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President's Letter

Hello Everyone!

I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and weren't too overwhelmed when you got back to work. Vacations are wonderful, but the getting back.....

NRV-SHRM had a great year in 2008 and we hope to continue that trend in 2009. I would like to thank Keith LaShomb for doing an exceptional job as president last year – he will be a tough act to follow. I would also like to thank the outgoing Board members and welcome the new members. Much of the 2008 Board will continue, but we will greatly miss outgoing members Christy Porterfield, Susan Graves, Valerie Crabtree, and Becky Cox – thanks so much for your hard work. New members on the Board will be Robin Ball (president elect) Darren Wagnon (member-at-large), Sharon Williams (secretary), Brooke Perry (membership coordinator), and Cyndy Rupe (HRCI coordinator). Sam Camden will be switching roles from member-at-large to college relations coordinator and Keith LaShomb will move from president to past president. Last but certainly not least, we all appreciate Teresa Harless who has agreed to continue as the newsletter editor.

In 2009, we plan to continue with many of the activities that have been successful in the past: monthly meetings in which HRCI credit will be offered, the annual salary survey, PHR study groups, social events, and community involvement. We want to continue to involve the student chapters at Radford and Virginia Tech as well as increase membership.

One change that we already know will occur is the addition of more lunch meetings, as we will alternate breakfast meetings in the odd months with lunch meetings in the even months. What we need to make 2009 a great year for the NRV-SHRM is your ideas and involvement.

- As Robin Ball begins to schedule speakers for the year, she would greatly appreciate your thoughts on topics and potential speakers – don't feel shy about suggesting yourself as a speaker!
- If there are jobs you want added to the salary survey, let me know (it will be sent out in February).
- If you have some ideas for involving the students, or would like a student intern, give Sam Camden a shout.
- If you think 2009 is the year to get your PHR or SPHR certification, contact Cyndy Rupe (study sessions will probably be in March and April).
- If you want to attend our monthly meetings but the location, schedule, speakers, or other issue makes it difficult for you to attend, please chat with any Board member so that we can make changes.
- If you know a local HR professional who is not in our chapter, encourage them to join – Brooke Perry would be happy to assist you.
- If you want to be involved in diversity or workforce readiness issues, feel free to offer your assistance to April Lucas or Shari Caston.

If your organization would like to sponsor a chapter meeting, Karen Edmonds would be excited to hear from you.

I look forward to seeing everyone in the coming year. Hope about starting the year of right and attending our January 15 meeting – Clint Morse will be providing a legal update on ADA issues; a meeting with Clint as the speaker is never dull.

Best Regards,
Mike Aamodt

Meeting Notices

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

The monthly Board meeting will be held on Tuesday, January 13th at 7:30 a.m. at IHOP in Christiansburg. Any Board members that cannot attend should contact Sharon Williams at partners@vt.edu.

CHAPTER INDUSTRIAL MEETING

Be sure to mark your calendars to attend the next meeting that will be held on Tuesday, January 13th at IHOP in Christiansburg. IHOP is located between Ryan's and Red Lobster in Christiansburg. This meeting is held on the second Tuesday of every month and meets at 7:00 a.m. Contact Jeff Hamley at (540) 639-8971 or jeffrey.hamley@atk.com for more information on the Industrial Meeting.

Chapter Financial Report

Beginning Balance as of November 30, 2008	\$ 2,681.63
Ending Balance as of December 31, 2008	\$ 748.07
Scholarship Balance	\$ 2,982.01
Certificate of Deposit	\$ 2,500.00

About the SHRM Foundation

The SHRM Foundation was founded in 1966 as a 501 (c)(3) not-for-profit affiliate of the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM). It is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors from the HR profession, including academics, practitioners and representatives from SHRM. The Foundation funds research, publications and education to advance the HR profession and enhance the effectiveness of HR professionals. To support its important work, the SHRM Foundation conducts an annual fundraising campaign. All contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible.

The Foundation promotes research, innovation and the use of research-based knowledge. With an annual budget of approximately \$1 million, it funds [major research projects](#) that have a direct and practical impact in advancing the HR profession.

Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives

The SHRM Foundation maximizes the impact of the HR profession on organizational decision-making and performance by promoting innovation, education, research, and the use of research-based knowledge.

Objective 1: *The SHRM Foundation* will be a preeminent broker/source of valued research knowledge.

Objective 2: *The SHRM Foundation* will broaden the understanding and application of research-based knowledge and techniques to the HR professional.

Objective 3: *The SHRM Foundation* will make research-based knowledge accessible and actionable for the HR profession.

Objective 4: *The SHRM Foundation* will develop and nurture funding sources for the Foundation's work.

Legislative Update

Workplace Violence: How to Keep Your Employees and Your Workplace Safe by Charles G. Meyer, III and Nancy B. Sasser of LeClairRyan

Although the holidays are a time of cheer for many, it can also be a stressful time for many of your employees. The stress of the holiday season often is cited as one reason for the cyclical spike in crime at this time of year, and the current economic downturn could mean more problems than usual this season. Unfortunately, holiday pressures sometimes result in employee outbursts and workplace violence, and employers should be tuned in to this possibility. Employers should take time now to revisit and, if necessary, revise their policies regarding workplace violence and workplace bullying to promote safety in the workplace and to ensure they are prepared for situations that may arise.

Workplace Violence

Over one million Americans are victim to some kind of workplace violence every year. In spring 2007, several faculty members were killed during the Virginia Tech massacre. In the same two-week period, a man who had been terminated a week earlier from Gordon Advisers, P.C. in Troy, Michigan returned to the firm and shot three coworkers, killing one. Within days of these tragic events, a contractor for NASA in Houston killed a coworker, duct-taped another to a chair, and then killed himself. Workplace violence occurs in every industry and affects all employers without regard for job classification, office size, or geographic location.

Although approximately 610 people died in 2007 as a result of workplace homicides, most incidents of workplace violence are less overt and dramatic. Workplace violence encompasses not only physical assaults, but also violent confrontations, co-worker sabotage, robbery, threats of violence, verbal abuse, and cyber threats. Of course, workplace violence also can take place outside of the actual workplace.

What Are the Signs Employers Should Look For?

Workplace violence is, in most cases, preventable. A 2004 *USA Today* series on workplace violence noted that in eight out of ten cases, workplace killers left “clear warning signs” prior to engaging in homicidal acts. Employers should be aware of the warning signs and be prepared to immediately evaluate those signals should they appear.

An individual’s behaviors and attitudes often provide obvious indicators that threatening, aggressive, or violent acts might occur. Such indicators include verbal or cyber threats to coworkers or managers, verbal references to violent acts, brandishing weapons to coworkers, and communication of proposed violent or disruptive acts.

Other warning signs, however, are more subtle, and employers should be aware of less obvious patterns of behavior during the holiday season, when stress levels tend to escalate. These signs and patterns include: (1) anger or distress over recent work or non-work events, such as a job termination or family troubles; (2) recent changes in demeanor or withdrawal from social interactions; (3) challenging authority; (4) substance abuse; (5) unwelcome obsession (romantic or otherwise) with a coworker; and (6) blaming others for work or general life problems.

What Can Employers Do?

Employers should never ignore reports of violent or threatening behavior, and should immediately respond to and investigate such reports just as they would respond to and investigate complaints of unlawful harassment.

One critical aspect of any plan for maintaining a safe work environment is providing assistance to employees who may be experiencing increased stress or who may be exhibiting the above behaviors. An Employee Assistance Program that provides confidential counseling to employees and managers is an excellent way for employers to show their support for employees, and to provide employees with a means of dealing with stress and other issues before those problems escalate. Other preventative measures employers should take include: (1) training all employees and managers on the warning signs of violent or aggressive behavior; (2) training managers on threat assessment; (3) establishing and promoting a clear policy for reporting threats or warning signs; (4) establishing and promoting non-violence policies; (5) creating a crisis management plan to handle emergency situations; and (6) identifying and mitigating weaknesses in workplace security.

In addition to the potential for employee injury posed by workplace violence, employers also face potential legal liability for acts of workplace violence. Although no specific federal regulation creates an obligation to prevent violent behavior, the General Duty clause (section 5(a)) of the Occupational Safety and Health Act (OSHA) requires covered employers to provide a safe workplace for all employees. Employers may be cited for violations of OSHA's General Duty clause if they fail to take reasonable steps to prevent or abate a recognized hazard of violence in the workplace. Moreover, employers may face liability for workplace violence in the form of workers' compensation claims asserted by injured employees. Employers also face potential tort liability for claims of negligent hiring, negligent retention, and negligent supervision arising from preventable workplace violence. Employers who do not immediately respond to or investigate incidents of violence have little chance of escaping liability should an employee or employee's family bring a claim or lawsuit against the employer in response to the workplace violence.

Workplace Bullying

There have been a number of recent attempts to add further legal protections to employees the workplace. Courts and legislatures have increased their focus on preventing workplace bullying. For example, in April 2008, the Indiana Supreme Court affirmed a \$325,000 jury verdict for the bullied plaintiff, holding that "workplace bullying" may be considered in determining whether someone is liable for assault or intentional infliction of emotional distress. *See* "The 'Workplace Bully' Lands More Than A Trip To The Principal's Office," LECLAIRRYAN LAB. & EMP. NEWSLETTER, Oct. 2008.

Employers would be well-advised to keep a close eye on these developments, and to consider implementing anti-bullying policies. Workplace bullying includes not only threats and assaults, as in *Raess v. Doescher*, but also teasing, belittling, yelling, glaring, ignoring, criticizing, and even attempting to undermine an employee's work, such as imposing impossible deadlines or projects. Bullying has been defined as health-impairing, repeated mistreatment in the form of verbal abuse, intimidating or humiliating conduct, or sabotage or work interference that undermines an individual's business interests.

An August 2007 United States workplace bullying survey by Zogby International found that 37 percent of American workers, or 54 million people, reported being bullied at work. Another 12 percent reported witnessing bullying at work. Workplace bullying is four times more prevalent than illegal discriminatory harassment. In 62 percent of cases, employers made aware of the behavior either did nothing about it or even made it worse. Of those targeted, 57 percent are women, most of whom

(71 percent) are bullied by other women. One third of those who reported workplace bullying note that the bullying continued for over a year.

Many employers have recognized the problems caused by workplace bullying, prompting an effort by several state legislatures to implement legislation designed to prevent it. Since 2003, at least thirteen states have introduced anti-bullying “healthy workplace” legislation. These new laws would provide employees with the ability to sue not only the workplace “bully” for offensive, threatening or humiliating behavior, but also their employers. The proposed bills would extend to all employees, regardless of the size or the public or private status of their employers. The bills also would prohibit retaliation against an employee who brought a complaint under the bill. Employers may be able to escape vicarious liability under the proposed legislation if they take reasonable steps to prevent and correct incidents of workplace bullying.

Accordingly, employers should take steps now to put in place anti-bullying policies or incorporate workplace bullying into their anti-harassment policies. Employers should also implement an anti-bullying training program and emphasize to their employees that they have a zero tolerance approach to workplace bullying. Taking these actions now can boost the company’s reputation while also minimizing the possibility of legal liability in the future.

Given the risks that workplace violence and bullying pose to the safety of individuals, as well as the morale, reputation, and financial security of companies, *all* employers should take the time to examine their workplace, pinpoint potential areas of weakness, and prepare for any problems that may arise.

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Renew your NRV SHRM Membership Today!

Please complete the 2009 Membership Application and submit immediately to Brooke Perry. The application can be found on the NRV SHRM website. For questions about your membership, please send e-mails to brooke@brightservices.net.

\$45.00 Annually for National SHRM Members (A discounted rate for National SHRM Affiliation).

\$55.00 Annually for Non-National SHRM Members (Local NRV Chapter Member Only).

\$10.00 Annually for Retired National or Retired Local SHRM Members.

Please make check payable to NRV SHRM and remit with 2009 application to:

Brooke Perry

NEW RIVER VALLEY SHRM

MEMBERSHIP MEETING January 15, 2009

Topics: Legal Update: ADA Amendment and Issues

**Speakers: Clint Morse
LeClair Ryan**

**Location: Hampton Inn,
Christiansburg, VA**

Time: 7:30 a.m.— 9:00 a.m.

APPROVED FOR RECERTIFICATION CREDIT

This program has been approved for 1 credit hour towards PHR, SPHR, and GPHR recertification through the Human Resources Certification Institute (HRCI). This program will also count toward the strategic management component of the SPHR.

