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Spring has finally arrived. The flowers are blooming and everything is moving forward into summer. Your RVHRA Board is also blooming and moving forward. We've had our first Board meeting. What a great group of human resource professionals we have representing the River Valley Human Resources Association. We've already started generating ideas from suggestions and feedback that we received from you. We are very excited to be leading such a wonderful organization. Please continue to send your thoughts and ideas our way.

My goals for 2007-2008 are to increase attendance at our local meetings, to build comradely amongst members and to grow our membership. You can help by reaching out to new HR professionals in our area and invite them to one of our meetings. Together we can raise the awareness of the River Valley Human Resources Association. We are leaders - we need to promote our profession. In addition, I would be remiss if we did not mention our association with SHRM. Many of us are

getting excited to attend the SHRM National Conference in Las Vegas in mid June. I hope to bring back lots of ideas to share with our chapter. Since my Presidency began, I've done a lot of research on the SHRM website (www.SHRM.org). What a wealth of information and benefits that we receive from being a SHRM member. If you have not used the "white papers" or asked someone to do some research for you, you are missing out on great opportunities.

As we move into the new year, the Board is trying to create programs, that attract HR professionals at all levels including the new HR professional as well as the senior HR leaders. As everyone is aware, we have three meeting locations. We'd like to try holding meetings every other month in the Claremont/ White River Jct. locations. The Claremont group meets every last Friday, the White River Jct. group will meet Thursdays and the Northeast Kingdom plans to meet monthly. Claremont and White River

Jct. will hold meetings every other month. A big thanks you to Bev Widger of the Claremont location and Barbara Niznek of the Northeast Kingdom for all of their efforts in coordinating programs at their locations. They have done a fantastic job. If you have not been able to attend these meetings, you have missed some great programs.



Sally McEwan, President

Upcoming Events:

- June 21st, 2007
Disaster Planning
White River Jct, VT
- August 31st, 2007
AARP
Claremont, NH
- September 28th, 2007
Compensation & Reward
White River Jct, VT

RVHRA – Claremont Springfield



Bev Widger, SPHR

RVHRA Claremont/ Springfield has had a great year! Since September we have been fortunate to have some great programs and presenters. Highlights include Dr. Alan Robinson of the University of Massachusetts coming to give a presentation on his book, Ideas Are Free. Our most popular presentation of the year is always the **Legal Update** and this year was no exception. We had record attendance.

In April we were approached to become sponsors of **New Hampshire Scholars**, a program where employers do pres-

entations and mentoring with students in eighth grade and ends in high school. The purpose of the program is to guide students in course choices to properly prepare them for continuing their education so they get better jobs. Both Newport and Claremont School Systems have received special grants for this program.

We would like to thank our secretary, Michele Baker, who does a great job getting meeting announcements and other important email out to everyone in the group.

The planning process is already underway for programming for fall 2007 through the spring 2008. Please send any ideas for topics and speakers to Paul Stokarski or Bev Widger.

RVHRA Claremont/ Springfield meetings are held at Claremont Savings Bank on the last Friday of every month at 8 a.m. with the exception of November and December when the meetings are moved due to the holidays.



Paul Stokarski, PHR
Foundation Chair, Vermont State Council,, RVHRA Chapter

SHRM Foundation

We continually hear about the benefits of being certified as a PHR, SPHR or GPHR professional. After reviewing the requirements to get certified we are often concerned about the costs associated with this achievement. If your employer cannot assist you with study materials and/or classroom instruction, many people put off their certification for a later date. What if you were told help would be available to pay for study materials, classroom instruction and exam fees?

The SHRM Foundation provides assistance to its members who are trying to become certified but find the costs substantial. This year the Foundation will grant \$100,000 in total scholarship money. This money can be used for certification, an extra class or other materials that help the Human Resources professional advance in the profession.

The Foundation also provides money for research projects. Currently the allocation of a research pro-

ject is as much as \$200,000 per project. In all, the Foundation is an active source of advancing the profession of Human Resources. Each year the Foundation collects funds from state and local chapters as well as individual donors. The money received goes directly back to people who apply for money to advance their profession. For more information about the Foundation, see SHRM's website at www.shrm.org/foundation/

Eye on the I-9

For more than 20 years, employers have been required to verify the identity and employment authorization of their employees on the Form I-9. To curtail the employment of undocumented workers, Congress increased the penalties for improperly completing and/or retaining the I-9 Form in 1996. However, Congress did not fund the cost of the enforcement of these laws until recently. Now these existing laws are being enforced with more frequency and greater severity than ever before. Every day, employers are being held accountable for the non-compliance of the existing laws in worksite audits.

Proposed Changes to Employment Verification

The current I-9 Form is very unreliable and does not protect against identity fraud. Congress is debating the available options for real time electronic verification of employment authorization. Congress is also proposing new laws that would require employers to re-verify their entire workforce. In fact, the most recent version of proposed Senate Bill 1348 (titled: Secure Borders, Economic Opportunity, and Immigration Reform Act) would require electronic verification of every worker in the U.S. within three years of the date of enactment. The I-9 form will not disappear, but changes to the method of completion are inevitable.

While Congress debates on how to improve the I-9 form, they are simultaneously giving additional funds to the Department of Homeland Security for enforcement of the current laws.

Employer Responsibility in the Proposed Legislation

Along with changes to the method of verification, the level of the employer's responsibility will be increasing. In the proposed legislation, employers will be held to higher standards and face stiffer fines. In 1986, the maximum civil fine for employers who violated the law the first time was \$2,000 per employee. In 1996, the civil fines were increased to \$2,200 per employee. In the most recent version of the proposed Senate Bill 1348, the maximum civil fine for hiring illegal workers will rise to \$5,000 per employee for first time offenders. Additionally, the maximum criminal penalty for a pattern or practice of hiring unauthorized workers will increase to \$75,000 per employee and mandatory incarceration of the employer or the employer's hiring agent.

The Proactive Approach

With audits and worksite raids occurring every day, it is imperative that employers take steps now to comply with the existing law. Understand the completion and retention requirements. En-

sure that your company currently complies with existing laws, while maintaining non-discriminatory policies. Employers must retain an I-9 form for every current employee hired after November 6, 1986. For terminated employees, employers must retain the I-9 form for three (3) years from the employee's date of hire or one (1) year after the employee's termination, whichever is later.

In the event of an audit, employers who use good faith to comply with the law will be allowed to mitigate fines for discovered violations. Therefore, now is the time to verify that the I-9 forms have been completed and retained properly. Review your I-9 forms for patterns of problems and omissions. Conduct an internal audit to ensure that your company has the ability to respond to a government audit within three days, if necessary.

Grace Miller is an Associate Attorney at GoffWilson. GoffWilson provides I-9 compliance and auditing services for in-house legal counsel and human resources departments. She can be reached at: gmliller@goffwilson.com.

Promoting a Career in Human Resources



Jessica Hollis

Perhaps even more than when I began undergraduate college, in our fast-paced and often demanding society, the pressure young adults experience in regard to choosing a career is enormous. It has only been two short years since I graduated with an undergraduate degree and still these societal expectations are very familiar to me. The goal of many young adults is no longer to simply find a job but to decide on a *career*.

It is no secret that Human Resources is feverishly gaining recognition as more than just another full-time job; it is an ever-expanding, professional career. However, the fact remains that Human Resources is still not being promoted as a career to young adults. Unfortunately, several of my own

friends and colleagues also believe that HR has little exposure at most other post-high school programs. Using my undergraduate college as an example, Clark University only offered one class on Human Resource Management. Despite Clark having a well-known "fifth year free" MBA program, only this basic introduction to HR was offered in the entire Management curriculum. Until a year ago when I began contemplating a career in HR, I also associated this profession with the tiny office that processed personnel paperwork in the backside of the University's administrative buildings.

Career fairs, seminars, and internship and mentoring programs are all wonderful ways to begin promoting HR as a career to students.

Also, as college management programs are made aware of the advances in this dynamic profession, their curriculums will include more than one basic HR management course further shattering the image as one-dimensional, personnel administration. If it is the goal of young adults to find a career, then it should be one of our goals as Human Resource professionals, to enthusiastically promote this industry fairly: as more than simply pushing papers and maintaining filing cabinets. We provide a service in our profession and to our communities not only recruit quality employees but to assist our companies and their executives to make decisions that will maintain the happiness, healthiness, and productiveness of those employees.

Upcoming updates to the website...



Dave Wheel
Website/Newsletter Chair

This coming year will be an exciting one for RVHRA as we introduce our newly-redesigned web site to our current and prospective members. Over the past few years, we've outgrown our previous site's capabilities, so the new site will offer several new function-

alities, to include a within-membership email capability, a member database, event registration, membership renewal and a consolidated calendar with links to the events (and many more!) Stay tuned to www.rvhra.org to see the changes by early August!

Diversity and Inclusion: An Essential Link

When Sally first asked me to write a couple of paragraphs about Diversity for the first issue of the RVHRA newsletter, I thought that I would focus on the Upper Valley, and the diversity issues (gender, ethnic, religious, age, etc.) that we encounter in our HR environments. That focus changed, however, after I had the opportunity to hear Steve Robbins' Keynote address at the Granite State Human Resources Conference earlier this month. His dynamic presentation, entitled *Unintentional Intolerance: Caring About People as a Business Strategy*, caused me to transition from thinking about diversity as one of our many HR issues, to thinking about inclusion as an all-encompassing ap-

proach to how we see the world, how we process what we see, and how we can help organizations link diversity and inclusion to bottom line results.

Dr. Robbins spoke eloquently from both his personal and professional experiences about the importance of not being NICE (Not Inclined to Critically Examine) when it comes to the subconscious biases we have toward "others" who are not like "us." He went on to discuss how we often "brand" others in our minds, based on our unintentional biases, and then proceed to make decisions within the corporate environment that evolve from such branding.

We in HR have unique opportunities to positively affect changes in corporate cultures by becoming champions of inclusion as a crucial element in a company's overall business strategy. Bringing different perspectives to the table, and being willing to listen to them, will be vital over the next several decades as organizations compete to attract and retain the best and the brightest employees from a shrinking labor pool, and thereby maximize their potential for continued growth.



Cindy Winters, Diversity Chair

Looking Ahead....



David Watts, PHR

I'm greatly looking forward to my second year on the RVHRA Board and playing a greater role in the organization. In addition to serving as the Workforce Planning Coordinator, I would particularly like to promote more dialogue between RVHRA members about the rewards and challenges of the HR field. Our common challenges-- a limited skilled workforce, changing legal environment and the breadth of our field—motivates me to

use our collective talents and our future website to our advantage.

I also want to focus on membership recruiting and encouraging a greater number of HR professionals from the Twin State region to be more involved with the Association. I know many other HR professionals who, for whatever reason, are not involved with the RVHRA. I want to help build the

RVHRA into an organization that is seen as the area's best resource for sharing information, networking, education and HR advocacy. I think this is necessary for us all and the Association as a whole if we want to meet the needs of the Upper Valley HR professional.

RVHRA-Northeast Kingdom



Barbara Niznik, Chair, RVHRA Northeast Kingdom

Grassroot efforts to kick off a RVHRA Northeast Kingdom SHRM Affiliate Satellite began in November 2005 and, in May 2006, the group became an official Satellite

to RVHRA and is now one year old! Enthusiasm, momentum, and participation continue with regular three hour monthly meetings alternating between Newport and

St. Johnsbury. The established agenda includes a Business and Legislative Report from the Chair, followed by a Round Table Discussion from attendees, and then followed by a 2 to 2 ½ hour presentation on a timely HR topic with HRCI approved recertification credits. The networking among the members has proven to be rewarding and enjoyable, and the regional availability to acquire HRCI recertification credits has, even by itself, been viewed as invaluable opportunity by certified HR profession-

als. Plus, each meeting has refreshments and two door prizes.

To date, the Northeast Kingdom SHRM Satellite has offered the following presentations:

- “Effective Documentation: In Search of Improved Performance”
 - “Uniformed Services Employment & Reemployment Rights Act”
 - “SHRM as a Resource”
 - “The VABIR Partnership – What VABIR has to offer employers in Vermont”
 - “Bridges Out of Poverty”
 - “EAPs and HR Professionals – Partnering to Improve the Work Environment”
 - “Hire With Passion”
- “Creative Compensation & Total Reward Tools to At-

tract and Retain Employees from

Different Generations”

- “Gettings a Bang For Your Buck – Maximize Your Retirement”
 - “Setting the Stage for Safety in the Work Place”
 - “Strategies For Controlling Medical Costs”
 - “The Synergy of HR & College Relations”
 - “An Introduction to Immigration”
 - “Legislative Happenings in Washington, D.C. & Montpelier, VT”
 - “Linking Employee & Leadership Competency, Performance and Rewards using the Strategic Management Assessment Review Tool”
- “The Implications of the Pension Protection Act



Lori Brown, PHR

Treasurer’s update

I am pleased to serve as the Treasurer of the RVHRA and look forward to working with the Board in the upcoming year. I can be reached by calling 603-443-8659 or via email, Lori.Brown@mascomabank.com.

The current balance in the checking account is \$6,133.48.

I attended the Granite State HR Conference in Manchester on May 8th. I found the day to be informative and very enjoyable. It was wonderful to see familiar faces and to finally enjoy the sunshine! I am looking forward to the VT State Conference to be held in Burlington on September 17 and 18th.

Affordable Housing In The Upper Valley - Twin Pines Housing Trust

In order for the Upper Valley to continue to be a growing community where employers can hire employees that live with their families in the Upper Valley, we must work together to provide Affordable Housing to the community. Currently there is a 2300 unit shortage of home supply vs. demand. Twin Pines Housing Trust is the only 501 (C) (3) non-for-profit developer of Affordable Housing in the Upper Valley. Over the last 15 years, they have been successful in developing 158 "homes" for members of our community. These homes include rental apartments and single-family homes.

Currently, Twin Pines Housing Trust is working with the Hanover Affordable Housing Commission to develop 120 additional homes on the Gile Tract in the Buck Road section of Hanover. Twin Pines is also working with the town of Woodstock on the pre-development work of an additional 36 "homes." They also continue to work with many of the other Upper Valley communities on the evaluation of other possibilities of Affordable Housing.

We're on the Web

www.rvhra.org

Membership



Jon D. Stearns

At the time of this report we are on target, with memberships coming in a steady stream and a significant number of renewals for this time of year. The push for new and renewed memberships started just before the annual meeting and continues as we move farther into 2007. Getting the membership application on the website should be helpful as well as will the new and improved website itself when the modifications we are all looking forward to have taken place later this year. We're looking for a banner year for membership and want to push the number of members up as high as we can by offering

great educational programs, on-target networking opportunities, and the general fellowship of your fellow HR professionals.

We would also like to encourage you to participate in helping to recruit new members into RVHRA. We can use any member's assistance in recruiting new members and getting old friends to renew. If you find someone needing information or application forms please pass along email or mail addresses for them and we will get information out to them immediately. Make sure they know about the discounts available for SHRM mem-

bers and professional HR certification such as PHR and SPHR. As you all know, a continuous influx of new members is the lifeblood of any active, long-standing organization, particularly one as active as ours. And if you have any ideas about how to increase membership please let us know what they are.

Thanks very much for your support and participation in RVHRA. We can't do what we do without every member's knowledge and love of the profession!