

The NAGC Communicator



National Association of Government Communicators

January 2010

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In this issue...

- ◆ Professional Certification
- ◆ Make 2010 a Turning Point
- ◆ Board Retreat
- ◆ Member Spotlight: Stew Thornley
- ◆ Commentary: Is the Government Cool Enough to Tweet?

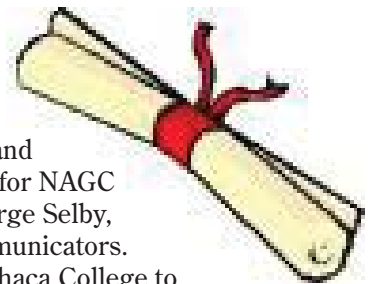
50% Membership Discount for Military
To honor the service of our military, NAGC is offering a 50% discount on annual membership to active duty military and reservists. Visit www.nacgonline.org for more details.



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NAGC partners with Ithaca College on Professional Certificate program

Professional certification is an important acknowledgement of an individual's skills, abilities and knowledge. "Developing certification opportunities for NAGC members has been one of our long-time desires," said George Selby, president of the National Association of Government Communicators.



In the first of these efforts, NAGC has partnered with Ithaca College to offer a professional certificate in Strategic Communications Management. Today more than ever, professionals in government communications are challenged to manage projects and teams more effectively; build professional "brands", leadership styles and coalitions; assess and adopt new technologies and techniques for organizational learning and communication; and show value for communication or performance system projects and infrastructures.

Ithaca's networked learning model is designed for communication, training or performance-improvement professionals with at least 5 years of professional experience who want to develop their management and strategy skills. The topics covered are immediately relevant to your career, providing concepts, practical tools and advice, as well as the theoretical underpinning and vocabulary needed to more effectively explain and defend strategic decisions.

The certificate program is conducted entirely online and asynchronously, allowing for participation anywhere and at anytime to fit the schedules of busy professionals. To earn the certificate, members must complete four, two-week seminars requiring 10-12 hours of participation in readings, case studies, discussions and work related projects.

NAGC members receive a fee discount when they enroll in the certificate program. For more details and to review the seminar offerings and schedules for the certificate in Strategic Communications Management, visit http://www.ithaca.edu/gps/professional_programs/prof_dev_cert_progs/stratcom_perfman/index.php.

Don't forget to renew your NAGC membership! Do it today!

NAGC: Good communications... Good government ©



George Selby
NAGC President

President's Perspective

Make 2010 your own personal turning point

Are you at a crossroads in your career? Is your work not challenging enough? Are you ready to move up to bigger and better things?

If you're looking for a new direction, yearn for real opportunities, and aspire to leadership in your chosen field, then I'm writing directly to you – NAGC member or not – to help you make 2010 the year you take control of your future and put yourself on the path to success.

Success is truly up to you, if you are prepared. You must decide the steps to take that will lead to true professional achievement, and then take those steps. No one can do this for you.

As president of NAGC, I can unequivocally state – based on my own experience - that by combining the following three action steps, you will take a major leap forward in personal and professional accomplishment, skills development, networking, and career building.

Here are three simple actions you can take that will pay long-term dividends.

1. Join or renew your membership in the National Association of Government Communicators. Membership in NAGC is not merely a credential on a resume. It is an opportunity for you to be part of a group of highly motivated peers who view their professional work, not merely as a job, but as a privilege.

You value the opportunity to serve your fellow citizens, delivering on the promise of a government “of the people, by the people, and for the people.” But, delivering on this promise takes effective, clear communication between the government and the people.

You are that link. You are the voice of government. You are the future.

Are you ready for that awesome responsibility?

By being part of NAGC, you will have the chance to help shape communications policy, set public information standards, apply what you have learned in your work, and then build on that knowledge base.

Today, we face a tough job market, where having the requisite degrees and diplomas by themselves will no longer guarantee a job offer. But, bring a potential employer in-depth real-world experience along with your formal education and you will, at minimum, be “a contender.”

NAGC can help you accomplish your goals by offering you a variety of challenging, exciting, and meaningful volunteer opportunities that will provide you with skills applicable to virtually every paid managerial and supervisory position.

The more involved you are, the more you'll develop. Learn the art of negotiating with vendors; plan educational programs from concept to delivery; coordinate not just a single exhibit, but a hall full of exhibits; build partnerships and coalitions with other national organizations; develop and monitor contracts; meet with your counterparts from around the world; market the association using the latest technology; or raise funds for a worthwhile cause. These real-world experiences cost real dollars, affect hundreds of government communicators, and enable you to state without exaggeration, “Yes, I did that!”

The point is: the opportunity is there in NAGC.

2. NAGC member or not, you can still gain notoriety among your peers, colleagues, and your supervisors by having your work recognized in a juried competition.

Find out how your published materials measure up by submitting your best work into the NAGC Blue Pencil-Gold Screen Awards competition. Submitted by staff at all levels of government, your work will be up against the “best of the best” communications vehicles, including brochures, press releases, magazine articles, promotional literature, statistical reports, PSAs, audio and video programming, and of course information released via the Internet. There are more than 50 categories to choose from.

The NAGC Communicator is published quarterly to keep members apprised of special activities in the organization. Your comments, story ideas and information are always welcome.

Contact Editor John Verrico at johnverrico@verizon.net.

Always visit the NAGC Web site at www.nagconline.org for the most current and up-to-date information.

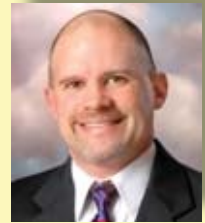
See *Turning Point*, page 3

What's the Board doing?

At the annual NAGC Board Retreat in December, board members discussed the a number of subjects. Below is a summary of some of those topics.

- Member benefits and how to increase networking opportunities
- The number of Blue Pencil/Gold Screen categories and helping winners receive greater recognition for their efforts with their supervisors and media contacts..
- Increase the frequency of the *NAGC Communicator* newsletter - shifting from a quarterly format to a smaller, more frequent format with more interaction (blog format, allow commenting, etc.)
- Increase the number of case studies/benchmarking stories that are shared with NAGC members.
- Webcast conference presentations
- Host two regional networking events per year.
- Create an editorial calendar with a concrete schedule of communications for NAGC members.
- Possibly separate the Communications School and Blue Pencil/Gold Screen awards into two separate events at different times of the year.
- Review upgrades to the NAGC Web site.
- Increase volunteer/committee opportunities and participation among NAGC members.
- Communications School 2010 in Washington DC. Presenters confirmed for the following subjects:
 - o Web Return-On-Investment
 - o Advance Social Media
 - o Case Studies
 - o Work/Life Balance
 - o Use of Twitter
 - o What Journalists Are Taught Today
 - o Social Media 101
 - o Speechwriting
 - o Ad Networks
 - o Media Relations
 - o Blogging
 - o Writing E-Newsletters

This is just a sampling of what was covered in our meeting. What do you think about these subjects? What should the board be focused on? E-mail me at gthomas@mlgw.org with your feedback.



Glen Thomas
NAGC Director of
Development

Turning Point

Continued from page 2

Winning a Blue Pencil or Gold Screen Award is clear recognition from professionals across the country that your work has achieved an exemplary level of quality that clearly has gotten your agency's message across to your constituents in the most effective manner.

As in the case of membership, noting that you are an NAGC Blue Pencil or Gold Screen Award winner is more than a mere line item on your resume. These awards are the most prestigious awards given specifically for outstanding government communications by any organization anywhere.

While the entry deadline has passed for the current cycle of awards, make it a priority this year to enter the 2011 competition.

3. The lifeblood of communication starts with the written or spoken word. People learn, take action, change behavior, modify their thinking, or one way or another respond to what you write and say.

At NAGC, we are always looking to share our knowledge and experience with fellow members. You can too, by publishing professional level articles in the *NAGC Communicator*, our quarterly online publication. Or, post your presentation in the "Members Only Resources" section on NAGC's Web site, www.nagonline.org.

Whether it is a case study, interview, style manual, or statistical report, NAGC members want to read them, learn from them, and adapt them for their own needs. You can help your peers avoid having to "reinvent the wheel."

And, I can promise you that when someone who needs your expertise reads your information and advice, you will hear from that grateful reader.

Now, that is something to put on your resume.

For more information about the benefits of NAGC membership visit our Web site at www.nagconline.org.

If you would like to speak with me directly, please call me at 301-763-4461.

Meet NAGC


MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Stew Thornley



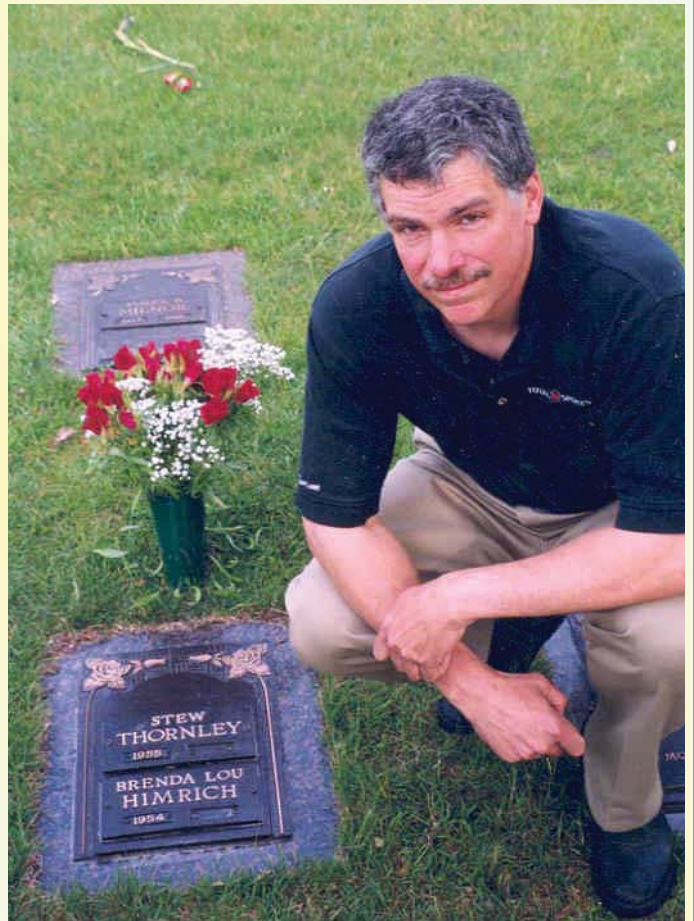
Jennifer Callahan
NAGC President-Elect

No, Stew Thornley isn't dead; he simply loves exploring cemeteries with his wife, Brenda Himrich. They like them so much, they decided to buy their own plot at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis. You might think that Stew has a death wish— that would be far from the truth. Stew is one of those people who finds continual excitement in life and is always looking for new challenges and adventures.

Stew's first love, other than Brenda, is baseball – a love that has served him well. His lifetime relationship with sports began at age 10, when his mom was teaching at the University of Minnesota. She bought a pair of faculty season tickets that covered all the Minnesota Gophers sports events. Following the 1968 season football opener with the University of Southern California, Stew was the only kid waiting for O.J. Simpson and the only one to shake the hand that would later become the center of a celebrated trial.

After high school, Stew went into broadcasting and worked as a sportscaster/disk jockey/staff announcer at radio stations in DeSoto, Mo., and Sauk Centre, Minn. He later returned to the Twin Cities, enrolled in the University of Minnesota, earned a degree in business in 1981, and joined two organizations that would have tremendous impact on his life: the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) and Toastmasters.

His membership in SABR led to his first published article, which appeared in the SABR's Baseball Research Journal. Stew decided that he wanted to write about baseball himself, instead of reading what others wrote. He has since written numerous books, including *On to Nicollet: The Glory and Fame of the Minneapolis Millers*, about the minor-league team that played in Minneapolis prior to the arrival of the Minnesota Twins; *Basketball's Original Dynasty: The History of the Lakers*, published in 1989; *Holy Cow! The Life and Times of Halsey Hall*, a biography of a Minnesota sports casting legend and the first man to use the term "Holy Cow!"



"Come by and say 'hi' sometime," says Thornley. Their plot is by the lake, in Lakewood Cemetery section 34, row 3B, grave 3 (or 44 degrees, 55 minutes, 55.2 seconds north latitude and 93 degrees, 18 minutes, 16.3 seconds west longitude).

Our members are what set NAGC apart from other communicator organizations. During nearly a decade as an active NAGC member, I have been fortunate to see, first hand, the immense talents and contributions of the richly diverse NAGC members.

See Thornley, page 8

Commentary:**Is the Government Cool Enough to Tweet?**

The current Administration is a huge advocate of social media. Its use of blogs, Flickr, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and live webcasting is making these technologies increasingly popular. The belief in a more open government is the driving force for the use of these technologies, but since when did government agencies become hip enough to use social media?



Josh Folk
Vice President
Online Video
Service



Take the use of Twitter for example. Twitter lets users send and receive brief updates, which are capped at 140 characters of text. The average Twitter user is between the ages of 18-34 – ironically, also the age demographic least likely to vote on Election Day. Twitter is popular in part today for the obnoxious but interesting tweets of celebrities like Miley Cyrus and Ashton Kutcher. Surely, our government will never compete for attention on this level. Trying to do so would be like placing public service announcements inside of the pop culture magazine US Weekly.

Perhaps the government has walked into a party that it wasn't invited to. The corporate world is already learning this lesson the hard way. Internet marketer B.L. Ochman commented on her blog, "Watching big ad agencies (and corporations) trying to master new media is a lot like watching people who are having mid-life crises trying to look hip, cool and young by adopting the toys, tools, and language of youth. It's rather pathetic."

Most government organizations are just getting their feet wet in the Twitter pool. For example, a simple Google search reveals that The City of Memphis Gas, Light, and Water, The Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), Federal Emergency Management Agency and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are each using Twitter – mostly for emergency preparedness alerts.

However, Twitter is not currently optimized to make this type of communication effective. To follow someone on Twitter is easy - that's why the average Twitter user is following almost 70 users. The problem is that by the time you're following this many people there's no way you can possibly keep up with all the tweets. Granted, software exists today to make the filtering process easier but until this becomes standard, Twitter's effectiveness as a tool will remain limited to certain audiences and types of communication.

How sustainable is this technology? Does it merit the amount of time agencies are investing in this venture? According to CNN, last September Twitter was raising capital at a valuation of \$1 billion. However, the northern California start-up has yet to announce a business model or revenue strategy. For now, the cost of utilizing Twitter is very low and takes little time, which makes it easy for the government to experiment with its use. But nothing is for free and changes are sure to come. So let's assume Twitter begins charging for the service – is the government in a position to start investing money to continue this experience? Alternatively, would the government accept advertisements on their tweets? Even worse, what if Twitter fails to find a successful strategy and crashes altogether?

Despite these disadvantages of Twitter, the fact is that our government deserves credit for becoming an early adopter of a technology with still unknown outcomes. Its actions represent a mega-shift in government's typical risk-adverse decision making. Additionally, Twitter upholds an essential duty of the public communicator. According to the National Association of Government Communicators Code of Ethics, "the public-at-large and each citizen therein has a right to equal, full, understandable, and timely facts about their government." As long as Twitter remains an easy, affordable tool for distributing information to the public, the government has little to lose. Who cares if it's cool enough for this party – the cover charge hardly costs a dime.

Josh Folk is vice president of Online Video Service and serves as the company's resident expert on the Obama Administration's Open Government Directive.

Thornley

Continued from page 4

on a baseball broadcast. He has written a number of books for the Minnesota Historical Society Press, including: *Six Feet Under: A Graveyard Guide to Minnesota*, *Baseball in Minnesota: A Definitive History*, and *Minnesota Hoops: Basketball in the North Star State*, which he co-authored with Marc Hugunin. He has also written a number of books for young readers, one he co-authored with his wife Brenda, *Electrifying Medicine: How Electricity Sparked a Medical Revolution*.

Stew has received numerous awards for his writing, including a baseball research award, Best Regional Book of 1991 for *Holy Cow! The Life and Times of Halsey Hall*, and was named a finalist in the Minnesota Book Awards in 1988, 1991, and 1995.

Stew's love of baseball doesn't stop with his published works. He does "datacasting" (play-by-play on the computer) of baseball games for the Major League Baseball Website mlb.com, and blogs and tweets on baseball. He is an official scorer for Major League Baseball for Minnesota Twins home games as well as a backup official scorer for the Minnesota Timberwolves.

Enough baseball already! The significance of his Toastmasters membership? It led to his meeting Brenda!

Stew and his wife love to travel. Stew has been to all 50 states, their capitals and Puerto Rico. Covering baseball took him to Tokyo, Puerto Rico and Cuba. He joined Brenda for visits to Iceland, Mexico, Holland, Scotland, France and England.

So why is Stew featured here in the NAGC Communicator? Well, he does have a regular job as a government communicator. Stew is a Health Educator for the Minnesota Department of Health—a job he has loved since he joined in January 1993. He conducts training and does public affairs work, which includes writing brochures and newsletters and dealing with the media.

He has been a member of NAGC since the mid-nineties and an active member of the program committee for the past three years. He also is president of the Minnesota Association of Government Communicators.

2010 NAGC Communications School in Washington DC



Transparency
and Technology
Advancing Government
Communications

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Bethesda
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