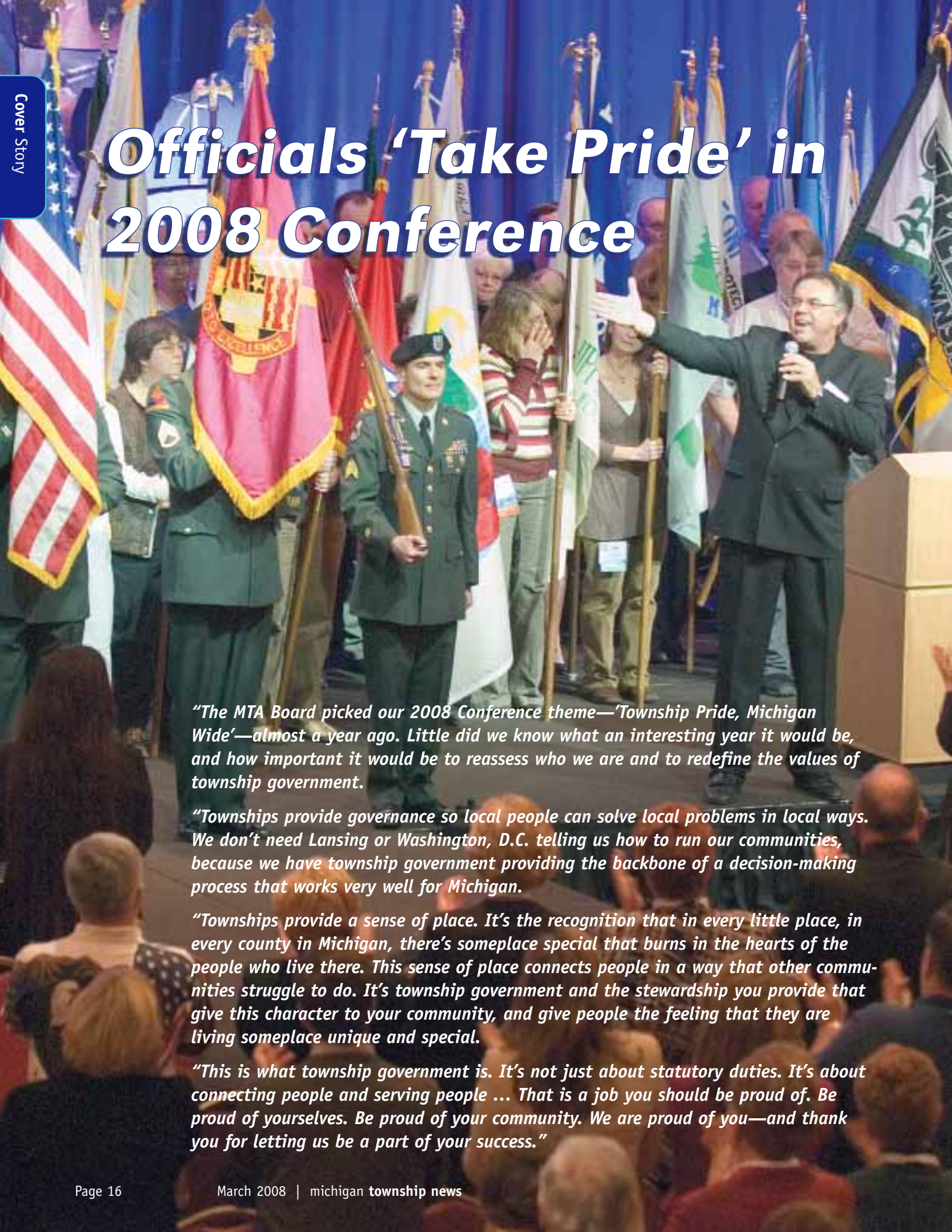


Officials 'Take Pride' in 2008 Conference

A man in a dark suit is speaking at a podium on a stage. He is gesturing with his right hand towards a group of people standing behind him. The group includes several individuals in military uniforms, one of whom is holding a rifle. They are holding various flags, including the American flag, a Michigan state flag, and several township flags. The background is a blue curtain.

"The MTA Board picked our 2008 Conference theme—'Township Pride, Michigan Wide'—almost a year ago. Little did we know what an interesting year it would be, and how important it would be to reassess who we are and to redefine the values of township government.

"Townships provide governance so local people can solve local problems in local ways. We don't need Lansing or Washington, D.C. telling us how to run our communities, because we have township government providing the backbone of a decision-making process that works very well for Michigan.

"Townships provide a sense of place. It's the recognition that in every little place, in every county in Michigan, there's someplace special that burns in the hearts of the people who live there. This sense of place connects people in a way that other communities struggle to do. It's township government and the stewardship you provide that give this character to your community, and give people the feeling that they are living someplace unique and special.

"This is what township government is. It's not just about statutory duties. It's about connecting people and serving people ... That is a job you should be proud of. Be proud of yourselves. Be proud of your community. We are proud of you—and thank you for letting us be a part of your success."



MTA Executive Director Larry Merrill set the tone to MTA's 2008 MTA Annual Educational Conference during his opening session address, kicking off the week on a proud note. Nearly 1,100 elected and appointed township officials and employees took part in the four-day educational and networking event, Jan. 8-11, at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center. With more than 70 educational sessions, time for socializing and networking with colleagues, and helping shape the Association's legislative future, Conference attendees had a lot to be proud of.

'A GREAT, BUSY YEAR—AND A REWARDING ONE'

Though the Conference officially began Wednesday, with the always inspiring opening session, Tuesday was packed with pre-Conference educational sessions for township officials, attorneys, auditors and assessors. The opening session kicked off with an emotional presentation of colors by a military color guard, and the 56-township 2008 Parade of Flags. As the flags filled the stage, special guest Tom Treece, a Michigan resident and U.S. Army veteran, sang the national anthem and performed his rendition of "Proud to be an American," moving many audience members to tears.

MTA President **Larry T. Rutledge** then reflected on his year at the helm of the Association—a year when townships were threatened by House Bill 4780, legislation that would move tax collecting, assessing and election administration duties from townships to counties.

"When HB 4780 was first introduced, I saw the dedication and passion of township officials, and MTA staff, to do whatever it took to make sure this legislation would be defeated," Rutledge recalled. "I went from being very scared to being very proud."

Though Rutledge has held numerous positions with **LaSalle Township** (Monroe Co.)—including planning commission chair, volunteer firefighter and every elected position on the township board, currently serving as supervisor—"nothing compares to the honor you've given me to allow me to be your MTA president," he said. "It's been a great year, a busy year—and a rewarding one. It would be very difficult for me to highlight any certain event this past year, but it was always an honor to be introduced and recognized as the president of MTA."

Following the graduation ceremony for the Township Governance Academy class of 2008 (see page 24), former NBA superstar and Michigan native Tim McCormick took to the stage as the Conference keynoter, inspiring attendees with his *Never Be Average* game plan.

"I hate 'average,'" said McCormick, a resident of **West Bloomfield Charter Township** (Oakland Co.). "Average is unacceptable. I challenge you to be better than you are—and right now, you're pretty darn good. But you're capable of being great. If you set incredibly high goals, you can do whatever you want."

McCormick's *Never Be Average* game plan—which he uses while working with current NBA players to maximize their performance on the basketball court—is a three-step process:

- 1) **Peak performance**—A passion to be better and to keep growing.
- 2) **Attitude**—Confidence, enthusiasm and optimism.
- 3) **Perserverance**—To let go of the negative things in your life.

"Have a championship performance," McCormick urged. "Maximize your performance, and be the best that you can be." ▶



A FULL WEEK

Other highlights included:

- More than 70 educational sessions—on topics from wind energy to downtown development authorities, offering knowledge and know-how for officials and employees from townships large and small, urban and rural.
- The unveiling of MTA's exciting new designation program, Township of Excellence (*see page 6*).
- A sold-out Trade Expo—with more than 114 vendors helping officials more readily and efficiently meet their communities' needs.
- The debut of the new MTA booth, which filled the Ontario Foyer outside the exhibit hall, offering MTA products and apparel as well as an impressive display of "township pride" photos from around the state.
- A look back to the heyday of Motown, with the Par Plan Motown Revue, hosted by the Michigan Township Participating Plan.
- An elegant, fun-filled Annual Banquet, including a performance by comedian, impersonator and singing impressionist Joey Voices. The following awards were also presented: **Arlene Hill**, clerk of **Chocolay Charter Township** (Marquette Co.), MTA Past President Award; and **Maxine McClelland**, supervisor of **Big Rapids Charter Township** (Mecosta Co.), MTA Life Member Award.
- Time to unwind and network at the Afterglow Reception, sponsored by Burnham & Flower Insurance Group.
- Adoption of MTA's 2008 Legislative Policy Platform (*see page 33*) at the MTA Annual Meeting on Friday morning.
- Election of 2008 MTA President **Gary L. Cramer**, supervisor of **Kalamazoo Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) and other MTA officers (*see page 21*).

Mark your calendars now for MTA's 56th Annual Education Conference, Jan. 27-30, 2009, at the Detroit Marriott at the Renaissance Center. ■

Photos: (Page 17) The opening session set an inspiring tone for the week. (Pages 18-19) (1) MTA Executive Director Lary Merrill stirred attendees with his motivational address during opening session; (2) Conference keynoter Tim McCormick had attendees laughing and ready to tackle new challenges; (3) The Annual Banquet offered time for dining, recognition and socializing; (4) Attendees garnered new information from educational sessions; (5) Banquet entertainer Joey Voices drew rave reviews; (6) Officials took part in round table discussions; (7) Time to "cut a rug" at the Afterglow Reception; (8) Workshops were offered on timely topics, including ambulance authorities; (9) Officials shared ideas through networking; (10) The Par Plan Motown Revue was an evening of music and fun; (11) 'Hot topic' sessions filled meeting rooms to capacity; (12) MTA's new life member, Maxine McClelland; (13) The new MTA booth display was admired by attendees; (14) Business Solution Sessions, taught by MTA Allied Service Providers, were popular lunch-time options.

Photos by Trumpie Photography, Grand Ledge. For more photos, go to www.trumpiephotography.com.



SORENSEN ELECTED TO MTA BOARD

Jeffrey Sorensen, supervisor of **Cooper Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.), was elected during a caucus at the MTA Conference to represent Allegan, Barry and Kalamazoo Counties as District 19 director on the MTA Board. A supervisor since 2000, Sorensen says he is looking forward to working together with his fellow township officials to strengthen township government in Michigan.



Sorensen

"It is my hope to continue to promote the interests of township officials, and encourage ethical practices that uphold the traditions, values and unique characteristics of township government and the people we serve," Sorensen said. "We are all a community, and what affects one township affects us all."

Prior to becoming supervisor, Sorensen served on the Cooper Charter Township fire department beginning in 1986. From 1988 through 2000, he served as the assistant fire chief. In addition, Sorensen served as president of the Kalamazoo County Council of Government in 2006 and 2007. He has been a member of the Kalamazoo Area Transportation Study since 2000, and vice chair of the Kalamazoo Regional Water and Wastewater Commission, where he has served since 2000.

INTEGRATED EMS SOLUTIONS NAMED 'TOWNSHIP PRIDE' BOOTH WINNER

Congratulations to Integrated EMS Solutions for being named MTA's "Township Pride" booth winner! Judged by an independent panel of Conference attendees, Integrated EMS Solutions best displayed the theme of the 2008 Annual Educational Conference & Expo: "Township Pride, Michigan Wide." The booth was judged on spirit of township pride, neatness and appearance, courtesy/friendliness of staff, and relevance to townships.

Integrated EMS Solutions offers services and solutions geared toward the challenges of providing emergency medical services to communities of all sizes. Visit them online at www.iemss.com.



Pictured are: (l-r) Cindy Shuell, Lynn Schutter, Mike Barrow and Randy Gerber, from Integrated EMS Solutions.



Meet Gary L. Cramer, 2008 MTA President



“Wow.”

That was the first word that **Gary L. Cramer** spoke as he accepted the presidency of the MTA Board of Directors for 2008. Proud of township government, and the way it serves people, Cramer is looking forward to serving as MTA's president. An avid swimmer, Cramer applies that same discipline to his dedication as a public servant.

First elected trustee of **Kalamazoo Charter Township** (Kalamazoo Co.) in 1980, he served in that position until 1996 when he was elected supervisor. He has served on the MTA Board of Directors since 1999.

The *Michigan Township News* sat down with Cramer after his election as president, to discuss where he's been as a township official—and where he plans to lead the Association.

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

I'm looking forward to advocating on behalf of all townships in the state of Michigan. Also, I'm open to cooperating with other statewide organizations in ways that will improve life for all of Michigan's citizens.

Q. What are your goals as MTA president?

Since 2008 is an election year, I'm encouraging all township officials to provide support to individuals running for the state

Legislature who understand and support township government. It is important that our voices are heard at the state level.

I'm also encouraging MTA county chapters to be prepared to respond swiftly to any state legislation that will have a serious effect on township government. House Bill 4780 energized us last year and we need to be prepared for any similar legislation that might appear this year or in the future.

Q. What in your professional experience prepared you to serve as MTA's president?

My professional experience has had two very distinct veins. I spent more than 30 years in public education with a majority of the time as a school principal. Also, I'm completing my 28th year in township government. The combination of these experiences has given me an excellent foundation.

Q. Why did you get started in township government?

My start in township government was brought on by a disagreement in a proposed land use plan that was being developed by Kalamazoo Charter Township. During this process, I decided if I was going to have a long-term influence I should try to get elected to the township board. I ran in the next election [in 1980] and was elected to a trustee's position, which allowed me to be the board representative on the planning commission. The residents have continued to elect me since then and the rest, as they say, "is history."

Q. What are your thoughts on how township officials can further engage residents in the local government process?

In this day and age, engaging residents in the local government process is becoming more difficult because of lifestyles and apathy on the part of individuals. I find the best way to engage residents is by going to them rather than waiting for them to come to me. This can be done either in a group environment or individual contacts. Somehow, one must stay in touch with the pulse of the community.



Outgoing President Larry T. Rutledge (left) affixes the MTA president pin to Gary L. Cramer's lapel following his installation as MTA president at the MTA Annual Meeting, Jan. 11.

Q. Who are your personal heroes?

My personal heroes are my parents. They raised me in a non-judgmental environment that included unconditional love and openness. They allowed me to find my own way through life's many struggles, and yet always knowing their support was there. This type of an environment in my early years has allowed me to grow as a person.

Q. Upon completion of your term, what would you like your legacy to be?

I would hope to be remembered as a positive, progressive leader who worked for the betterment of township government in the 21st century. ■



Members of the Kalamazoo County MTA Chapter presented new MTA "First Lady" Jan Cramer (second from right) with flowers during the MTA Annual Meeting.

Personal Profile

Family: I was born and raised in Muskegon. After high school, I attended Western Michigan University (WMU), and it was then that I met the love of my life, Jan. We

have been married for more than 42 years, and are blessed with two beautiful daughters, Kimber and Kelly. Kelly delivered triplet granddaughters two years ago, and they have provided a new energetic spark to our lives.

Community Involvement: My life has been mixed with over 30 years of time spent in Kalamazoo Public Schools, and 28 years with Kalamazoo Charter Township. These experiences have seen me involved with more activities than I care to admit to. However, two experiences I wish to comment on are: (1) We have had family camping experiences every year for the past 33 years, and (2) I continue to volunteer at WMU in an effort to help with the athletic program. Jan and I greatly enjoy collegiate sports at WMU (Go Broncos!).

A Day in the Life of Gary L. Cramer: My weekdays are spent at our township offices, or at meetings that seem to come with the job. Time away from the office has changed greatly in the last two years. With our triplet grandchildren in North Carolina, Jan and I spend as much time as possible there. I continue to enjoy my responsibilities with Kalamazoo Charter Township, and I'm looking forward with great anticipation to serving as MTA president this year.

2008 MTA Executive Committee



Cramer

Gary L. Cramer, President Supervisor, Kalamazoo Charter Township (Kalamazoo Co.)

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

Colleen Schwartz, First Vice President Clerk, Milford Charter Township (Oakland Co.)

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



Schwartz



Towsley

Linda Towsley, Second Vice President Clerk, Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.)

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

Jack Randolph, Treasurer Supervisor, East China Charter Township (St. Clair Co.)

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



Randolph



Renn

Bill Renn, Secretary Supervisor, Chandler Township (Huron Co.)

- ◆ Elected to MTA Board in 2001
- ◆ Elected supervisor in 1990

Larry T. Rutledge, Immediate Past 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



Rutledge



Parade of Flags Proud to Jump-Start 2008 Conference

Thank you to the 2008 Parade of Flags participants, and to MTA District 2 Director **Denny Olson**, supervisor of **Breitung Charter Township** (Dickinson Co.), for leading the parade with the MTA flag.

Ada Township (Kent Co.)

Alpena Township (Alpena Co.)

Alpine Township (Kent Co.)

Arbela Township (Tuscola Co.)

Bangor Charter Township (Bay Co.)

Bloomington Charter Township (Van Buren Co.)

Breitung Charter Township
(Dickinson Co.)

Brownstown Charter Township
(Wayne Co.)

Buena Vista Charter Township
(Saginaw Co.)

Cedar Creek Township (Muskegon Co.)

Chesaning Township (Saginaw 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.)

East China Charter Township
(St. Clair Co.)

Edenville Township (Midland Co.)

Escanaba Township (Delta Co.)

Hamlin Township (Eaton Co.)

Homer Township (Midland Co.)

Huron Charter Township (Wayne Co.)

Ingersoll Township (Midland Co.)

James Township (Saginaw Co.)

Kalamazoo Charter Township
(Kalamazoo Co.)

Lake Charter Township (Berrien Co.)

LaSalle Township (Monroe Co.)

Leoni Township (Jackson Co.)

Leroy Township (Ingham Co.)

Lincoln Charter Township (Berrien Co.)

Macomb Township (Macomb Co.)

Marion Township (Livingston Co.)

Menominee Township (Menominee Co.)

Millington Township (Tuscola Co.)

Mt. Morris Charter Township
(Genesee Co.)

Oscoda Charter Township (Iosco Co.)

Oshtemo Charter Township
(Kalamazoo Co.)

Otsego Township (Allegan Co.)

Otsego Lake Township (Otsego Co.)

Pere Marquette Charter Township
(Mason Co.)

Pierson Township (Montcalm Co.)

Plainfield Township (Iosco Co.)

Plainfield Charter Township (Kent Co.)

Richland Township (Kalamazoo Co.)

Sebewa Township (Ionia Co.)

Victor Township (Clinton Co.)

West Branch Township (Ogemaw Co.)

White Lake Charter Township
(Oakland Co.)

Williams Charter Township (Bay Co.)

Windsor Charter Township (Eaton Co.)

Worth Township (Sanilac Co.)

Zeeland Charter Township (Ottawa Co.)

MTA Thanks the Following 2008 Conference Sponsors for Their Support

PLATINUM

Burnham & Flower
INSURANCE GROUP



GOLD



Marriott
DETROIT
AT THE RENAISSANCE CENTER



SILVER



FORESIGHT GROUP



Foster, Swift, Collins & Smith, P.C./Attorneys at Law



BRONZE

Bendzinski & Co.,
Municipal Finance Advisors

ITC Holdings Corp.

MBIA—Michigan CLASS

Miller, Canfield, Paddock & Stone, PLC

Rowe Incorporated

Tetra Tech

Treetops Resort

Tyler Technologies/FundBalance

Wade Trim