

ARKANSAS SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION

REPORTER

November 2007

Volume 26, Number 2



Beebe



Slaughter



Sims-deGraffenried



Moody

'3 Rs' is theme of conference

Bible courses,
after-school programs
highlight sessions

“The 3 Rs of Board Work: Roles, Respect, and Responsibility” is the theme for the 2007 Arkansas School Boards Association Conference, which will be Dec. 4-6 at the Peabody Hotel and Statehouse Convention Center.

This year’s conference has been lengthened by a half-day to expand offerings and bring information requested by board members from around the state.

Instead of a full day of pre-conference activities, the only pre-conference workshop will be Jim Slaughter’s Parliamentary

Procedure Workshop on Dec. 4 from 9 a.m. to noon. This is a session recommended for board presidents and for new school board members.

The conference will officially begin at 1:30 that afternoon with a general session featuring Ako Kambon, president of Visionary Leaders Institute. Kambon is a dynamic speaker and an innovator in the field of educational leadership. He is a strong advocate for parental engagement in education and for public-private partnerships.

After receiving many requests from members, ASBA changed “Bible Courses: Risk and Opportunity” from a breakout session into a general session seminar. Thomas Hutton, senior staff

attorney for the National School Boards Association, will speak and answer questions from 3 - 4:30 p.m.

The ASBA Delegate Assembly will convene at 7:30 a.m. on Dec. 5 to consider adoption of the organization’s Beliefs and Resolutions and to elect officers for 2008. Each member board is entitled to send a delegate, who must be a board member. Delegate registration information was mailed to all boards in October. The proposed Beliefs and Resolutions is found on our website.

Several dozen exhibitors will be on hand throughout the day, beginning at 7:30 a.m. on Dec. 5, to visit with conference-goers

See Conference...page 3

ASBA Conference schedule

TUESDAY, DEC. 4

9 a.m. - Noon

Pre-conference Workshop
Parliamentary Procedure for Better Board Meetings
Jim Slaughter, Nationally Certified Parliamentarian

Noon - 1:30 p.m.

Lunch on your own

1:30 - 2:45 p.m.

Opening General Session
Ako Kambon, President of Visionary Leaders Institute

3 - 4:30 p.m.

General Session Seminar
"Bible Courses: Risk and Opportunity"
Thomas Hutton, Senior Staff Attorney for the National School Boards Association

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 5

7:15 a.m.

ASBA Nominating Committee

7:30 a.m.

Delegate Assembly

8:15 - 9:30 a.m.

Breakout Sessions
Fundamentals of School Finance, with Dr. Greg Murry
Six Principles of School Board Governance, with Horace Smith
Tax Contributors or Tax Consumers: The Choice is Yours (Alternative Education), with Lori Lamb
How to Read the Law and Personalize School District Policies, with Ron Harder

Developing Board Operating Principles, with Dr. Tom Jacobson
Distance Learning, with Cathi Swan
After School: A New Day for Learning, with Jennifer Harris
Systemic School Improvement, with Albert Brown
Community Connections, with Ann Marshall

9:30 - 10 a.m.

Networking Time/Visit Exhibit Hall

10 - 11:15 a.m.

General Session: Voices from the Field

11:15-11:30 a.m.

Visit Exhibit Hall

11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.

ASBA Awards Luncheon
Featured Speaker: Dr. Sandra Sims-deGraffenried

1:30 - 2 p.m.

Networking Time/Visit Exhibit Hall

2 - 3 p.m.

Breakout Sessions
Insurance and Risk Management: Common Overlooked Exposure, with Bill Birch
The Changing Face of Arkansas: The New Latino Residents of Arkansas, with Dr. Andre Guerrero
Tax Contributors or Tax Consumers; The Choice is Yours, with Lori Lamb
School Law: Issues and Answers, with Paul Blume
Developing Board Operating Principles, with Dr. Tom Jacobson
Distance Learning, with Cathi Swan
After School Programs in Arkansas: The Time Is Now! with Paul Kelly and Brad William
Coordinated School Health, with Laura McDowell
Community and Parent Involvement, with Dee Cox

Systemic School Improvement, with Albert Brown
"Teaming" with Success, with Horace Smith

3:15 - 4:15 p.m.

Breakout Sessions
Fundamentals of School Finance, with Dr. Greg Murry
Systemic School Improvement, with Albert Brown
The Changing Face of Arkansas: The New Latino Residents of Arkansas, with Dr. Andre Guerrero
How to Read the Law and Personalize School District Policies, with Ron Harder
Insurance and Risk Management: Common Overlooked Exposures, with Bill Birch
The Six Principles of School Board Governance, with Horace Smith
After School Programs in Arkansas: The Time Is Now! with Paul Kelly
Coordinated School Health, with Laura McDowell
School Law: Issues and Answers, with Paul Blume
Community Connections, with Ann Marshall

THURSDAY, DEC. 6

8 - 9:30 a.m.

Networking Breakfast
Kareem Moody, PARK Program Director

9:30 - 10 a.m.

Networking Time

10 - 11:15 a.m.

Final General Session
Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education
Governor Mike Beebe

11:15 a.m.

Adjourn

ASBA to publish quarterly magazine

The Arkansas School Boards Association and Steve Brawner Enterprises are partnering to produce a full-color quarterly magazine for ASBA members next year.

Report Card magazine will be mailed free to all ASBA members beginning in February. Like *The Reporter*, it will discuss ASBA activities while examining education issues from the perspective of school board members and superintendents.

"One of ASBA's most important roles is communicating news and information to our members," ASBA executive director Dan Farley said. "*The Reporter* has been a good tool for us, but we believe we could do a lot more with a magazine."

Brawner, who currently edits *The Reporter*, is a freelance writer and publisher. He is the former editor of *The Benton Courier* and the *Malvern Daily Record* newspapers.



Conference

Continued from page 1

about their products and services. Many will provide door prizes, which will be presented just before the exhibits close at 4:30 p.m.

A series of 75-minute Breakout Sessions will begin at 8:15 a.m.

At 10 a.m., a panel of superintendents, principals and educators will present a General Session entitled "Voices from the Field." The panelists will discuss the systems approach to professional development and the significant gains in achievement their schools have exhibited thanks to the school support component of the Arkansas Leadership Academy.

The annual ASBA Awards Luncheon will be held from 11:30 to 1:30. Recipients of the Master Board Member Awards will be recognized, and Pinnacle Awards will be presented to board members who have earned 200 hours or more through professional

development activities and service to ASBA. Also to be presented is ASBA's highest honor, the Dr. Daniel L. Pilkinton Award for Outstanding Service to Public Education.

The featured speaker for this year's luncheon is Dr. Sandra Sims-deGraffenried, former executive director of the Alabama Association of School Boards, a position she held for almost 20 years. With an education career spanning more than four decades, Dr. Sims-deGraffenried began as a teacher of English in a small, rural Alabama school. Over the years, she was a guidance counselor and held various school administrative positions dealing with attendance, supervising student testing, implementing court orders, and conducting professional development. She received her bachelor's and master's degrees from Athens College and her doctorate from Peabody College of Vanderbilt University.

Following the networking

luncheon, there will be two rounds of hour-long breakout sessions on the afternoon of Dec. 5. A list of those sessions is on page 2.

Kareem Moody, author of *Raise Them Up* and program director of PARK (Positive Atmosphere Reaches Kids), will join us for breakfast on Dec. 6. He will talk about the importance of connecting with young people through quality after-school and summer programs.

The final general session will feature Dr. Ken James, Arkansas Commissioner of Education, and Governor Mike Beebe.

All in all, it is a big agenda packed full of interesting and informative speakers and topics.

"This will be the best professional development opportunity for Arkansas school board members this year," said ASBA Executive Director Dan Farley. "I think we have put together the best conference ever, and I'm looking forward to a big crowd to take advantage of it."

Registration deadline is Nov. 26.

Job Bulletin

A service of ASBA

Superintendent, Elkins School District

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Omaha, NE 68107

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Fax: (402) 991-7168

Website: www.macnjake.com

Email: mail@macnjake.com

Contact ASBA at (501) 372-1415 to publish your job announcements.

Three join ASBA board

Three new ASBA board members were elected during this year's regional meetings.

Danna Schneider from Clarksville was elected to represent Region 4 on Oct. 18. A mother of two daughters attending college, she has served five years on the Clarksville School Board.

Damon Daniels of Amity was elected Region 10 director on Oct. 30. He has served as president and vice president of the Centerpoint School Board and



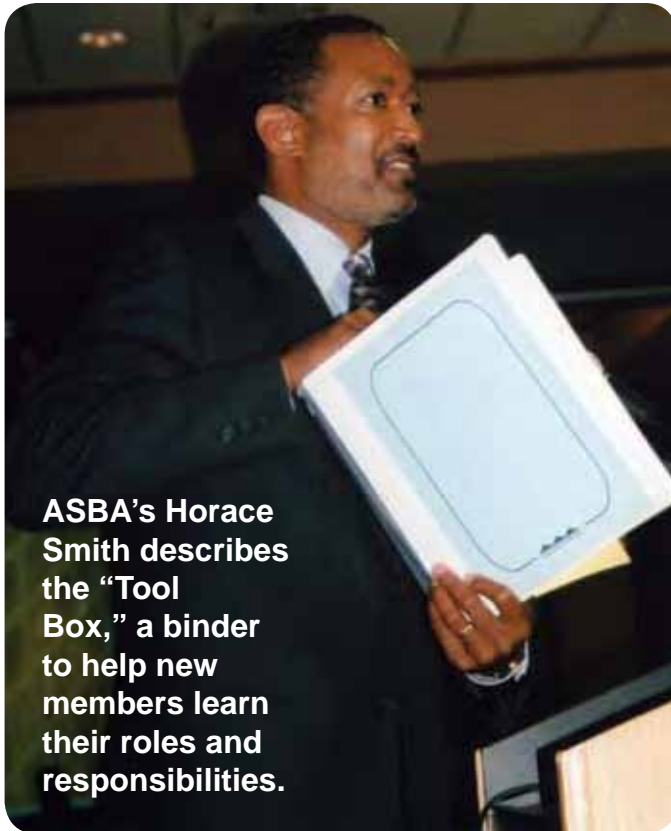
Schneider



Daniels

currently serves as secretary.

Tony Crowell of Manila was elected to represent Region 7 on Oct. 22.



ASBA's Horace Smith describes the "Tool Box," a binder to help new members learn their roles and responsibilities.

Jumping in with dry feet

• Rookies, vets gather, then split at annual training session

A foggy morning drive and a crowded assembly hall didn't deter 500 Arkansas school board members from attending this year's New Board Member Institute in Little Rock Oct. 16. In fact, more would have attended had the fire marshal not required ASBA to cut off registration a day early so as not to violate fire codes.

The high number of attendees wasn't the only twist to this year's institute. Although it is intended primarily to be an orientation for newly elected school board

members, the event in the past has drawn mostly veterans who want to refresh themselves on basic school board principles while earning required training hours. This year, ASBA organizers decided to split the two groups for the afternoon sessions. The result was a crowded rookie session, a few technical glitches, and a lot of good training.

In their session, rookies were reminded by ASBA organizers of their unique responsibility as government officials and private citizens who, according to ASBA executive director Dan Farley, "have one foot in the schools and one in the community." Despite encroaching state and federal control, "Public school boards remain the most basic form of representative democracy we have in this country," he told the rookies.

A key to the institute's success was the "tool box" created by

Horace Smith, ASBA's director of board development; Ann Marshall, special projects director; and other ASBA staff members. This was a binder that included standard information about school board members' roles and responsibilities as well as interactive charts and worksheets that rookie board members can use throughout their first year in office. The cover was left intentionally plain so they could design it as they wished, while the material was organized to guide new school board members as they develop their confidence.

Like Phil Donahue

Smith asked rookie members how they would explain the school board's role to first graders and then hopped through the crowded room with a microphone like Phil Donahue did a few years ago on his television show. Later he explained

that if board members could explain their role to a first-grader, they could explain it to the community. When he asked what the community thinks a school board does, a rookie said one of his first phone calls was from a parent complaining that his ninth grade son wasn't getting enough playing time on the football team. Another board member said, "They think that you have so much power that you can do anything."

He later had the rookies wordlessly form groups based on an article of apparel worn above the waist. After they used hand motions and facial expressions to

members – agreed that they should immediately become involved, a sentiment echoed by moderator and ASBA staff attorney Kristen Gould, who said, "The people, in my opinion, did not elect you to hang back a couple of years."

James: Ask tough questions

The effects of "hanging back" were made clear to rookies and veterans earlier in the day by Arkansas Education Commissioner Ken James. Instead of giving a pep talk, James reminded them that the Arkansas Department of Education sadly retains the power to shut down schools that are under-

members that future legislative sessions probably won't be as bountiful as the past few, when the governor and Legislature were required by court decisions to increase spending on education.

But not all of his remarks were so sobering. James reminded attendees that academic performance is improving and test scores are up. He recounted a recent newspaper column in which Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings listed Arkansas and Massachusetts as states others should emulate when it comes to public education.

Board members also heard presentations by Gould about school boards' legal responsibilities, by Fort Smith superintendent Dr. Benny Gooden on school finance, and by veteran school board member Rich Carvell about working with the public.

Whether they were rookies or veterans, board members came away from the institute with a new understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Rookie Randy Hutchinson from Springdale appreciated Gooden's "10 Danger Signs" describing when a district is slipping into trouble. Rookie Alan Ferguson from Hampton, who ran for office because he wants his school district to provide a good education for his own children, said he was learning what school boards are and what they can and cannot do. "I jumped in this with dry feet, I guess," he said. "I'm trying to get my feet wet." Charles Sikes from Scranton, a 19-year veteran who has attended several of the new board member events, said he always learns something new. "If you can take one thing back every time, it's been a good day," he said.

"Sometimes you can't keep everybody happy. Sometimes you have to make tough decisions. And that falls to you as board members."

– Dr. Ken James
Education Commissioner



cluster in numerous groups, he explained that members of a school board come from the same community but are different in many ways. He pointed out that such diversity allows for differing perspectives, but it makes it harder for boards to unify. Ultimately, though, he said school boards exist in order to set policy for the benefit of the students. "If we're there for any other reason, we might as well shut our doors," he said.

During a panel discussion, one rookie asked if new school board members should remain in the background until they are more experienced. Panelists – all of whom were veteran school board

performing or are in financial distress. James displayed no joy as he described a recent state takeover of a school district whose legal balance had steadily slid from \$1.3 million in 2003-04 to \$18,000 a few months ago, when he told patrons in a silent and packed gymnasium that their district had gone broke. School board members are supposed to ask questions of their own districts to ensure such a situation does not befall them, he asserted. "Sometimes you can't keep everybody happy," he said. "Sometimes you have to make tough decisions. And that falls to you as board members."

James also reminded board


 AMY DANIEL, ASBA PRESIDENT

ASBA Conference offers chance to learn, network



The New Board Member Institute and regional meetings are behind us. The temperature is dropping, and fall is in the air. Before we know it, the holidays will be upon us, and we all know what that means as far as hustle and bustle and scheduling time for important things.

I mentioned in my talk at the regional meetings about setting aside some time on your calendar for the annual ASBA Conference to

Sometimes the most valuable information you take away from a conference stems from conversations you have with colleagues from different places.

be held in Little Rock Dec. 4-6. The conference is one of the main ways ASBA helps school board members better serve their districts. It follows the New Board Member

Institute, where new school board members got their feet wet with a broad overview of what to expect from school board service, and the regional meetings, where we all were taken on a little trip through history and learned how school boards came to exist. The annual conference will give all of us, both new and veteran board members alike, the opportunity to examine in

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DAN FARLEY, ASBA EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

PBS's *The War* a reminder of nation's capacity for sacrifice

I hope many of you saw the excellent Ken Burns film, *The War*, broadcast recently on PBS. I watched each of the seven installments and was quite taken with every aspect of it. As I watched, I hoped that millions of other Americans, especially students, were also watching.

I am a "boomer," born to parents who had experienced World War II. My father was in the Navy serving in the South Pacific. My mother was a high school student, but that war touched everyone, including her and everyone she knew. The film points that out very well. It was a war that engaged every citizen in some way, be it through

serving in the armed forces or sacrificing for the common good – resulting in freedoms and material blessings that we all take for granted today. Growing up among my parents, my extended family, and my parents' friends and associates, I heard about the war. I understood that it was a profound experience and a time that measured us as a people in deeds and courage and sacrifice. It shaped their generation and it helped to shape mine.

That war was fought – and won – more than 60 years ago. The veterans who fought the war are vanishing at the rate of 1,200 per day, so having the story brought so

vividly to my TV screen seemed especially important – particularly the personal stories told by veterans and their friends and families. Burns sought to bring that personal perspective to life by focusing on four very different communities: Waterbury, Conn.; Mobile, Ala.; Luverne, Minn.; and Sacramento, Calif. The commonalities of those four cities were many, but the differences helped to provide other points of reference.

Each night as I watched, I was frequently moved by the stories they told. It painted a picture of America fighting for the freedom

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Executive session: Mays, shalls, and shall nots

Everyone knows what executive sessions are for, right? Personnel. Right?

Well, maybe, maybe not. So maybe what everyone knows is wrong.

Executive sessions of school board meetings are covered – that is, created and limited – by the Arkansas Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), specifically Section 25-10-106 of the Arkansas Code. Now, it does provide that executive sessions are to be used for personnel purposes, but ONLY to consider:

1. Employment;
2. Appointment;
3. Promotion;
4. Demotion;
5. Disciplining; or
6. Resignation, of any public officer or employee.

There's one other thing: You may go into executive session to interview a candidate for the position of Superintendent, but for NO OTHER position.

That's it. Nothing else.

There are provisions for closed sessions for dismissal proceedings for employees, for grievance hearings, and for student expulsions, but those are dealt with under different statutes. Those aren't FOIA situations.

Okay, so you've gone into an executive session, discussed something perfectly legal, and you just can't wait to get out of the meeting and tell someone what went on in executive session. So, you tell your wife/husband, best friend, or some reporter who wants to know. This scenario should be pure fantasy, because if you're four years old, you can't be a board member. What does that mean?

It means that you've been elected to a very important position, with lots of responsibility, including people's trust in your integrity and the good name of

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Network

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depth some of the issues that we face in our local districts.

We have expanded the offerings this year and have included more general sessions and breakout sessions so that everyone has the opportunity to hear those topics that are extremely pertinent. These include board operating principles, alternative learning, out-of-school programs, school equity, distance learning, school health, parental involvement, school finance, school law, personalizing your board policies, and helping low-performing schools raise test scores. The changing demographics in our state will be another breakout session, as well as what board members need to know about insurance coverages. You can find a complete listing elsewhere in this issue of the *Reporter*.

One way to get more value from the conference is to decide the topics you and your fellow board members want to attend. Split them up and share your information.

Perhaps equally valuable is the chance the conference provides for us to network with one another. Sometimes the most valuable information you take away from a conference stems from conversations you have with colleagues from different places.

As you can tell, there is a lot we need to know and understand as we serve our communities. I hope each one of you will try to find time in your busy schedules to join us in Little Rock for what promises to be a very beneficial annual conference. We look forward to seeing you there.

ASBA budget released

Following are ASBA's revenues and expenditures for fiscal year 2008.

Revenues		Expenditures	
Member dues	\$369,697	Personnel	\$581,618
Member services	\$310,974	Operations	\$119,651
Workshops and training	\$130,000	Conferences and travel	\$ 86,585
Interest income	\$ 45,000	Training program	\$ 33,300
Commercial affiliate fees	\$ 42,000	Dues	\$ 27,839
		Communications	\$ 26,615
		Legislative expenses	\$ 10,000
Total revenues	\$897,671	Total expenditures	\$885,608
Net revenues over expenditures		\$12,063	

Executive

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your employees. If you go about telling others what was discussed, you've failed in both of those responsibilities. Completely.

There's a reason executive sessions are closed to outside ears: The matters discussed there are, get this, confidential. Secret. Stuff only a certain, very select group of people are to know about. That's one big reason why only grownups get to be board members. The laws assume that only someone mature enough to handle the responsibilities of the office will take those positions.

If you've been talking to anyone other than those who were in your executive sessions, it's not too late to stop. Stop now, and forever.

Your position vests you with the duty to do what is best for the school district, its employees and, especially, the students. If you're talking about goings-on in executive sessions, you've also blown it on those responsibilities. Only a

majority of a board can decide what's best for the district, etc. You can't make that unilateral determination.

Also, you should know that, if you violate the confidentiality of an executive session, there might be recourse against you, civilly and criminally, for a violation of the FOIA. It has never been decided whether that will entitle someone to invoke the FOIA in a civil and/or criminal proceeding, but don't push it. Loose lips sink ships. You, too.

Let me remind you, also, that there are other ways for people to sue you (and the school whose interests you're supposed to be protecting) for such a violation of executive session confidentiality.

So. Moral of the story: Protect yourself and your school. Don't talk about executive session discussions – or otherwise communicate what was discussed – with anyone other than your board members and whoever else might have been in the executive session.

It just might be the best thing you do for your school and for yourself.

The War

Continued from page 6

of mankind, despite the fact that freedom was not yet realized by many of its own citizens. Even so, everyone understood that this was an enormous event that required unusual valor and selfless commitment. It made me understand more fully than I ever have that what we had done as a nation would shape just about everything, including my own life and my own beliefs and values.

My dad, like many others who survived the war and returned to build their place in our society, rarely talked about specific incidents. Neither did my three uncles who also served. One, a prisoner of Japan, is the only one who is still with us today. Not once did I ever hear him mention that experience, nor did I ever hear him express any regret for what he must have suffered. They did what they did because they had a keen sense of duty and an understanding that there were certain things more important than themselves. They had a shared mission, and they believed in it with every fiber of their being. Had they not, the freedoms that we take for granted today might not exist.

Fast forward 60-plus years. Ours today is a nation polarized by political ideology and mesmerized by media, technology, and instant gratification. We have forgotten how to be civil to one another. We model behaviors for our children and grandchildren that would never have been tolerated then.

How many times in the past week did the driver of that car in front of you use his signal light before turning? How many red

lights were run because the driver was more engaged in his cell phone conversation than in safely driving his automobile? How many attendants bothered to say “thank you” when you purchased groceries, or a hamburger, or an expensive new garment? How many times did you say “thank you?” How many times were you rude to someone because you were in a hurry or because you were having a bad day? How many times did you pause, even for a moment, to be thankful for what you have instead of being angry because of what you don’t have? How often and how thoughtfully do you read or listen to the news? Do you really care about others, or are you most concerned with yourself?

We have become a nation where rudeness is the rule rather than the exception. Tolerance is used only if it regards you or a member of your family. The future is taken for granted, and the past (even recent history) is disregarded. Both seem inconsequential to far too many of us.

When I was a kid (and granted, that was a while back!), things were far different. I worked for what I wanted, and I waited until I could pay for it before I got it. I was polite to people. My family ran businesses and I was part of the team, so courtesy and respect and honesty were the hallmarks of how we fit into the larger picture, how we were successful, how we measured our lives.

So, you’re probably wondering, what does any of this have to do with me, with schools, or with school boards?

I think it has everything to do with whatever it is any of us is engaged in every day. Sure, times have changed. I certainly don’t

want to take us back, but it would be nice if we could view ourselves once again in a context of character, where we are bound by certain shared values that our forefathers so eloquently articulated and for which they so nobly sacrificed so much.

Much of what our children learn today, like always, comes from what they observe. They often find it difficult to imagine an era like World War II, and they rarely have role models that remind them that, “The only thing we have to fear is fear itself.”

School boards remain an important American institution because they strive to connect communities to their schools. They can help shape the success of the school districts they govern. They can be the role models not only for students, but for the greater community that elected them. They should always remember that promoting public education is a keystone of democracy.

Do yourselves and your families a favor. Invest some time watching *The War* as it is rebroadcast on PBS, or buy the DVDs. Watch it with your children, your grandchildren, and your friends. Help them understand that, even with our warts, we are a nation of caring and compassionate people who value our history and believe that an understanding of it will help us navigate an uncertain future. The forces that seek to destroy us today aren’t Nazis or fascist extremists. We are, in fact, our own greatest enemy, and the future demands that we find the courage to face our challenges as a great nation that still values the kind of character and personal responsibility exemplified so vividly in *The War*.

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Life Track Services, Inc.

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Merl's Bus Sales, Inc.

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Metro Builders & Restoration Specialists, Inc.

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Meyer Roofing & Sheet Metal, Inc.

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Midwest Dairy Council

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Midwest Risk Mgmt. Services, Inc.

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Musco Sports Lighting, Ll.c.

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Performance Surfaces, Ll.c.

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Veteran board member writes book

Shares success secrets for school boards after 15 years of service

What do you do to cap 15 years of serving on the North Little Rock School Board? When you're as conscientious as Lynn Hamilton, you write a book about it.

In his just-released *The Secrets of School Board Success: Practical Tips for Board Members*, Hamilton offers practical suggestions for successful board service and chronicles the story of how he learned his lessons – the hard way. His candor about frustrations and failures, as well as accomplishments and accolades,



Hamilton

superintendent, and community.

Reviewing Hamilton's book, Glenn Cook, the editor-in-chief of the *American School Board Journal*, writes that *Secrets of Success* gives readers "engaging insight into the world of school governance," noting that the book isn't an academic treatise but a practical hands-on guide.

According to Ann Marshall,

leads Hamilton to single out the factors that promote personal growth, team building, and a healthy partnership among the board,

ASBA's Special Projects Coordinator, who coached Hamilton with some ideas and red ink as his book took shape, "Lynn grew into the board member every district should hope to have. His savvy perspectives on the central role of relationships and the power of trustworthiness are right on target. He offers down-to-earth advice and examples that boards can take to heart and immediately put to use."

Hamilton will be at ASBA's annual conference in Little Rock Dec. 5 with copies of his book, which he'll autograph. Published in softcover by Rowman & Littlefield Education, the book retails for \$19.95.

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