

CONNECTIONS

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2008

THE FIRST WORD

Supporting Executives

How does an executive find renewal when challenges pile up?

One way to find support is by connecting with other executives. For example, within MHS Alliance, the leaders of the larger mental health programs have organized themselves to meet once a year, moving around to each other's locations.

These executives meet because they get something from each other that they can't get anywhere else. They join with a group of people with similar values who are willing to trust each other with both good and bad news.

MHS Alliance is launching a new program, called Executive Circles, for experienced leaders. It has the goal of developing trusted, supportive relationships, with the first meeting planned for early 2009. Emerson Leshner, CEO at Messiah Village, will lead the group.

Executive Circles will focus on fostering a spirit of mutual exchange. Members hope to share challenges, solutions, and best practices and to test new ideas and plans for their organizations. They will also address integrating Anabaptist values into organizational culture.

MHS Alliance member CEOs will receive information about this new program this fall.



Mim Shirk
Vice President

PENN FOUNDATION DIRECTORS ENGAGE IN PEER EVALUATIONS AT TERM'S END

BY STUART W. SHOWALTER

Absent term limits, helping individual directors exit from a governing board, when the time comes, can be a daunting task. The process, handled poorly, can have negative consequences for the individual board member, the board as a whole, and the entire organization.

To the rescue, MHS Alliance can make available to member organizations a board of directors evaluation instrument for use in conjunction with end-of-term decisions. The tool can alleviate the political stickiness associated with renewing a director's term — or not — and, more positively, it can strengthen a board's performance.

The board of Penn Foundation in Sellersville, Pa., which provides comprehensive behavioral healthcare to persons in need of hope, healing, and compassion, has used the MHS Alliance tool during the past two years. Penn Foundation representatives praised the review process highly.



Vernon Kratz



John Goshow

Vernon Kratz, who chairs the board's governance committee, said, "We were very pleased with how the MHS Alliance tool worked last year, which was our first experience. We didn't have a good way of doing evaluations before, but increasingly, we thought there should be a more objective way. So we talked with MHS Alliance and decided to try the tool they recommended. Our board responded to it very well."

CEO John Goshow said that a desire to make the re-election of directors more meaningful initially drove the search for an evaluation instrument. "I think it brings integrity to the reappointment process because it gives us an opportunity to sit down in a more thoughtful way with the board members whose terms are expiring. It also provides a better opportunity to say no should that be necessary."

The Penn Foundation board consists of 12 members who serve three-year terms. So, theoretically, four members are reviewed every year. All board

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members, except the one under review, are asked to complete the 12-item Web-based review instrument for each member whose term is expiring. Both quantitative data and written comments are tabulated and summarized by MHS Alliance staff in a report that only Kratz or a member of the four-person governance committee receives.

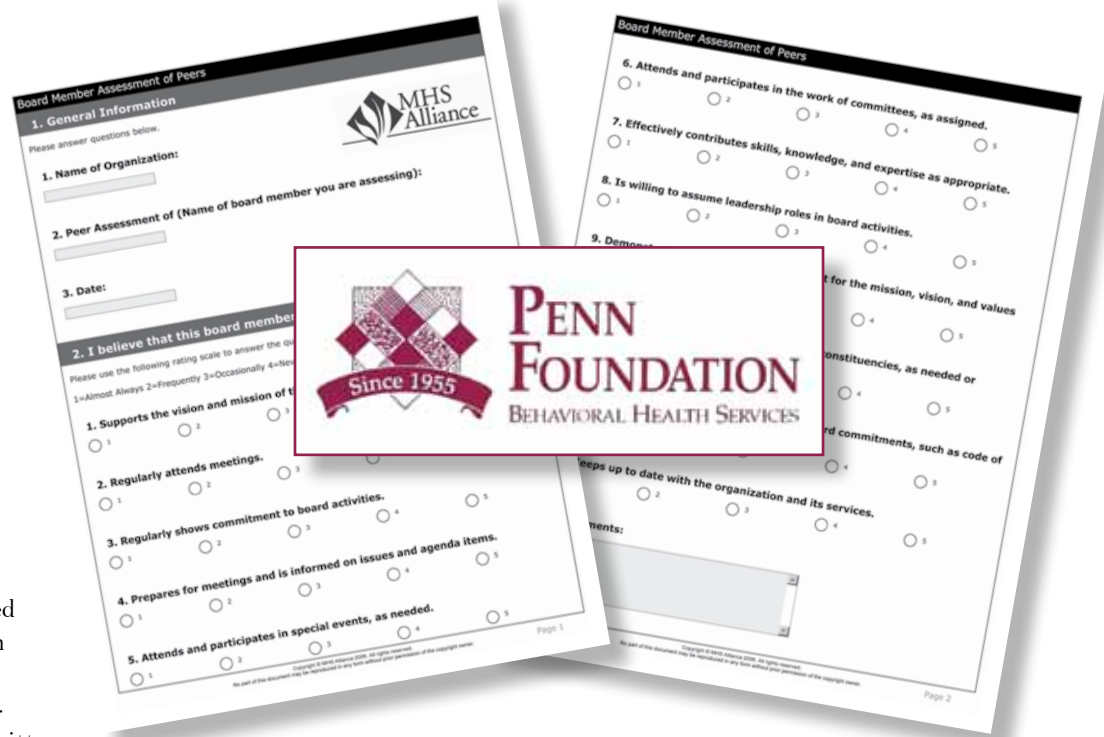
Then Kratz or another member of the governance committee meets personally with the individual board member and summarizes the report. With the board member's concurrence, the governance committee then makes a recommendation to the full board for reappointment or not. So far, all board members who have gone through the review have been reappointed.

The board members who have been reviewed seemed to enjoy the process, said Goshow. "They don't mind doing it, and they are impressed that we are on the cutting edge of an important process for board development."

Goshow said one byproduct of adopting this review process is that the Penn Foundation board has created a list of expectations for its members. He noted that the evaluation tool mirrors these expectations, such as attendance at meetings and active involvement with a board committee.

Goshow said he has recommended the peer-review approach to other organizations. "I think it's a good tool," he said. "I personally don't see any limitations with the instrument — it's the only formal way we have developed to evaluate board members. As a CEO, I find it important to have good board members, and this instrument helps to ensure that we do."

Member organizations may receive additional information about the board review instrument from Emily Reese, Emily@mhsonline.org, at MHS Alliance.



“As a CEO, I find it important to have good board members, and this instrument helps to ensure that we do.”

— John Goshow, CEO, Penn Foundation

MENNONITE WEEKLY WILL FEATURE MHS ALLIANCE MEMBER REPORTS

Mennonite Weekly Review plans to begin this fall a new feature that will consist of regular, brief reports from MHS Alliance member organizations. All members will be invited to participate on a rotating basis.

MHS Alliance will distribute a reporting form periodically to members. The goal will be to publish news about awards, new programs, leadership transitions and other highlights about each member organization twice a year. Stuart W. Showalter, managing editor of MHS Alliance's *Connections*, will receive and edit the reports for *Mennonite Weekly Review*.

Mennonite Weekly Review is an independent, inter-Mennonite newspaper published since 1923 from its headquarters in Newton, Kan. It reaches a readership crossing conference and regional boundaries, mostly in the United States. Its goal is “to foster communication and cooperation within the Mennonite family of faith, encouraging support for the work of the church, its structures and institutions.”

RISK GROUP DISTRIBUTES \$1 MILLION TO MEMBERS

After only four years of operation, the Peace Church Risk Retention Group (PCRRG) has rewarded its 45 member organizations with a \$1 million dividend distribution.

That good news was announced by Phil Leaman, the chief executive officer of the Association of Anabaptist Risk Management (AARM), based in Lancaster, Pa., which provides overall administration for PCRRG. The \$1 million distribution follows a \$500,000 dividend that was distributed to members in 2007.

Leaman attributed PCRRG's success to the emphasis that member organizations have placed on risk management. "Members are committed to the risk management program which we have developed together," he said. "Our

member organizations, which are primarily long-term care communities, are diligent in their efforts to prevent incidents and claims. Our members also understand that an effective risk management program enhances the quality of care and services provided to residents."

PCRRG, founded in January 2004, operates as a reciprocal risk retention group for members of Mennonite Health Services Alliance and related organizations.

"PCRRG has shown steady growth in capital and reserves," said Edward Brubaker, CEO of member organization Dock Woods Community in Lansdale, Pa. He said this growth "has allowed us not only to distribute profits back to our



Phil Leaman

members but also reduce our members' premium rates for the last two years."

Keith Stuckey, vice president of MHS Alliance, helped to create PCRRG. He recalled, "We had concluded that the commercial markets were not serving our needs. The number of commercial insurers was diminishing, and those that remained were increasing premiums at an alarming rate even though our members had excellent claims experience. In this context, we determined that we could chart our own course and build an alternative source for liability insurance."

PCRRG welcomes new members from eligible non-profit long-term care providers. They can explore options by calling Leaman at AARM: 717-293-7840.

THE LATEST TRENDS

What Does It Mean to Go Green?

The U.S. Green Building Council provides independent, third-party certification that "a building is environmentally responsible, profitable and a healthy place to live and work."

Some members of MHS Alliance are thinking green as they undertake new building projects.

Landis Homes, Lititz, Pa., is securing permits for green structures to expand residential living space in 2009.

Linford Good, vice president of planning and marketing, said, "More sustainable buildings last longer and have less impact on ecological systems, particularly in relation to global



Landis Homes proposes to go green for this new structure.

concerns such as climate change and oil depletion."

The concern for more sustainable building practices has led Landis Homes to pursue LEED certification (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) for its project. Landis Homes also wants to incorporate floodplain restoration into its planning.

The U.S. Green Building Council states, "LEED promotes a whole-building

approach to sustainability by recognizing performance in five key areas of human and environmental health: sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection and indoor environmental quality."

Might your organization go green with its next building project?

MEMBER NEWS

Lynn Thompson has resigned as chief executive officer from **Mennonite Home Communities of Ohio**, located in Bluffton.

Glencroft of Glendale, Ariz., honored **Linda B. Sohm**, controller at PING, Inc., for her outstanding contributions to the board of directors during her 2002-08 tenure. She served Glencroft as board treasurer and a member of the finance committee. She was cited especially for her work on investments, advocating a new investment policy that was implemented in 2006.

Jubilee Association of Maryland received a \$35,000 grant from the Jim and Carol Trawick Foundation to support an innovative Retiring at Home Program for seniors with developmental disabilities. **Tim Wiens**, Jubilee's executive director, said, "We can begin to work with our clients who do not always want to go to a day center program."

Generations United, a Washington, D.C., membership organization, has named Hesston (Kans.) Child Care and **Schowalter Villa** a top 10 national finalist for their shared intergenerational site. The recognition carries a \$1,000 award.

"The award can inspire all of us to look at the opportunities that are available to us when sites that serve children, the young and the elderly choose to live together and to share experiences," said Judy Friesen, administrator of Hesston Intergenerational Child Development Center. Three years ago she and **James Krehbiel**, president and CEO of the Villa, helped guide the building of the new child care facility next to the Villa.

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Midwest Chaplains
Sept. 17, Goshen, Ind.

Values-Based Leadership Program
Sept. 23-25 and Feb. 24-26, 2009
Laurelville, Pa.

Anabaptist Providers Group Board Forum
Oct. 4, Palmyra, Pa.

Developmental Disability Program Executives
Nov. 12-13, Goshen, Ind.

MHS Alliance Board Meeting
Nov. 13-15, Middlebury, Ind.

Anabaptist Providers Group Senior Team Forum
Nov. 18, Harleysville, Pa.

Mennonite Health Assembly and Annual Members Meeting
March 19-22, 2009, Cleveland, Ohio



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THE LAST WORD

How might Mennonite or Anabaptist core convictions shape the identity and practices of our MHS Alliance members? We are currently engaged in an exciting initiative to explore this very question.

One assumption behind this research initiative is that the chief executive officer plays a key role in influencing both the organization's performance and its identity.

Research I am conducting for my graduate program relates directly to this question. I will be interviewing 10 chief executive officers from our member organizations to explore how they understand their role and work in contributing to the religious identity of the organizations they serve. The research will include current CEOs who represent both Anabaptist and other faith perspectives.

Very little research has been conducted on this question in the broader faith-based health and human services sector. Nothing has been done with this particular focus among our MHS Alliance members.

Some of the insights that emerge will help us shape our leadership development more effectively. These insights will also inform and enrich our recruitment efforts, executive support programs, and consultations with governing boards.

The research process will be rich indeed. In upcoming issues of *Connections*, I plan to share more resources that will come from this initiative.

Rick Stiffney President/CEO

