

The
Iowa County

Iowa State Association of Counties

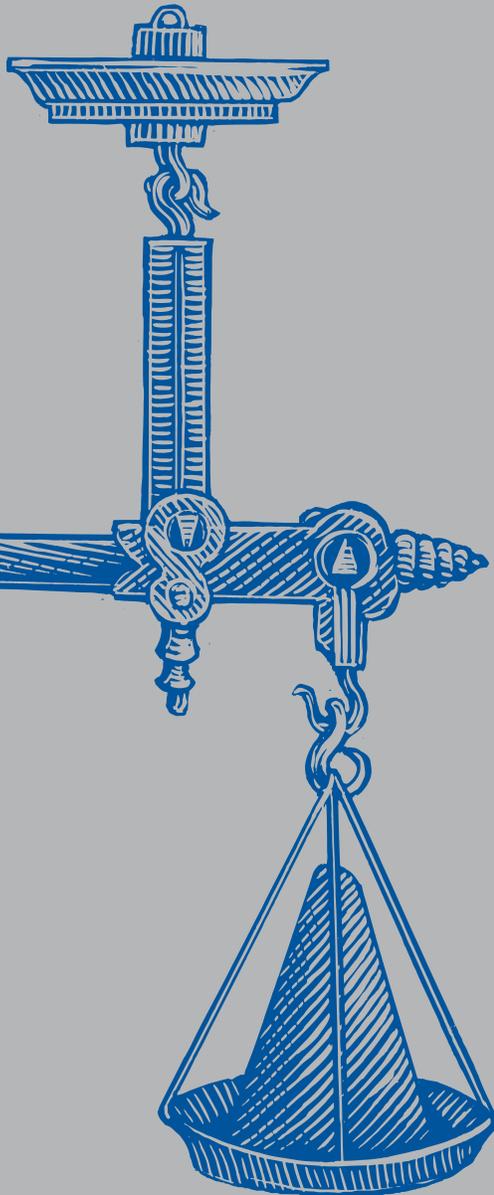
May 2009

Cutting Budgets Without
Slashing and Burning
NACo Legislative Conference
Wrap-up

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Feature - Cutting Budgets Without Slashing and Burning <i>Phil Rosenberg</i>	4-6
By the Numbers <i>Jay Syverson</i>	7
Capitol Comments <i>Nate Bonnett</i>	8-9
Technology Center <i>Robin Harlow and Tammy Norman</i>	10-11
ISAC Meetings <i>Stacy Horner</i>	12-13
Case Management <i>Deb Eckerman Slack</i>	14
NACo News	15-16
Miscellaneous	16
Associate Member Highlight	17
Calendar of events	20



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ISAC's Mission:

To promote effective and responsible county government for the people of Iowa.

ISAC's Vision:

To be the principal, authoritative source of representation, information and services for and about county government in Iowa.

ISAC meetings

Cutting Budgets Without Slashing and Burning

The Great MASH character Dr. Hawkeye Pierce was once asked to name his favorite book. He said it was his dictionary because it had all the other books inside of it. That is exactly the situation with Human Resources. No manager or professional in any field – certainly not public administration – can be successful without also being an HR Manager.

As this author looks back over thirty-five years of public service with many more to come, the greatest moments of joy have come by having some role in developing the next generation of public administrators, in creating internship programs, and in helping to substitute innovation for inertia in creating version 2.0 of Civil Service Rules, benefit innovations, and much more. The saddest and most difficult times have come on the rare occasions when layoff letters had to be written.

For at least the next decade, many local governments will be under the same kind of attacks that California agencies suffered in the wake of the passage of Proposition 13 three decades ago. Economic pressures, horror stories of government waste, the perception of excessive compensation to public employees, and the seeming lack of long-term vision have come together in a perfect storm of tax revolt. The easiest target is local government. The principal perpetrators are found in State Legislatures. These are the bodies which inflict unfunded and often caseload driven mandates on local governments. They are quick to attack the property tax which is the local government's lifeblood of general revenues.

Nonetheless, it is the lot of local government administrators, including elected officials, to look to the future with optimism, and to live in a world of balanced budgets, even if the population at large and the Federal government in particular seem fascinated with short-term massive expenditures, credit card borrowing, sub-prime mortgages, etc.

How do you go about balancing budgets without engaging in wanton mass destruction? The answer is not at all easy. This author is pleased to share a few insights derived from service as a City and County HR Director in California, and, for more than twenty years in Florida, as well as serving as a County Chief Administrative Officer in the wake of Proposition 13. These insights also come from many years of consulting with other government agencies and service as an intelligence officer. Two fundamental points about how to deal with any liabilities at work and at home are essential. The two philosophies are simple but profound:

By: Phil Rosenberg

The HR Doctor, www.hrdr.net



1. Take action now to put off the day when something bad happens!
2. Don't walk by something wrong!

Managers commit malpractice when they don't look at strategic issues and when they don't view a situation such as chronic revenue shortfalls with a "view from forty thousand feet." To those of my colleagues who have a tactical focus on merely getting past the next Commission meeting, the options to deal with acute revenue problems are very, very limited. They are limited to what can be done in a period of three to six months. That usually means organizational and service reductions, re-organizing, freezing and eliminating vacancies, writing lay-off letters, and postponing capital and fixed asset purchases as well as perhaps closing facilities. It also generally means slashing what little training and development budgets are present in organizations in the first place. To balance budgets coming up in a matter of weeks or months, such as October 1st, the tactical Administrator has few options other than budgetary extreme cage fighting.

The trauma can be minimized and indeed met with optimism and innovation by acting now so that years from now things will be different and much better than they would otherwise have been. All of these approaches require the skills of a strong communicator, an innovator, and someone who deliberately sets out to overcome an inherent fact of life in many bureaucracies – inertia. The possible strategic approaches center on several fronts:

1. Know where you now stand. You can't get to a new and better place without knowing where you are at present, and how you got there. This is a basic map reading and way-finding strategy. Do you know how many vehicles are being taken home every night? Do you know how many credit cards bear the agency's name and where they all are, and who is authorized to use them? Do you know what the provisions of the Pension programs and the Health Insurance programs are in the organization? Have you surveyed the fixed assets such as computers to understand how many there are, where they are, and their relative conditions? What is the history of employee relations in the organization? How many unscheduled single day sick leave occurrences are taking place? Are they connected often to holidays or weekends? Do Supervisors really pay any attention at all to performance evaluations and take active steps to interrupt sexual harassment, race discrimination or bullying? Are there even up to date policies in these areas?

After taking your own pulse, just as doctors do when you first visit their office with baseline tests and medical histories, it's time to look at specific opportunities for cost reduction.

2. Review benefit management cost controls. This includes pension reform to limit the spiraling cost of pensions – especially in the public safety area. Seek out innovations, such as establishing a two-tier system so that the benefits of current employees are not affected – or perhaps enhanced - but the future employee pension benefits are locked in at a lower and much more cost-effective point. Explore incentives for early exit from the organization as long as the resulting vacancies are not filled. Do the same with phased-in retirements, allowing some employees to move to part-time work prior to retiring. Create a long term attrition planning goal for the gradual realignment of work and reduction of positions.

Health Insurance Reform requires help from extraordinary broker/consultants who serve as safari guides through the jungle of alternatives and options - guides such as Lloyd Rhodes in South Florida.

Perhaps consider merging separate categories of pay for time not worked such as sick leave, vacation, personal holidays and many other categories into a single paid time off category with controls, so that the cost of that one hour of vacation earned twenty years ago as a Firefighter does not multiply many times over by the time a Battalion Chief retires later. Perhaps (yes, it's rather radical!) consider accruals of paid time off in dollars rather than in hours. The latter creates the kind of super-compounding effect described above.

Reviewing organizational structures might reveal opportunities for long term streamlining. Eight sworn ranks in the Fire Department below the rank of Department Head or Fire-Rescue Chief might have been piled on over time and are not really necessary. Each layer adds cost and escalates further the cost of the next higher rank. Are sworn law enforcement and fire-rescue employees really needed to do administrative work, such as budget preparation, HR, procurement, fleet maintenance and other functions? Perhaps these areas can be “civilianized” at a considerable savings. Perhaps separate street maintenance and park maintenance crews can be consolidated.

We will come to the point in local governments when we will also take the innovative step of realizing that you don't need to be an “employee” to lead a government department. Lead-

ership through consultancy will capture the experience and wisdom needed for strategic policy decisions as well as the mentoring and succession planning needed for the long run – at least that is the basis for The HR Doctor's consulting role with other agencies as “HR Advisor.”

3. Create Process Improvement. Start inside the HR system by determining whether the organization has a model which is essentially a nineteenth century civil service model which is neither flexible nor effective. Such models torture the applicants, and make the directors in the agency as well as the current employees unhappy and frustrated. The same may be true of the procurement system, of how vehicles are maintained, computer systems managed, and payroll changes made, and much more.

Process improvement can best begin by engaging an outside facilitator to help lead the creation of a self examination of these processes. That, result can then be incorporated into a Strategic Plan for improvement and a specific “How many? By when?” Business Plan for change.

Does the organization hold accountable employees to receive the training associated with liability reduction? Are there up-to-date policies banning sexual harassment or workplace violence for example? Is there proof in each person's personnel file that they have attended the trainings? If not, a liability set of double doors has just opened wide to hoards of plaintiffs' attorneys. Rather than whacking the training budget, this is the time to enhance accountability training, especially for supervisors and managers! Is there careful stewardship of the Worker's Compensation programs to ensure that the right benefits are paid to employees who are injured or become ill because of the job, but that those who are using or stretching the system are crashing into organizational walls of protection? Internally, is the organization getting the most bangs for its risk insurance buck? Comparisons with other organizations and dynamic insurance marketing of the organization can be very valuable.

Continues on page 6.

ISAC meetings

4. Improve employee selection screening methods as part of longer range liability prevention and cost prevention. Some specific tips include reviewing the driving history of all current employees who may operate a vehicle regularly, such as every six months, just to be sure that people driving large vehicles with the government agency logos on them have not had their licenses suspended or revoked. Require that every employee immediately inform the organization if they are convicted, plead guilty, or plead no contest to any felony or misdemeanor, including DUI. Before hiring Law Enforcement or Fire personnel, it is a good idea to have a forensic psychological evaluation included in the post-offer pre-employment consideration. Setting in place protocols in advance for drug testing and threat assessments when behavior is particularly bad represent excellent strategies to prevent future costs. These and other proactive methods are especially important when hiring persons whose work includes particularly high consequences of error for the organization. These include management personnel, safety personnel, childcare personnel, and others who may be involved in working with children and frail or infirm senior citizens.

5. Consider major inter-agency initiatives. This is often the most difficult area of change due to the marriage of inertia and ego. How many separate agencies need to exist in the same region performing the same functions? How many Communication Dispatch Centers does it take? Does every City and County really need a separate HR department? How many Fire Departments must there be? What about an inter-agency training consortium, since many of the training initiatives described in this article are common needs in multiple agencies. What about producing cooperative arrangements so that jurisdic-

tions share recreation facilities, water and wastewater treatment plants, and solid waste facilities?

Some of this might be perceived as giving up some operation, or particular location such as a Fire Station. However, stepping away from the tactical, and looking at a multi-jurisdictional approach with joint powers authorities, or cooperative agreements, may save the tax-payers considerable money, and even enhance service. They are brave and bold steps which will, no doubt, produce opposition from vested interests and from champions of inertia.

If the City or County Manager, the Executive Staff members, and very importantly, the Elected Officials, joined together in looking long range, in cooperating and communicating with employees and citizens openly, honestly, and with no surprises, it is possible to put programs and concepts in place which put off the day when a layoff letter ever has to be written. It is possible to install efficiencies and mitigate costs. HR is at the center of this process of optimism and innovation. Tactical HR, focusing on paperwork management and paperclip counting is not going to get the agency where it needs to be. However, when HR is a strong partner in strategic decision-making, sitting next to the City Manager or the Mayor, serious opportunities for positive change can be seized.

Phil Rosenberg
The HR Doctor
www.hrdr.net

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SAVE THE DATE!
The Fifth Annual
ISAC 
Scholarship Golf Fundraiser
Hosted by the Iowa State Sheriffs and Deputies Association
and the Iowa State Association of County Supervisors
July 15, 2009 Jester Park Golf Course, Granger
Iowa State Association of Counties www.iowacounties.org

Golf Course Property Taxes

By: Jay Syverson

ISAC Fiscal Analyst



Summer is nearly here, and it's about time for thousands of Iowa golfers to start heading back to one of the state's 415 golf courses. Because there has been a lot of discussion during the past few legislative sessions about providing property tax relief to golf courses, this month's *By the Numbers* looks at the current status of golf course property taxes, using Polk County as a case study. All data, which covers the 2007 assessment year and property taxes payable in FY 2009, can be found at the Polk County Assessor's web site, www.assess.co.polk.ia.us.

There's a nine-hole golf course – the Urbandale Golf and Country Club – near my home in Urbandale. The course covers about 78 acres of land just off a busy suburban street, and is nestled in a residential area. The golf course is classified as commercial property and its 78 acres of land have an assessed value of \$682,000, or about \$8,750 per acre. The property includes a clubhouse, a pool, a few warehouses and a storage shed for golf carts. The total building value of the property, \$1,031,000, also includes value for fencing, asphalt paving and the nine greens on the golf course, which are considered “improvements” for assessment purposes. That means the total property value is \$1,713,000. In FY09, the course paid about \$63,000 in property taxes. A hefty chunk of change, to be sure. But let's compare that to other properties in the area.

There's a Hy-Vee about a half-mile south of the golf course. It's at an intersection of two busy suburban streets, so you'd expect it to have a higher land value. Boy, would you be right! The Hy-Vee sits on six acres of land that are assessed at \$1,362,000, or a whopping \$227,000 per acre. Its building value, including the store and parking lot, is \$2,406,000, for a total value of \$3.8 million. On that store, Hy-Vee paid property taxes of about \$138,000 this year. (Incidentally, both the golf course and Hy-Vee appealed their 2007 assessments to the Polk County Board of Review. The golf course got no relief, and the board actually increased Hy-Vee's initial assessment from the \$3.8 million the assessor put on it to the \$4.5 million final value. Hy-Vee appealed the board's decision, and the court ordered the valuation reduced to just below the initial assessed value, or still about \$3.8 million. This court-ordered valuation of \$3.8 million is the number I use in this article.)

Golf courses are unique because they require so much land to operate. The Urbandale golf course near my house is 78 acres, and that's just for nine holes. The smallest 18-hole golf course I found in Polk County covers just about 150 acres. Because of their land-intensive nature, comparisons are hard to make; it's hard to find a property that requires as much land as a golf

course. The best I could do is Valley West Mall, which sits on 58 acres of prime commercial real estate at the northern edge of West Des Moines. Those 58 acres are valued at \$22.2 million, or more than \$380,000 per acre. Including the building value of \$48 million, the mall paid over \$2.6 million in property taxes this year.

Now let's look at the residential property surrounding the Urbandale Golf and Country Club. On the western border of the golf course, the typical home sits on a third of an acre; that land is assessed at about \$50,000, or about \$150,000 per acre. Building values over \$300,000 can push property taxes on those homes to between \$5,000 and \$6,000 annually. On the north side of the course, homes are a little older and a little smaller. Lot sizes are a fifth to a quarter of an acre, and land values average about \$38,000 per residence. That translates to a per acre value of about \$170,000. Property taxes on these homes are about \$2,400 this year.

Most golf courses in Polk County have per-acre land values in the \$8,000 to \$10,000 range. Frankly, that doesn't seem unreasonable. Golf course property taxes are indeed high, but that's because golf courses cover a lot of property. It's the nature of the beast, so to speak. If legislators want to give golf courses a property tax break, that's one thing. Maybe the benefits golf courses bring to Iowa are deserving of a tax break. (For some data behind that theory, check out *The Iowa Golf Economy 2006*, a report prepared for the Iowa Golf Alliance and available at www.iowagolf.org.) But be honest about it: golf courses are not over-taxed. With assessed land values at \$10,000 an acre at golf courses, \$150,000 to \$170,000 an acre at surrounding residential property, \$227,000 an acre at the grocery store down the street, and \$380,000 an acre at a mall in same metropolitan area, it's hard to single out golf courses as being treated unfairly.

capitol comments

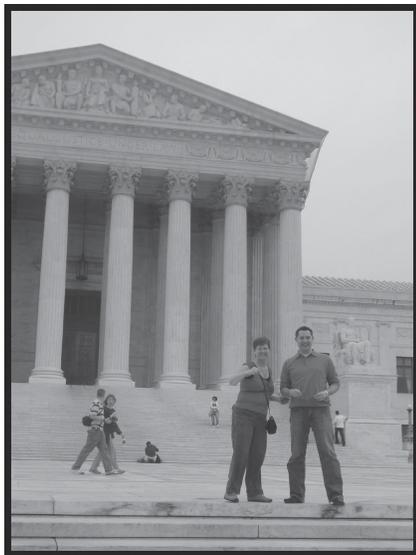
ISAC Takes On D.C.

As I was about half done with my May “Capitol Comments” article for the Iowa County magazine I received a print out—hot off the press—of Grant Veeder’s NACo report for the same issue. Much to my utter dismay we chose to write about the exact same things, literally sharing verbiage in some cases. I was visibly shaken by this. Rachel didn’t seem to care. Unfortunately for me, Grant puts pen to paper well. His wit and dry humor is tall on clever and long on humor, while mine is extraordinarily neither. It’s too bad really, because I nailed the report on Interior Secretary Salazar’s speech—at least the parts I heard when I wasn’t watching Rachel sketch him on her legal pad. Nonetheless, I reluctantly step aside and, instead of writing another article about the nuts and bolts of the daytime happenings of the conference, I’m going to focus on my D.C. experience. After all, I am a 28 year old lobbyist/lawyer and had never been to Washington, D.C. before!

Our arrival at Reagan National on what was otherwise a sleepy Saturday morning quickly became something more as the jet clung to the meandering form of the Potomac in a fashion generally more suitable to F-22s in heavy combat. After the pilot managed to put the bird down unscathed, we emerged from the airport and caught a taxi to the hotel. The weather was beautiful our entire trip, and apparently everyone in D.C. jogs for exercise because the paths through Rock Creek Park were full of what I can only assume were other lobbyists and lawyers. Some members of the ISAC group promptly joined the “insiders” outside as we began our tour of the sights.

Places and People

I had a few things I wanted to check off my list that weren’t exactly “work-related.” Unless, of course, you count trying



to keep up with ISAC President Gary Anderson “work” as we “strolled” through the National Mall—I know I paid the price in muscle aches the rest of the week! It was well worth my discomfort, though, as I finally got a chance to understand the breathtaking scope of our great capital.

I toured the usual spots—the Capitol,

By: Nate Bonnett

ISAC Assistant Legislative Counsel



Library of Congress, and various memorials to honor past presidents and those who have served our country. These were, of course, beautiful and moving sights to see. I particularly enjoyed the ornately appointed Library of Congress. I think I could have gotten lost in the stacks for the entire trip. I also enjoyed watching Grant peruse the various Lincoln exhibits. I’m not entirely sure, but I may have seen him reciting the Gettysburg Address to himself in the corner. I also scheduled time to argue before the Supreme Court, (Bill actually made Linda and I stage an argument on the front steps for a photo. It was pretty goofy. But seriously, I annihilated her.) We didn’t actually get a chance to go inside the White House, but we did witness a scene from the upcoming Angelina Jolie flick “Salt” being filmed one night outside the grand residence. The fake news reporter seemed to have her lines down. The film is set for a summer 2010 release.

As Grant will explain in his article (see page 15), one of the more exciting experiences was when our entourage was invited to the

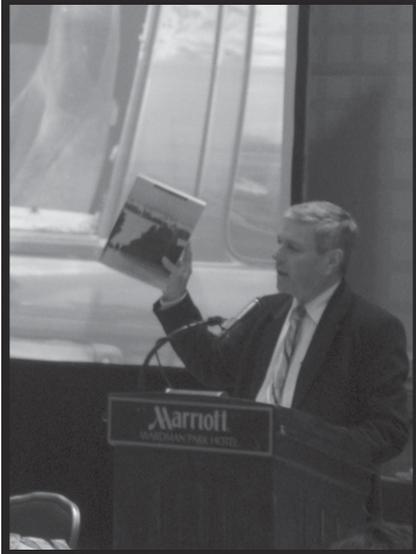


Senate reception hall, which is just off the floor of the chamber, to present Senator Harkin with an award. I think I only managed to get in to one picture—I was standing behind the good Senator with a silly grin on my face imagining all the conversations that had gone on inside the dark little alcoves. I also saw Senator Burris, from Illinois, greeting a guest to my left. You

may remember his name associated with the recent (most recent) gubernatorial scandal in the great state to our east. I suspect we haven’t heard the last of it either.

Dining and Nightlife

When it comes to dining, it’s obvious that Mr. Peterson has a penchant for Italian and seafood cuisine. We rolled out of three very good restaurants on each of Saturday, Sunday, and Monday evening after consuming fresh, homemade, beautifully presented fare and sharing stimulating conversation with county officials and ISAC staff.



By Tuesday, Bill and I preferred a simple burger and fries, which we found in Georgetown at a lively establishment known as "J. Paul's." With just the two of us the conversation wasn't nearly as stimulating (I'm sure you can imagine). After dinner, Bill thought he should show me a little bit of the neighborhood. I was particularly impressed by the

townhouse and adjacent steep stairway made famous in the movie "The Exorcist." In fact, I couldn't wait to call my wife and tell her the news. As I suspected, she was unimpressed.

Nightlife for me generally consists of listening to republican lawmakers raise amendments to democrat bills for hours on end. I'm sure that's similar to many nights in D.C. for that

matter. There also happens to be a bustling neighborhood scene. Even though I was exhausted, I let Linda lead me and a few others on a trek through her old neighborhood, Adams Morgan where we had refreshments at an establishment known as "Madams Organ" (that's known as wordplay, my friends). It was one of the more unusual experiences of the trip, listening to a mix of hip-hop and reggae in a dark room while sitting on a sofa that was entirely too well worn with a county supervisor next me and a county auditor across from me.

On another night, Rachel and I met the Michigan Association of Counties' lobbyists for refreshments at a Dupont bar known as the "Brickskeller." Never before had I seen so many beers in one place. In fact, the bar is listed in the Guinness Book of World Records as "the bar with the largest selection of commercially available beers," with 1,032 choices! I honored my comrades with a tasty Michigan microbrew and a favorite Czech selection and called it a night.

As you've probably gathered by now I thoroughly enjoyed my first visit to Washington D.C. Believe it or not, I actually enjoyed my time *in* the conference as well. All the important stuff that Grant said is true. Plus, I thank him for allowing me the opportunity to write about something slightly more interesting, even though he didn't realize he was doing it.



About the Pictures

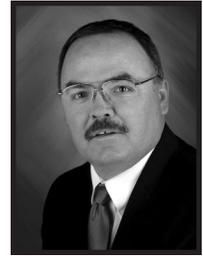
As Nate mentions on the previous pages, there is a lot to see in Washington, DC. The cover picture shows a staircase and ceiling of the National Library of Congress. It is truly an amazing building. Page 8, column 1, Nate and Linda are shown arguing in front of the Supreme Court. Page 8, column 2, is a picture taken in the underground hallways leading from the Rayburn Senate Office Building to the US Capitol. Pictured in the first two rows (front to back, left to right) are: Richard Bender, Senator Harkin's Senior Legislative Assistant; Linda Langston, Linn County Supervisor; Lucas Beenken, Wright County Supervisor; and Terrence Neuzil, Johnson County Supervisor. Pictured above, John Miller, Black Hawk County Supervisor, is presenting to the justice and public safety steering committee. More information is included in Grant's article on pages 15-16.

Don't miss the 2009 NACo Annual Conference and Exposition begin held at the Gaylord Opryland Resort and Convention Center in Davidson County (Nashville), Tennessee, from July 24-28. Registration is open at www.naco.org.

ARRA and Rural Broadband

By: *Robin Harlow*

ISAC Technology
Project Manager



The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 contains significant funding (\$7.2 billion) for assessing, developing and implementing rural broadband. \$4.7 billion will come from the Commerce Department and \$2.5 billion will be managed by the Department of Agriculture. When compared to the previous levels of funding (\$20 million a year), there are some serious dollars being made available to implement broadband in unserved and underserved areas of the United States.

The overall purposes of the broadband language in ARRA are: to provide broadband service (e.g., faster Internet access) to consumers in unserved areas of the country and improved broadband service to consumers in underserved areas; and to provide broadband education, awareness, training, access, and support to libraries, educational institutions and other organizations to facilitate greater use of broadband, including more use by low-income, unemployed, aged, and otherwise vulnerable populations.

Funding can be used by libraries and other organizations to undertake projects consistent with the above purposes. More specifically, funding can be used:

- To acquire equipment, networking capability, hardware/software, and digital network technology;
- To construct and deploy broadband services; and
- To ensure access to broadband service by community anchor institutions. (It should not be too difficult to position the library as an anchor institution.)

Some of the funding is targeted at specific groups or for particular purposes. For example:

- There is a minimum of \$200 million for competitive grants to expand “public computer center capacity.” Public libraries and community colleges are specifically referenced as eligible for this funding.
- There is a minimum of \$250 million for competitive grants for innovative programs that encourage adoption and sustainability of broadband service.

Of particular interest to the counties is funding that is targeted to enhance broadband infrastructure and encourage greater use. Specifically, \$350 million is allocated to fund the Broadband Data Improvement Act (BDIA). The BDIA was passed in October 2008, but was left unfunded.

The BDIA establishes a new federal grant program within the U.S. Department of Commerce to help states fund broadband expansion initiatives that address the following components:

1. Create a statewide broadband availability map to identify unserved areas;
2. Conduct extensive market research to understand the barriers to broadband adoption;
3. Create and facilitate local technology planning teams to produce tactical business plans for improved technology use;
4. Generate collaboration between the public and private sectors to encourage broadband deployment and adoption; and
5. Create programs for improved computer ownership and Internet use in low-adoption areas.

It is important to understand why these five components were selected. Without an availability map, it will be hard to determine where the high priority areas exist. It is very important that a baseline be established to determine the progress we have made. Based on conversations with leading mapping organizations, mapping usually costs around \$200,000 to produce. Once produced, the maps are updated as new areas are served.

In conjunction with the mapping, there is the need to develop market information that will help build strategies to overcome barriers to adoption. For example, based on work done by the USDA’s Economic Research Service, regardless of location (urban or rural), low-income households access the Internet less at home than high-income households. The researchers may believe that Internet use is related to household income. The Economic Research Services notes that the underlying causes behind this relationship cannot be explored further without better data on household Internet use, education, age, and the pricing/cost of broadband Internet access.

All the maps and data in the world are useless unless we have a way to develop and implement plans for improved technology use. The third and fourth components are intended to assist groups with this task. The project teams could be developed that would consist of members from education, government, private sectors, agriculture, and non-profit groups. These teams could be organized by county.

Continued on page 11.

What is Cloud Computing?

By: *Tammy Norman*
ISAC Office Manager



Q: Please explain what cloud computing is and the benefits of it.

A.: Cloud computing can be explained by using the following example: Some of us utilize a Hotmail, Yahoo, or Gmail account for the purpose of emailing, while others use Outlook or Outlook Express, which is a software program that must be loaded onto a computer/server located in their office/home to allow email account access. When you are using the Hotmail, Yahoo, or Gmail accounts, you do not have to load any software onto your computer, you simply use a computer with an internet connection to log into and access your account and view your e-mails; this is a simplified form of cloud computing.

Here are a few benefits of cloud computing. It enables end users to tap into a large array of hardware and software by paying for only the software programs they wish to utilize. A company or organization would not have to purchase, install and maintain the hardware or software for their end users. They could tap into Microsoft, IBM or Google, just to name a few, for these services. Many claim that it is economical to utilize the cloud computing service versus maintaining servers, hardware and software, and hiring the IT staff to install and maintain it. Another benefit to cloud computing is the fact that you are able to access your applications and data anywhere, anytime, as long as you are able to connect to the internet.

Now that we have discussed some of the benefits of cloud computing, let's look at some of the concerns. The biggest

concerns are security and privacy, which are extremely important. The companies providing this service will claim they have the security in place to protect your data and privacy; however, you will be relying on them to provide this to you. Another concern that has been raised is the accessing of the data that is being stored on these cloud servers, would it be possible for the company providing the cloud computing to deny access to the stored information to the organization or company purchasing this service? This is an ongoing battle and debate which has not yet been worked out. Cloud computing is definitely not for everyone but it is an option to be considered and one that may work well for entities that do not have the resources to operate their own IT department.

Website Note: The 2009 ISAC District Legislative Workshops are just around the corner. The registration is now online to attend these exciting and informative trainings. Have a question regarding new technology and would like it addressed in this column? Contact me at 515-244-7181 ext. 315 or via e-mail at tnorman@iowacounties.org. Until next month, keep clicking!

Continued from page 10.

The plans will address: affordability, availability, awareness advocacy, adoption, and applications. For example, a part of the technology plan might address the movement of surplus (outdated, but useable) from local government or businesses into a program that could use the local school's lunch to identify potential recipients of this equipment. ConnectedNation.org has already initiated and executed a successful pilot project of No Child Left Offline and has delivered approximately 2,000 internet-ready computers to disadvantaged individuals and populations across the state of Kentucky.

The Internet has quickly evolved from being a luxury item to a very important component of a county's infrastructure. Many experts compare the development of broadband access to other technologies now considered common necessities—such as cars, electricity, televisions, microwave ovens, and cell phones. A county's future economic growth could very well rest on what access businesses, schools, health institutions, and governments have to high speed/low cost broadband.

ISAC meetings

A Look Into ISAC Conference Planning

First and foremost, I would like to thank everyone for all of their feedback upon the conclusion of ISAC conferences. Both the positive and negative comments are extremely helpful in planning for future conferences. ISAC conferences are held to benefit our members, and we want to make sure that we are doing all that we can to make the conferences of value and worth. So, please don't hesitate to give us your opinion, because we want to hear it!

Here is a look inside planning an ISAC conference. In receiving feedback about our conferences, I wanted to clear up some of the confusion out there among our members. ISAC is comprised of 15 statewide associations or affiliate groups that range in sizes. All 15 of these groups have the opportunity to meet during designated time set aside for affiliates during our two annual conferences. Even though not all 15 affiliate groups usually meet at one conference we must be prepared if they all do decide to meet during the conference. So, trying to find a conference location with 15 different rooms of various sizes to accommodate all of our affiliate group meetings is very challenging. Simply put, there are not a lot of properties in Iowa that meet this space requirement. When we do find a location to adequately accommodate all of our affiliate groups and members, we usually sign multi-year contracts with the property or properties to get the best possible room rental and sleeping room rates. It's a lot easier to negotiate lower rates when you can guarantee a property more than one year of business.

The ISAC Spring School of Instruction must be held in Des Moines because the Legislature is in session. A lot of our members take advantage of the spring conference to visit the Capitol and meet with their legislators. We have more location flexibility for our fall conference. A couple of years ago, the ISAC Board of Directors decided to try a brand new property and location for our fall conference and that is why ISAC signed a four-year contract with the Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center. I am currently researching and negotiating properties for our 2012 conferences. Our goal now, and in the past, is to sign contracts about two to three years out to get the best dates and rates for our conference attendees.

What is offered to eat and drink during a conference is always on someone's mind. "Why is that served?" or "Why didn't we get that?" are some thoughts that usually go through attendees' minds. But what most people don't realize is that food and beverage is the most expensive cost during the conference. We wish that we could offer more quantity and a larger variety of refreshments throughout the conference, but

By: *Stacy Horner*

ISAC Meeting/Event Administrator



we must stay within our conference budget. For example, at the Coralville Marriott and Conference Center, coffee is \$40/gallon plus 22% service charge and 6% sales tax. That means that coffee is \$51.73/gallon and I usually figure around 16 cups per gallon, which is \$3.23 for a cup of coffee. Here are some more examples from the Des Moines Marriott Downtown. Soda is \$2.25/can plus 22% service charge and 6% sales tax. That is \$2.92 for a can of soda. Cookies are \$24/dozen plus 22% service charge and 6% sales tax, which means they are \$31.04/dozen or \$2.59 per cookie. These prices definitely make you think before your order!

The last issue that I want to address is our hotel sleeping room blocks that comes up at every conference. If your county reserves a large amount of sleeping rooms within the conference block and then decides not to use them and cancels them right before the deadline, we unfortunately can not get these sleeping rooms back in our block and they go back to the hotel's general block. This means other conference attendees can not get these rooms at the conference rate and are only available for the rack rate or current hotel rate. By reserving and then cancelling large room blocks, it doesn't give members who actually attend the conference the opportunity to stay at the conference hotels because we have lost that conference room rate. These unused rooms also go against our attrition, which is a percentage ISAC must meet in the number of sleeping rooms actually used to negotiate our sleeping room rates and the number of rooms available in our conference block. So, it's only fair for our entire membership if each county would reserve only the amount of rooms that they actually need and not take up rooms that in reality they will never use as it hurts other county officials and ISAC's future conference rates.

We are currently in the process of creating a new process for reserving your conference sleeping rooms through the Iowa Housing Bureau. This new registration process will ease all of your previous worries and frustrations about reserving a sleeping room during the conference. We plan to announce this registration process this summer in time for the 2009 ISAC Fall School of Instruction in Coralville, so please DO NOT try and make your hotel reservations until ISAC launches this new room reservation format. Thanks for your patience and assistance. We are trying very hard to make this process as smooth as possible for everyone involved, which includes our members, exhibitors, special guests, and conference hotel staff.

Continued on next page.

ISAC meetings

If you ever have any questions or comments about an ISAC conference, please don't hesitate to contact me at shorner@iowacounties.org. As previously mentioned, we greatly appreciate your feedback and take all comments in consideration when conference planning. Thanks for your assistance!

2009 Legislative District Workshops

Each summer, the ISAC staff travels to the six ISAC districts to conduct a series of workshops to provide county officials with a summary of the legislation that passed during the last session and to discuss important issues. Legislators are invited to discuss their perspective on the legislative session, to answer questions, and to raise important issues for our members to consider. The 2009 ISAC Legislative District Workshops will be held on the following dates and locations:

District 5 - Tuesday, June 9

Honey Creek Resort
12633 Resort Drive, Moravia, IA 52571

District 6 - Wednesday, June 10

Kirkwood Center for Continuing Education
7725 Kirkwood Blvd SW, Cedar Rapids, IA 52404

District 2 - Tuesday, June 23

Hanford Inn
3041 4th Street SW, Mason City, IA 50402

District 3 - Wednesday, June 24

King's Pointe Resort
1520 Lakeshore Drive, Storm Lake, IA 50588

District 1 - Wednesday, July 8

Stoney Creek Inn
5291 Stoney Creek Court, Johnston, IA 50131

District 4 - Thursday, July 9

Southwestern Community College
1501 W. Towline Street, Creston, IA 50801

You can register for the 2009 ISAC Legislative District Workshops at www.iowacounties.org. The pre-registration fee is \$35, and registration is \$40 at the door. A copy of the legislative summary book, morning refreshments and lunch are included in your registration fee.

The agenda is as follows:

9:00 am-9:30 am Registration and Morning Refreshments
9:30 am-12:00 pm General Session
12:00 pm-1:00 pm Lunch
1:00 pm-3:00 pm Affiliate Breakout Meetings

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at shorner@iowacounties.org or 515.244.7181.

Call for Seminar Topics

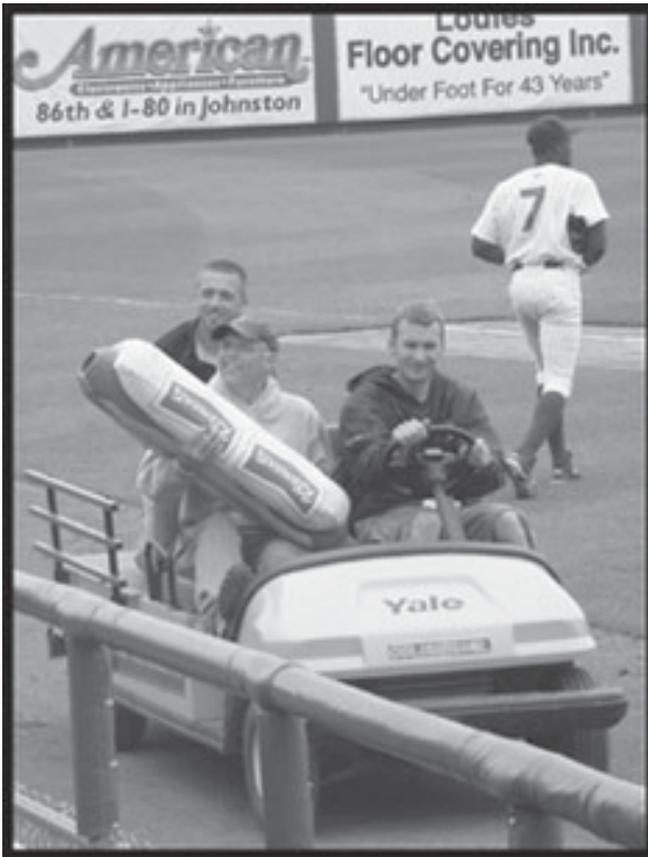
For the 2009 ISAC Fall School of Instruction to be held at the Coralville Marriot Hotel and Conference Center, we will be taking proposals for educational topics and speakers on November 18. ISAC conducts a variety of 75-minute educational seminars at both the fall and spring conferences. These seminars are a great learning resource and typically reflect issues or challenges that counties or affiliates are currently facing. Seminar topics and speakers will be selected from both internal and external proposals.

If you are interested in submitting an educational seminar proposal during the 2009 ISAC Fall School in Coralville, please contact Stacy Horner by Monday, June 1, 2009. We look forward to hearing from you!

In Remembrance of Dan

As most of you know, we lost a dear friend and colleague, Dan Vonnahme, on April 4, 2009. Dan had been a member of the County Case Management Services team since January of 1998. As I write this I am listening to one of the many CD's of music that he had burned for me over the years. Dan loved music, and often turned me on to various artists that he enjoyed.

Dan and I first crossed paths years ago on the campus of the University of Northern Iowa. When we again crossed paths later in life, he was fond of reminding me that he remembered me as having "much bigger hair" (well it WAS the 80's!). Of course my response to that was, I remembered him *having* hair-and it was much darker! Dan loved his years at UNI and I heard him say on more than one occasion that his "sophomore year at UNI was three of the best years of my life."



By: Deb Eckerman Slack
ISAC Case Management
Services Manager



Anyone that knew Dan knew of his passion for fishing. And as most of you are aware, he covered the Northeast part of the state-this was not a coincidence! I know he respected and enjoyed the agencies and people he worked with in that area of the state, but I also know he loved the fishing! I remember many early mornings, looking in Dan's vehicle as he loaded his computer and trusty briefcase for a TA trip to the northeast part of the state, and seeing the car also filled with his waders, his fishing poles, tackle box, fishing vest and other various fishing gear that I don't know the names for. He always tried to get some fishing in when he was done at an agency. Dan played as hard as he worked. We could all take a lesson from this and make time to play and enjoy the things we love.

I have received phone calls and emails from many people across the state who knew Dan. The common thread heard from all was his wonderful laugh, his quick wit and his positive attitude. We will all miss that booming wonderful laugh, his sense of humor, his generosity of spirit, and his zest for everything he did. I will miss his animated story telling, his love for the Cubbies (and his eternal hope for them too), trying to keep up with him when he walked, and when he ate, his famous "tator digger" dance! Dan was a man of character, a man that we are all lucky to have known.

As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote:

Success
To laugh often and much,
To win the respect of intelligent people
And the affection of children,
To earn appreciation of honest critics and to endure the
betrayal of false friends,
To appreciate beauty, to find the best in others,
To leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a
garden patch,
Or a redeemed social condition,
To know even one life breathed easier because you lived,
This is to have succeeded.

Dan was a very successful man indeed.

NACo Legislative Conference Report

I recently attended, along with several ISAC members and staff, the 2009 National Association of Counties (NACo) Legislative Conference at the Wardman Park Marriott Hotel in Washington, D.C. from Saturday, March 7, to Wednesday, March 11.

My conference began with a number of meetings on Saturday and Sunday regarding the Finance and Governmental Affairs (FIGA) Steering Committee, for which I chair the Elections Subcommittee. Elections are on the back burner this cycle (and election officials are appreciating the hiatus) with most of Congress's energy being devoted to the stimulus package and other aspects of the faltering economy.

The interim resolutions sent to the NACo Board of Directors by FIGA and the other eight steering committees covered a wide range of county issues, but some took note of the roots of the current financial crisis. The Community and Economic Development Steering Committee forwarded a resolution strongly supporting the continuation of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac roles of serving as the secondary market for the nation's mortgage system, and the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee called for a nationwide mortgage fraud task force. The board of directors approved all of the proposed interim resolutions, which will be voted on by the full membership at the annual conference in July. (I should note that the Health Steering Committee report was given by its chairperson, Linn County Supervisor Linda Langston.)

The board also strongly stressed the continuation of the Restore the Partnership initiative, which in its early stages relied so much upon Iowans. We were given cause to hope that our efforts have had some effect; conference participants were a veritable who's who of the incoming Obama administration. Speakers at the general sessions included HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, Interior Secretary Ken Salazar, Energy Secretary Steven Chu, Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano, and Valerie Jarrett, Senior Advisor to the President. New Director of Intergovernmental Affairs Cecilia Munoz spoke at the Board of Directors meeting. About thirty-five NACo members and staff joined city leaders for a day-long meeting with Vice President Joe Biden and top federal agency administrators to discuss implementation of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. And top NACo officials held a meeting with a familiar-looking gentleman, Ag Department Secretary Tom Vilsack, who stressed nutrition assistance programs and rural broadband deployment. Various other administration officials spoke to steering committees and other groups.

By: Grant Veeder

ISAC Board of Directors
NACo Representative,
Black Hawk County Auditor



Nor was Congress ignored; NACo leadership met with Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, and NACo bestowed its Legislator of the Year Award (which is given only when deserving members are identified) upon Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid of Nevada, Montana Senator Max Baucus and (drum roll please) Iowa Senator Tom Harkin! The Iowa contingent took great pleasure in joining First Vice President Teresa Altemus and Immediate Past President Eric Coleman in the ornate halls just off the Senate Chamber in the Capitol as they presented Senator Harkin with a plaque recognizing his commitment to the Farm Bill, and in particular his tireless efforts to include innovative rural development programs, which are critical to rural counties.

ISAC members also visited with the rest of Iowa's Congressional delegation. We met with Senator Chuck Grassley and Congressmen Leonard Boswell, Steven King, and David Loebsack in their offices and with Representatives Bruce Braley and Tom Latham at a breakfast that ISAC arranged in the impressive new Capitol Visitors' Center. We were very fortunate this year to have 100% participation by the members, although we also appreciate the valuable discussions we hold with staffers.

If we could have taken the Supreme Court justices out for drinks, or at least filed a few amicus curiae briefs, we would have communicated with all three branches of government. As it is, there's something we can look forward to accomplishing next year.

Many other activities took place at the conference. Among these was a presentation by three county supervisors from Iowa to the justice and public safety steering committee. Jim Houser (Linn), Mike King (Union), and John Miller (Black Hawk) reported to the committee on the floods and tornados that devastated parts of Iowa last year, the steps taken in their aftermath, and the continuing frustrations that we face.

The Board of Directors also continued the discussion of the 11 recommendations from the Task Force on Governance and Structure, of which I am a member. Limited space prohibits a full discussion – you may contact me for details. The Board raised a number of suggestions that the task force will consider during a conference call prior to the WIR Conference (to be held in

Continues on page 16.

miscellaneous

Making Medicare Sense

Q: Is there a free local resource to get help with Medicare questions?

A: Yes. Every state and territory in the United States has a State Health Insurance Assistance Program known as the SHIP that gets some or most of its funding from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), the federal agency responsible for administering the Medicare program. There are 54 SHIPs nationwide.

The SHIP program is funded to help Medicare beneficiaries in each state with local, personalized assistance on a wide variety of Medicare and health insurance topics.

Recently, all of the SHIP programs nationwide received their grant funding from CMS for 2009. This new funding will help ensure that the SHIP programs continue to work with their local governments, community-based organizations and other partners in each state to help meet the needs of our Medicare beneficiaries.

CMS expects the SHIPs to use the 2009 funding to conduct targeted community-based outreach to people with Medicare

who may be unable to access other sources of information. SHIPs will also provide outreach and assistance to current and newly eligible Medicare beneficiaries and their caregivers, with a special emphasis on reaching people who will most likely be eligible for Medicare's low-income subsidy if they enroll in Medicare prescription drug coverage.

The SHIP staff in each state recruit and train volunteers on the Medicare program so that Medicare beneficiaries in almost every part of a state have access to local help via phone or in person. If you are interested in being a SHIP volunteer, please contact the appropriate SHIP program listed below.

CMS will continue to support the quality of services provided by SHIPs through training, technical assistance, a SHIP Resource Center, and the online tools at www.medicare.gov to assist people with Medicare.

The Kansas City Regional Office for CMS oversees the SHIPs in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska. You can contact Iowa's SHIP at 1-800-351-4664.

employment

Guthrie County Engineer

Guthrie County (Guthrie Center) is seeking a full-time County Engineer to oversee the operation and management of the Secondary Roads Department. The salary range is \$75,000-\$100,000 depending on qualification and experience. The candidate must be licensed as a professional engineer in the state of Iowa. Qualified candidates must possess knowledge and experience in administrative work overseeing road and bridge construction and maintenance, snow and ice control, equipment maintenance, and engineering operations. Position is open until filled. Please submit a cover letter with resume and references to the Guthrie County Board of Supervisors, 200 N. 5th Street, Guthrie Center, IA 50115 or to guthrieauditor@netins.net.

NACo news

Continued from page 15.

Umatilla County, Oregon in May), at which the Board will make its final review before any bylaws amendments are presented to the full membership at the annual conference.

Any changes made this year will not affect the 2009 election for NACo Second Vice President, the campaign for which was well underway in D.C. Members will choose between Commissioner Lenny Eliason of Athens County, Ohio, and Freeholder Director Lou Magazzu of Cumberland County, New Jersey, at the annual conference in Nashville, from July 24 to July 28.

Well, President Anderson, that pretty much wraps up my report, except to say that this year's legislative conference came at the perfect time for a Lincoln buff to visit Washington, D.C.

associate member highlight

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Past issues of The Iowa County can be viewed on ISAC's website, www.iowacounties.org, under news.

Editor's Note: For consideration of materials to be published in *The Iowa County* magazine, please submit before the first Friday of the previous month. (Materials for the June 2009 magazine are due on Friday, May 1.)

Thank you! Rachel

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calendar

May

14 CCMS Advanced Case Management Meeting
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

June

3 CCMS Supervisors Training
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

9 District 5 Legislative Workshop
(Honey Creek Resort, Moravia)

10 District 6 Legislative Workshop
(Kirkwood Center for Continuing Education, Cedar Rapids)

10 CCMS Board Meeting
(ISAC Office)

10-12 ICIT Mid-Year Conference
(West Des Moines Marriott)

12 CRIS Board Meeting
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

15-17 Assessing Officers (NCRAAO) Conference
(Coralville)

17-19 CCMS Fundamentals Training
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

23 District 2 Legislative Workshop
(Hanford Inn, Mason City)

24 District 3 Legislative Workshop
(King's Pointe Resort, Storm Lake)

July

8 District 1 Legislative Workshop
(Stoney Creek Inn, Johnston)

9 District 4 Legislative Workshop
(Southwestern Community College, Creston)

15 ISAC Scholarship Golf Fundraiser
(Jester Park, Granger)

16 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

24-29 NACo Annual Conference
(Nashville, TN)

August

5-7 Recorders Summer School
(Honey Creek Resort, Moravia)

6-7 2009 Supervisors Executive Board Retreat
(Holiday Inn at Ameristar Casino, Council Bluffs)

12-14 CCMS Annual Conference
(Holiday Inn Airport, Des Moines)

September

17-18 ISAC Board of Directors Retreat
(Honey Creek Resort, Moravia)

October

13 CCMS Administrators Meeting
(Location TBA)

21-23 CCMS Fundamentals Training
(Courtyard by Marriott, Ankeny)

29-30 ISAC Board of Directors Meeting
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

November

5 CCMS Advanced Case Management Meeting
(Location TBA)

18-20 ISAC Fall School of Instruction
(Coralville Marriott Hotel and Conference Center, Coralville)

December

7-10 Iowa County Engineers Association Annual Meeting
(Ames)

10 ISAC Board of Directors
(ISAC Office, Des Moines)

Please visit ISAC's online calendar of events at www.iowacounties.org and click on 'Upcoming Events.' A listing of all the meetings scheduled thus far in 2008, agendas and meeting notices can be found on ISAC's website. A majority of ISAC's meetings offer online registration. If you have any questions about the meetings listed above, please contact Stacy Horner at (515) 244-7181 or shorner@iowacounties.org.



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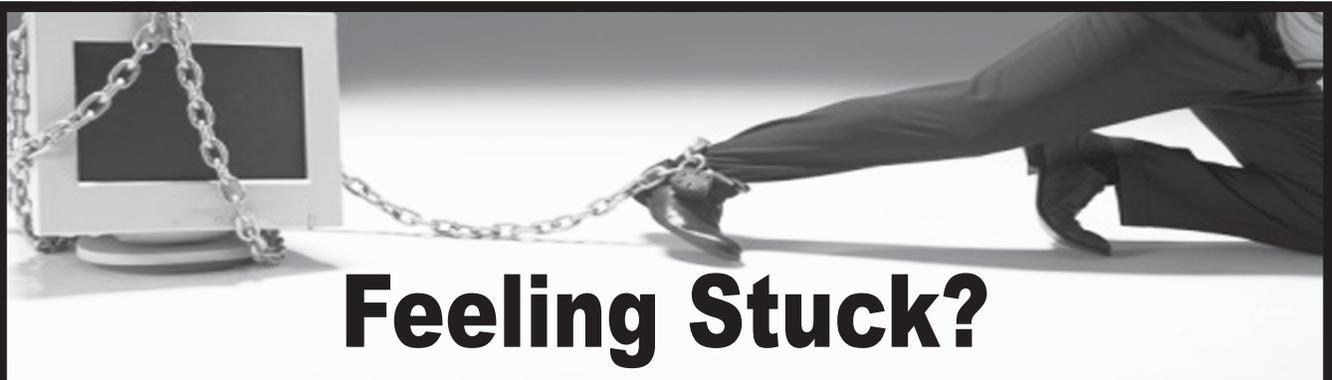
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