concludes, what would you like the membership to remember about you?

I would like our members to say, "He was a very fair president who respected his peers and coworkers, and always treated people the way he wanted people to treat him."

Q. Why is it important for townships to be members of MTA?

MTA is an organization made up of dedicated local officials who work one-on-one every day with our citizens to provide the best form of government anywhere. But now more than ever, townships are under attack from all sides. MTA's strength and ability to help shape public policy is in the fact that we represent more than 99 percent of all of Michigan's townships. You can't put a price on the value of membership in an association like MTA.



Larry Rutledge's wife, Linda, does the honors of affixing the MTA president pin to his lapel.

Personal Profile

FAMILY:

I've been married for 44 wonderful years to my wife, Linda. We have three children, Julie, Cindy and Tom, and eight grandchild-

dren. My wife and I have lived in LaSalle Township for 42 years.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:

I'm a lifelong member of the Zion Lutheran Church in Monroe. I served 10 years as a LaSalle Township firefighter. I'm a past member of the United Way Board of Directors and the Muscular Dystrophy Events-a-Rama. I previously served on the Monroe County Tax Allocation Board, Monroe County Road Association and Ordinance Review Committee of the Michigan Mobile Home Commission.

In 2005, I was appointed to serve on the Governor's Task Force on Local Government Services and Fiscal Stability. My current memberships include the Monroe County Democrats, Monroe County Self-Help Committee (roads), Monroe County Federal Aid Committee (roads), the 911 Emergency Dispatch Authority, and more!

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF LARRY RUTLEDGE:

From 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., I'm in the township offices, usually five days a week, unless I can sneak out early once in a while to watch my grandkids' sporting events. I meet my wife about three times a week for lunch and attend numerous daytime and evening meetings related to work or MTA each week.

I spend my free time with my wife and grandchildren four-wheeling, camping, going to recitals and any time left mowing our six acres.

2007 MTA Executive Committee



Rutledge

LARRY T. RUTLEDGE, President Supervisor, LaSalle Township (Monroe Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 1996
- Elected supervisor in 1988; clerk, 1984-1988; trustee, 1980-1984; treasurer, 1975-1978

GARY LEE CRAMER, First Vice President Supervisor, Kalamazoo Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 1999
- Elected supervisor in 1996; trustee, 1980-1996



Cramer

COLLEEN SCHWARTZ, Second Vice President Clerk, Milford Charter Township (Oakland Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2001
- Elected clerk in 1996; deputy clerk, 1977-1996



Schwartz

LINDA TOWSLEY, Treasurer Clerk, Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 1997
- Appointed clerk in 1988; deputy clerk for one year



Towsley

JACK RANDOLPH, Secretary Supervisor, East China Charter Township (St. Clair Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 2005
- Appointed supervisor in 2000; trustee, 1994-2000



Randolph

ARLENE E. HILL, Immediate Past President Clerk, Chocolay Charter Township (Marquette Co.)

- Elected to MTA Board in 1993
- Elected clerk in 1986; Forsyth Township clerk for six years; deputy clerk for two years



Hill

2007 Parade of Flags Offers Inspirational Start to Conference



Thank you to the 2007 Parade of Flags participants, and to MTA Immediate Past President Don R. Hilton, Sr., for leading the parade with the MTA flag!

Alpena Township (Alpena Co.)
 Alpine Township (Kent Co.)
 Arbel Township (Tuscola Co.)
 Aurelius Township (Ingham Co.)
 Bloomingdale Township (Van Buren Co.)
 Breitung Charter Township (Dickinson Co.)
 Bridgehampton Township (Sanilac Co.)
 Brownstown Charter Township (Wayne Co.)
 Buena Vista Charter Township (Saginaw Co.)
 Cedar Creek Township (Muskegon Co.)
 China Charter Township (St. Clair Co.)
 Chippewa Township (Isabella Co.)
 Chocolay Charter Township (Marquette Co.)
 Columbia Township (Van Buren Co.)
 Cottrellville Township (St. Clair Co.)
 Croton Township (Newaygo Co.)
 Dalton Township (Muskegon Co.)
 Eagle Township (Clinton Co.)
 Edenville Township (Midland Co.)
 Escanaba Township (Delta Co.)
 Flushing Charter Township (Genesee Co.)
 Frankenlust Township (Bay Co.)
 Fruitland Township (Muskegon Co.)
 Grant Township (St. Clair Co.)
 Hamlin Township (Eaton Co.)
 Hampton Charter Township (Bay Co.)
 Homer Township (Midland Co.)

Huron Charter Township (Wayne Co.)
 Ingersoll Township (Midland Co.)
 Kinross Charter Township (Chippewa Co.)
 Lake Charter Township (Berrien Co.)
 LaSalle Township (Monroe Co.)
 Leroy Township (Ingham Co.)
 Leslie Township (Ingham Co.)
 Lincoln Township (Midland Co.)
 Lincoln Charter Township (Berrien Co.)
 Manistee Township (Manistee Co.)
 Marquette Charter Township (Marquette Co.)
 Metamora Township (Lapeer Co.)
 Millington Township (Tuscola Co.)
 Moran Township (Mackinac Co.)
 Oscoda Charter Township (Iosco Co.)
 Oshtemo Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.)
 Otsego Township (Allegan Co.)
 Plainfield Township (Iosco Co.)
 Plainfield Charter Township (Kent Co.)
 Raisin Charter Township (Lenawee Co.)
 Richland Township (Kalamazoo Co.)
 Sebewa Township (Ionia Co.)
 Sebewaing Township (Huron Co.)
 St. Charles Township (Saginaw Co.)
 West Branch Township (Ogemaw Co.)
 Williams Charter Township (Bay Co.)
 Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.)
 Worth Township (Sanilac Co.)
 Zeeland Charter Township (Ottawa Co.)

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