

# The NAGC Communicator

National Association of Government Communicators

February 2007

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## NAGC 2007 Communications School

### Communications: Central to Good Government

As a government communicator, if you attend one event this year, you should make it the National Association of Government Communicators 2007 Communications School. The three-day conference will be held at the Doubletree Hotel in Chicago-Oak Brook in Oak Brook, Ill, April 24 through 26, with pre-conference training offered Monday, April 23.



*A session at the 2006 Communications School.*

*Communications School, page 2*

“Government communicators at all levels of government – federal, state and local – will find this conference invaluable in improving their capabilities and by providing information unique to their role in

### Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards Recognize Outstanding Work

Entries in the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards are presently being judged, according to **Jennifer Callahan**, competitions director. The awards program, sponsored by the National Association of Government Communicators, is the only international awards program that recognizes the outstanding work of federal, state and local government communicators. The winners of this year's competition will be announced at a special awards banquet during the 2007 Communications School in Chicago, April 24-26.

“This year, we have more than 550 entries in the awards program,” said Callahan. Blue Pencil categories are designed for written and print-related products, such as publications, photography, visual communications and special communications. Gold Screen categories are reserved for electronic media, which includes video, audio, Internet, multimedia and CD-ROM/DVD. First and Second Place awards, and Awards of Excellence, are presented in each category.

*Awards, page 3*



**A presentation held at the 2006 Communications School.**

conference last year in Baltimore. Attendees at this year's conference will hear from Pulitzer Prize-winning photographer John H. White, strategic planner Mary Hoffman, USA.gov, and Alison Davis, founder and CEO of the award-winning internal communications firm Davis & Company. The three pre-conference workshops will feature Larry Smith on Media Training in Crisis/Risk Communications; Graves Fowler Creative conducting a workshop on creating an effective and visible communications program; and the National Association of Government Webmasters presenting a session on creating your messages on the Web.

Communications School planners have made the best effort to offer sessions that will appeal to every field in government communications. Breakout sessions will include Incident Command System, Adding Sparkle to Your Speeches, Prepping the Boss for a Press Conference, Local Government on Campus, Video News Releases, Adobe Photoshop and InDesign and much more.

There also will be an exhibit hall where attendees can talk with vendors and learn about products and services oriented to government communicators. According to NAGC Executive Director **Elizabeth Armstrong**, CAE, MAM, more exhibitors and vendors are expected to participate in this year's Communications School. Sponsorships are being sought at all levels, ranging from sponsoring President's Reception (\$1,000) to hosting the Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards Banquet (\$25,000). There are other sponsorship opportunities in between.

The traditional ending of the conference will be the Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards Banquet on the evening of April 26. The cost of the banquet is now included in the NAGC conference registration fee, so more school attendees can share in the festivities.

The NAGC Board has approved the fee structure for the 2007 Communications School (see box). "Early registration results in a cost savings that is attractive for government budgets," said Rose. The total registration package includes access to all presentations and workshops, exhibits and awards banquet, but does not include the one-day pre-conference workshops, accommodations or transportation.

Information on the 2007 Communications School is available on the NAGC Web site at [www.NAGCOnline.org](http://www.NAGCOnline.org) or by writing NAGC, 201 Park Washington Court, Falls Church, VA 22046-4527. ■

government," said **Gene Rose**, NAGC president.

"We are lining up some key speakers, and arranging some outstanding workshops and breakout sessions," said **Carrie Moritomo**, Communications School program chair, who pointed out that this year's Communications School promises to surpass the very successful

**Register now at [www.nagconline.org](http://www.nagconline.org).**

### **Communications School Fees**

\* Early Registration Fee (through March 9):  
\$650 Member                      \$775 Non-Member

\* Full Registration Fee (March 10 – April 26):  
\$795 Members                      \$925 Non-Members

*\* Fees include all sessions, meals and receptions during the Communications School, and now including the Blue Pencil/Gold Screen Awards Banquet.*

Pre-conference Training (Monday, April 23)  
\$100 Members                      \$150 Non-Members

Registration Single Day Rates:  
\$250 for Members                      \$300 for Non-members

Exhibit Hall Only  
\$25 for Members                      \$50 for Non-members

BPGS Awards Banquet Only  
\$100 Members                      \$150 Non-members

## Recognizing Outstanding Work, *continued from page 1*

NAGC also will present its highest recognition of the year, the Communicator of the Year. This recognition for 2006 was presented to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Max Mayfield, Director of the Tropical Prediction Center, National Hurricane Center, for his work during Hurricane Katrina.

Watch the NAGC Web site to find out the winners of this year's Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards and who will be selected as Communicator of the Year for 2007. ■



*Jennifer Callahan, competitions director, with some of the 2006 winning entries.*

## Let's Raise the Level of Our Voice

Government communicators are not immune to government oversight. Our profession can be affected by something as broad as the outsourcing of communication jobs to something as specific as how video news releases are to be distributed, and even something as seemingly simple as how and where your agency's name is to be displayed on a press release.

Accordingly, NAGC and its new management firm, ASMII, have agreed to take a more active role in advocating on behalf of government communicators nationwide.

NAGC is creating a Public Affairs Advisory Committee to identify issues upon which the organization needs to take a stand on behalf of communications professionals in public service. We seek seven government communicators from all levels to work with the board to draft letters, resolutions and other documents in response to actions that may have a direct impact on what we do as government communicators.

Just as AARP, the NRA or the ACLU take an active role to protect their members' interests, we believe it is just as important for NAGC to be responsive to changes in our industry. We hope you will join in this effort to monitor legislation and trends at all levels of government.

If you are interested in serving on this committee, please send an e-mail to our headquarters at [info@nagconline.org](mailto:info@nagconline.org) by February 28.

### **Continuing Our Promise**

Back in the fall, I told you of the Board of Directors' commitment to making this organization stronger and more visible. By now, I hope you have spent some time on our new Web site, [www.nagconline.org](http://www.nagconline.org) and are taking advantage of some of the member-only services.

You've also noticed more communications coming from the home office, including notifications of our awards contest and the upcoming Communications School in April. We have also started a "To the Point" column highlighting the organization's activities.

We're just getting warmed up. If you would like to join with your colleagues from across the nation and take part in this growing organization, we welcome your participation. Bring us your ideas or ask us what you can do. You'll be glad you did. ■

*Gene Rose, president*



## President's Report



**Gene Rose**

## Delegation from Armenia Learns About NAGC

Providing a forum for education, recognition and networking was how the National Association of Government Communicators was described to a delegation of government representatives from Armenia. **Jennifer Callahan**, **John Nash** and **Melissa Trumbull**, representing NAGC, met with the delegation on Thursday, Jan. 17, to discuss the operations of the professional association and how it serves its members.

Callahan explained the organization's annual Communications School, where government communicators from federal, state and local levels hear expert speakers, learn about new communications technologies and exchange ideas with their peers. She described the NAGC Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards as being an important way to recognize government communicators for their outstanding work. Callahan also discussed the new NAGC Web site structure ([www.NAGCOnline.org](http://www.NAGCOnline.org)) and how important it is in keeping members informed and involved in the organization's activities.

After summarizing the professional association's history and describing special characteristics of government communicators, Nash explained the importance of the NAGC Code of Ethics, indicating that it is an ethical standard and guideline that NAGC members endorse.

In candid discussions, it was found that each group faced many similarities and challenges, such as the need to accomplish more with fewer resources, understanding emerging demographic segments and relying on the Internet as a means of information exchange. The Armenian delegation was especially interested in ways government communicators work with members of the media in promoting worthwhile government programs, providing requested information and protecting restricted data.

The delegation, hosted by the Center for International Exchanges at the Academy for Educational Development in Washington, D.C., was composed of top government policy and public affairs persons who were learning how various aspects of U.S. public and private sectors interact. ■



*NAGC representatives John Nash (seated left), Jennifer Callahan (seated right) and Melissa Trumbull (standing right) met with government communicators from Armenia.*

## Exhibitors and Sponsors Demonstrate Products



*NAPS exhibiting at the 2006 Communications School.*

At the 2007 Communications School, attendees will again be able to see some of the latest concepts and improvements in organizational communication.

According to NAGC Executive Director Elizabeth Armstrong, more than 30 vendors and exhibitors are expected to participate in this year's conference. There will be special times during the conference for attendees to visit the exhibits and talk with vendors. This is a valuable service provided at the NAGC Communications School. Don't miss it. ■

## New Board Member Appointed



**Deidra McGee**

**Deidra L. McGee** recently was appointed to the NAGC Board of Directors as director for volunteer and education. She completes the term of board member **P.J. Spaul**.

McGee is a public affairs specialist and Web content manager for the Forest Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Northern Research & Development branch headquarters' office in Newtown Square, Pa. She manages news media relations, providing technical and scientific communications to employees, scientists,

congressional staffers, Web users and collaborators. She is a results-oriented team player and a leader in her community.

"I attended the 2006 Communications School in Baltimore and was really impressed with the caliber of the Board and NAGC members at the local, state and federal level," said McGee. "My level of enthusiasm and background must have impressed the Board and I was asked to serve in a leadership role."

"As the director for volunteer and education, I plan to draw from my volunteer experiences as well as other educational and training opportunities I have had at the federal government level to help NAGC," she said.

Contact her at [dmcgee@fs.fed.us](mailto:dmcgee@fs.fed.us) to get involved in NAGC. ■

### **NAGC Board of Directors 2007**

**Gene Rose, president**

**George Selby, president-elect**

**David Matustik, past-president**

**Virginia Narsete, vice president for administration**

**John Nash, treasurer**

**Gaye Farris, secretary**

**Jennifer Callahan, competitions director**

**Carrie Moritomo, programs director**

**Thomas Collins, communications director**

**Jill Wiggins, member development director**

**Deidra McGee, volunteer and education director**

**(Vacant), fundraising director**

## The Value of NAGC Membership

As a member of NAGC, you are part of the leading organization representing and serving government communicators at all levels of government; local, regional, state, federal, and military. Belonging to NAGC provides you with key member benefits that can enhance your professional career in a number of ways.

There are opportunities to network with your peers to share personal knowledge and learn from the experiences of others who serve at the federal, state, regional, and local levels. Your membership provides you with opportunities for professional education on number of levels, from attending the annual Communications School, to accessing useful how-to-tips on the Web site at [www.nagconline.org](http://www.nagconline.org). Or perhaps if you have a particular subject of interest, you soon can join one of the new special interest groups for online peer information exchanges that are forming (watch your e-mail for an announcement with more information).

Your membership also entitles you to discounts on fees for submitting entries into the Blue Pencil and Gold Screen Awards competition, as well as discounted registration prices at the Communications School. The 2007 Communications School will be held April 23-26 at the Doubletree Hotel Chicago-Oakbrook. Check the Web site for the complete Communications School program and registration information.

Value is a two way street. As a member, your ideas and suggestions about the types of programs and services that are being offered as NAGC membership benefits are important to us. Your ideas and suggestions about the types of programs and services you would like to see offered as part of your membership are welcome and important.

NAGC is a great organization that will become more effective through your participation. Opportunities to grow and learn more as an active member are available and waiting for you. So please send your comments, suggestions and questions to NAGC Executive Director **Elizabeth Armstrong** at [armstrong@nagconline.org](mailto:armstrong@nagconline.org) or call 703-538-1787. ■

Visit  
[www.nagconline.org](http://www.nagconline.org)  
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## The Government Communicator Experience

After 19 years experience working as a government communicator for the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and the U.S. Census Bureau, it is clear to me that there are certain distinguishing characteristics that separate us from our for-profit brethren in the commercial sector, and link us closely to causal agencies in the not-for-profit world. These distinctions and commonalities are true whether you work for the federal government in Washington, D.C., any one of 50 state legislatures, a mayor's office, or a social service agency or program funded with tax levied funds.

From writers and editors to public speakers and Webmasters, graphic designers to exhibit specialists and marketing types, we as government communicators have an obligation to:

- Bear in mind that we provide a valuable and honorable public service.
- Represent and act in the agency's and the public's best interest.
- Interpret and clearly explain policies and programs supported by taxpayer money.
- Never underestimate readers' intelligence or overestimate their information.

We all can learn from the following newspaper rules:

- Speak with candor and engage the reader in a two-way conversation.
- Target your presentations and publications to the audience's specific needs.
- Be prepared to say you don't know the answer when you don't, and promise to get the answer to your customer by a certain time and date (and do just that).
- Help people make informed decisions about government issues that affect them.
- Avoid technical or bureaucratic jargon; stay factual; keep it conversational.
- Pique the reader's or listener's interest in your topic.
- Make the words you use compelling, yet avoid hyperbole.
- Write memorably so the most important information is retained—no one ever "sold" anything to anyone by boring them to death.
- Use anecdotes where possible to make a point.
- Foster a desire in the audience to learn more about the subject.
- Inspire your audience to take some action.
- Present information clearly, succinctly, and in an organized fashion.
- Promise less and deliver more.
- Provide current and accurate agency contact information.

Perhaps you have other characteristics of what makes a good government communicator. If so, please e-mail your suggestions to [info@nagconline.org](mailto:info@nagconline.org). We'd love to hear what you have to say. ■

*By George Selby, president-elect*



**George Selby**

## Volunteers Are Needed

If you want to become more active in the growth of NAGC, please contact Deidra McGee, volunteer and education director, at [dmcgee@fs.fed.us](mailto:dmcgee@fs.fed.us) or Beth Armstrong, NAGC executive director, at [armstrong@nagconline.org](mailto:armstrong@nagconline.org). Your efforts can help strengthen our work as government communicators. ■

*The NAGC Communicator is published periodically to keep members apprised of special activities in the organization. Your comments, story ideas and information are always welcome. Contact Editor John Nash at [jnash2@cox.net](mailto:jnash2@cox.net).*

*Always visit the NAGC Web site at [www.nagconline.org](http://www.nagconline.org) for most current and up-to-date information.*