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THE ROAD AHEAD

by S.F. Tomajczyk, President

I am pleased to announce that tremendous progress was made in outlining the future of NPHIC at the Executive Board's Strategic Planning Meeting, which was held in mid-November in Atlanta. For two full days, the Board addressed a variety of issues confronting NPHIC. This article is intended to give you a broad and general overview of what transpired so that you can remain up-to-date of developments.

We began by reviewing a Vision Statement that Nanci Gonder and I had written up prior to the meeting. This was subsequently revised into a so-called "Guiding Principles" document; a separate Vision Statement was drafted. So now NPHIC has a Mission Statement, a Vision Statement, and Guiding Principles. You will receive copies of all these in the near future, but for now, I want to share the Vision Statement with you because it is at the heart of what this organization is seeking to become:

"NPHIC will be an independent organization of professionals sought after as a resource to improve America's health through public health communications."

Memorize this. Repeat it to yourself every morning in the mirror. Have it tattooed on your forehead. This is what all of us are striving for as a group. Everything we do from now on must help us achieve this goal. Granted, we already do things that help establish this image of expertise, but we need to build the demand for our services. Now that we know what our vision is, we can select the projects that will reinforce it.

The Board discussed the various obstacles that NPHIC will have to overcome in the forthcoming years to achieve its goals. We first identified internal and external issues and then went back and discussed what could be done to alleviate them. External issues included the general anti-government sentiment among Americans, the lack of knowledge that the public has about public health, the lack of awareness that health organizations have about NPHIC, and the uncertainty of future funding sources for NPHIC. As for internal issues, they included the turnover of NPHIC members and the lack of experience of PIOs who replace them, the broad range of skills and expertise among the members, the geographic distribution of members, the varying objectives in states and territories, and the perceived lack of value by members toward NPHIC.

In responding to all of these issues, the Executive Board came up with a wide

variety of creative solutions. Since progress cannot be made externally until a strong infrastructure is in place, we focused most of our effort on internal issues. However, this is not to suggest that external matters were glossed over. For instance, to raise awareness of NPHIC and what it does, the Board came up with the following suggestions: 1) Develop a computer home page for NPHIC, with links to each state as well as CDC; 2) Distribute the *American Journal of Health Communications* outside of NPHIC to other health agencies; 3) Market NPHIC members as health experts to journalists; 4) Issue press releases; 5) Have officers meet other health organizations on a one-to-one basis; 6) Establish an electronic bulletin board for NPHIC members, reporters and other health officials; 7) Display at health exhibits and shows; 8) Do advertising and direct mail; 9) Include NPHIC as an entry in various resource directories; and 10) Conduct media training via audio-visual aids, consultations and conferences.

As you can see, this is an impressive list of potential solutions. Do this over the span of two days--addressing a dozen issues--and you can better understand why the Board members were complaining of headaches caused by "brain drain."

With regard to internal issues, here's a list of some of the projects we have agreed to accomplish in the subsequent years:

- ◆ Develop a list of recommended resources new PIOs should read so that they have a better understanding of what's expected of them and how they can better do their jobs. Example resources include magazine articles on focus groups, books on advertising and social marketing techniques, guides to photography, and videos on media relation. Further down the road, NPHIC would like to develop an audio-visual training program for new PIOs and these various topics. *(Note: Nanci Gonder, Jennifer Norberg and Anastasia Burton have volunteered to work on the resource list; Jeanette Duerr and Jim McVay, the AV program.)*
- ◆ Create a topical clearinghouse of materials developed by each state and territory. Inquiring members will be given a list of states that have produced materials in the health arena they are interested in, as well as the contact name and phone number to facilitate follow-up. *(Note: Kevin Teale and Ross Martin have volunteered for this effort.)*
- ◆ Develop a national media list and share it among members. Likewise, create a national cross-indexed photo archive that members can refer to. *(Note: Joe Wagner has volunteered for the media list; Kim Saylor Brannock, the photo archive.)*

- ◆ Put together a handout of sample contracts and RFPs (e.g., advertising agency) that PIOs can use and customize to their own needs.
- ◆ Encourage members to do special presentations during the course of the annual meeting. In a similar fashion, survey members about what issues/topics they would like to see addressed at the annual meeting. *(Note: Members of the Meeting Program Committee have volunteered to do both of these projects.)*
- ◆ Strengthen NPHIC's identity among members by ensuring that each member receives a "New Member Kit," which is to include a certificate, membership directory, lapel pin, membership card, bylaws, newsletter, journal, media guide, etc. *(Note: Brad Christensen and Kathy Getz will both work on the kit.)*
- ◆ Get all NPHIC members interconnected on E-Mail as quickly as possible. *(Note: Kevin Teale is responsible for coordinating this effort with the assistance of the regional reps.)*
- ◆ NPHIC will market **The Media & You** more aggressively. Proposed marketing methods include direct mail, advertisements, and exhibit sales.

As for alternative funding sources for NPHIC, the Board discussed the possibility of writing grants (e.g. Robert Wood Johnson Foundation), establishing partnerships with various CDC programs, offering private consultations to ASTHO affiliates and other partners, and increasing membership. With regard to the latter, the Board established a new fee structure for individual (\$75/year), institutional (\$150/year) and organizational (\$300/year) associate memberships. In February 1996, you--as a NPHIC voting member-- will be asked to participate in a month-long associate membership drive, in which you approach health professionals within your agency to join NPHIC. A similar drive will be done for corporations and institutions later in the year after a brochure is designed and produced for that audience.

Hopefully, from this short narrative, you can get a sense of just how much was accomplished at the strategic meeting. I encourage you to read the minutes of the meeting and to communicate with your regional rep. More importantly, I urge you to become more involved with NPHIC. These are exciting times, and we have a vision of what the future holds for us. Your involvement can make a difference. Happy Holidays!

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

- ◆ D. Lynn Denton (TX) is the new Director of Communications for the Texas Department of Health, replacing Margaret Wilson. Her telephone number is 512-458-7444 and FAX is 512-458-7288. We welcome her aboard.
- ◆ A great holiday gift idea for the runner in your life: *Eyes on the Gold*, a book that shows runners how to improve their skills and become more competitive. This comprehensive book includes little-known training techniques that world-class runners use for better performance. Chapters address weight lifting techniques, diet, the science of speed, mental attitude training, and much more. This popular "underground" book has been successfully used by a wide variety of high school, collegiate, Olympic and professional athlete and teams...not necessarily just by runners. The book retails for \$19.95 at your local bookstore, but you can get it for a measly \$10 (plus P/H) by ordering it directly from the author: NPHIC President SF Tomajczyk. (He'll even autograph copies as you wish.) Steve's personal supply of his book is running low, so you need to act quick if you want a copy. *Eyes on the Gold: An Advanced Training Manual for Running Events*, 168-pages, Appendices, Soft-bound.
- ◆ Sean Fitzpatrick (MA) has volunteered to represent NPHIC on ASTHO's Tobacco Work Group, which will assess policy and programmatic issues related to tobacco use prevention and control.

REGIONAL NEWS

REGIONS I and II

- ◆ Vermont and New Hampshire recently worked together handling a cluster of *Yersiniosis* that crossed borders along the Connecticut River. *Yersiniosis* is a fairly rare enteric disease that is spread via contaminated food products and water, or from person-to-person by fecal-oral routes. The public affairs offices in both states worked closely together handling media inquiries and sharing information materials.
- ◆ Nancy Erickson (VT) reports that Vermont has produced a flyer encouraging adults to be immunized. Both flyers and postcards were handed out by district health offices this fall. If you would like copies of the flyer, please call Nancy at 802-863-7281.

- ◆ SF Tomajczyk (NH) announces that the state legislature--in an emergency session-- approved a bill allowing the Commissioner of Health and Human Services to dramatically reorganize the department in an effort to reduce operating costs by \$32 million dollars. The reorganization effort will take approximately three years to accomplish.
- ◆ Lois Uttley (NY) was forced to resign her position due to political pressures. She is presently looking for another public relations position outside of government. If you know of any jobs that may interest her, please call her at 518-674-5390. A replacement for Lois has not yet been announced by the state health department.
- ◆ Sean Fitzpatrick (MA) is moving his office. His new address is: 250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111. His new phone number is 217-624-5200 and his FAX is 617-624-5206.

REGION X

- ◆ The Arizona Department of Health Services released a statement to the media regarding lead poisoning and miniblinds. The Department of Health has tested several types of miniblinds and confirmed the presence of lead. For more information, please call Brad Christensen at 602-542-1001.
- ◆ A report from the Arizona Department of Health Services indicates that tobacco sales to minors can be reduced through a training and enforcement program involving merchants. For more information regarding the report, please contact Brad Christensen at 602-542-1001.
- ◆ A report issued by the Arizona Department of Health Services indicates that nearly one third of child deaths are preventable through the use of seat belts, bicycle helmets, pool fences, smoke detectors, safe gun-storage practices and other strategies. For more information on this report, please contact Brad Christensen at 602-542-1001.

1996 ANNUAL MEETING

Next year's annual meeting will be held Sunday, October 20 through Wednesday, October 23 in Las Vegas, Nevada. We will be staying at the Tropicana Hotel, which is located right on the famous "strip." The hotel features a casino, indoor and outdoor pools, saunas, a complete health spa, conference center, business center, etc. The contract is presently being negotiated between

the hotel and NPHIC to reserve the dates and rooms, so go ahead and mark these dates on your calendar. In the meanwhile, if you would like to be on the planning committee for the meeting, please notify either your regional rep or Luana Ritch (NV) at 702-687-3786.

EXECUTIVE BOARD UPDATE

- ◆ Ann Garcelon (WV) is stepping down from the Executive Board after representing Region III for the past few years. Her term expires on December 31. Replacing her is Jeannette Duerr (MD).
- ◆ The following NPHIC individuals will become the new regional representatives to the NPHIC Executive Board on January 1. Their terms will expire on December 31, 1998.

Region III	Jeannette Duerr (MD)
Region IX	Brad Christensen (AZ)
- ◆ Dr. Jim McVay (AL) will be stepping down from the Executive Board on December 31, when his term as Member-at-Large expires. In the past several years, Jim has served with distinction as Vice President and President of the organization. To recognize his efforts and contributions to NPHIC, the Executive Board presented Jim with a plaque. The organization benefited greatly from Jim's leadership, vision and direction.
- ◆ Kevin Teale (IA) assume the role of Member-at-Large on the Executive Board effective January 1, 1996. We welcome him aboard.

GENERAL NEWS

Volunteers Needed for the Annual Awards

Lisa Marie-Short (AK) has volunteered to coordinate next year's Excellence in Communications award program. She needs other volunteers to assist her in judging submitted materials. Her intent is to have volunteers be responsible for judging only one or two categories, thereby significantly reducing the workload into manageable portions. If you would like to participate in this fun and entertaining program, please notify either your regional representative or Lisa at 907-269-7801.

APHA Meeting

Vice President Nanci Gonder (MO) represented NPHIC at the APHA National Meeting in San Diego, CA October 29-November 2. She has subsequently recommended to the

Executive Board that NPHIC consider setting up a booth display at next year's event (which will be held in New York City) to promote the Coalition to other health agencies and professionals. NPHIC could sell copies of its Media and You Guide and biannual magazine, as well as solicit associate memberships. Furthermore, NPHIC could highlight current health communication projects with which it is involved. The matter is still pending a final decision from the Board.

Calendar of Health Designations

When is Breast Cancer Awareness Month? Happy Banana Day? A calendar produced by the PHS lists dozens of health designations you should be aware of. To receive a free copy, call 800-336-4797.

American Journal of Health Communications Update

NPHIC's new magazine is scheduled to be released at the end of January. It is filled with articles that focus on how health communicators and educators can improve their skill at communicating messages to targeted audiences. This magazine is available to non-NPHIC members at a subscription price of \$24.95 a year, or \$15 per issue. (Voting members and associate members of NPHIC automatically receive copies of the magazine as part of their membership.) You are encouraged to share your copy of the publication with pertinent staff in your health department as well as those outside agencies.

If you would like to write an article for the magazine, please contact Steve at 603-271-4462. The magazine is primarily interested in "how to" articles that focus on communication techniques, DTP skills, photography methods, printing techniques, etc. Manuscript length ranges from 1,500 to 2,500 words. Preference is given to articles that are accompanied by photographs/charts, or that can be easily illustrated. Contributors receive 10 copies of the magazine for their portfolio in lieu of cash payment.

If you are an avid photographer and would like to either submit existing photos to the magazine or shoot photo assignments, please contact Kim Saylor Brannock, Photo Editor at 502-564-6786. As with other authors, contributors receive 10 free copies of the magazine issue in which their work appears.

Ad Council Makes Commitment to America's Youth

The Ad Council recently announced that for the next 10-years it will focus its efforts on promoting campaigns that promote the health and well-being of America's youth. The effort, which is known as "Commitment 2000: Raising a Better Tomorrow," will provide Americans with specific action steps to improve the lives of children so that they can fulfill their potential.

Steve Tomajczyk recently spoke with the Ad Council to determine what role NPHIC can play in this effort. At this point in time, it appears that NPHIC will be sought to give ideas on

what health issues the Ad Council should focus. In proceeding years, the Coalition could be called upon to suggest existing campaigns that the Ad Council could actually use. Steve will maintain contact with the Ad Council and advise the Coalition on any progress being made. In a show of support to what the Ad Council is doing, the *American Journal of Health Communications* will run Ad Council PSAs in each issue.