



## President's Message

By Tim Gantz

As President, I am honored to be a part of an organization that supports and helps others, as we work together to weave our way through the changes happening within our wonderful world of special education. In saying that, please also consider the following article submitted by Ann Wicklund, *Six Reasons to Belong to WCASS*. As always, if you need anything, do not hesitate to

contact me or anyone on the WCASS Board.

**Tim**

Timothy Gantz  
Associate Director—Special Education Services  
Green Bay Area Public Schools



## Six Reasons to Belong to WCASS

Ann Wicklund

1. **SAA Affiliation** – The WCASS is a member of the Wisconsin School Administrators Alliance (SAA), which is comprised of the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators (WASDA), the Wisconsin Association of School Business Officials (WASBO), and the Association of Wisconsin School Administrators (AWSA) and provides a strong voice in Madison.
2. **Involvement** – There are a variety of opportunities for involvement in WCASS. Members are encouraged to serve as executive board members, representatives on committees and task forces, or mentors.
3. **Professional Development and Networking** – WCASS offers lifelong learning opportunities at the winter and spring conferences. In addition members are able to earn credit for conference attendance through Viterbo College.
4. **Recognition for Outstanding Contributions to Students with Disabilities** –

Each of WCASS's four regions recognizes local individuals who provide outstanding services to students with disabilities.

5. **Legislative and Legal Updates** – All WCASS members receive updated information on legal matters and legislative issues of particular interest to special education leaders.
6. **Newsletter and Online Access** – WCASS Newsletter keeps members connected to organizational activities and special education topics. A continually developing Web site provides members with instant access to upcoming organizational events, professional resources and job opportunities.

WCASS membership is strong and growing stronger every year. If you know of someone who may be interested in joining our organization, please go to the WCASS Web site for contact information. Thank you!

Ann Wicklund, Membership Chair  
awicklun@wausau.k12.wi.us

## Executive Director's Comments . . .

In the fall of 2005, WCASS as an organization was spending all of its time and energies on the realignment of Chapter 115 with IDEA 2004. The results of our efforts along with the other members of the SAA were very successful. We feel we now have a very good law on the books in Wisconsin that can be easily updated when IDEA is reauthorized the next time.

As we look ahead to the legislative issues that WCASS will be working on for the remainder of the 2006–07 year, the following come to mind. The major issue will be the 2007–09 state budget that should be approved sometime during the summer of 2007. The SAA will play a major role in determining the outcome of the budget for Wisconsin's public schools.

WCASS and SAA are currently looking at the financial problems created by open enrolled special education students. An open enrollment SAA committee has been studying this issue since June and as of this writing has not been able to come up with proposed legislation that is acceptable to all stakeholder groups. We will continue to work on this issue with the hope that legislation will be developed that corrects the financial problems now faced among districts with open enrolled students.

During the 2007 legislative session, WCASS will again propose legislation that will allow school districts to use federal funds for private contracted services for students in special education. This is an issue we have been working on since the 2000 legislative session and hope it will be approved this time around.

Another issue that may have to be addressed in the future is transfer of services claims that are

made to DPI on a yearly basis. Each year we receive questions from school districts, legislators and others regarding this item. The revenue cap exceptions under transfer of services continue to grow significantly each year, and almost no districts are reducing cost for students transferring out.

The last area that may need some attention is the method and amounts claimed during 2005–06 for school nurses and counselors that received categorical aids for the first time. I anticipate that when final figures are in for this past year, they will be much higher than anticipated. The impact will directly affect the percentage of aids received for classroom teachers and others who receive categorical aids.

Other issues will come up during the year that I have not thought of as of now. I encourage you to follow these and other SAA legislative agenda items. Please keep in contact with your local legislators about the good things going on in your district along with areas of concerns. If we are to have a strong voice in the legislature it comes from grassroots efforts by WCASS and other SAA members.

WCASS has started work on an updated Web site that will provide our members with additional benefits and information. Look for additional information on that in the future, and thank you to all our members for what you do on behalf of students with disabilities in Wisconsin.



**Phil Knobel,  
WCASS  
Executive  
Director**

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**"Save the Date" – 2007 Conference Dates:**  
**February 7, 8, 9: Paper Valley in Appleton**  
**May 9, 10, 11: Crowne Plaza in Madison**

## Message from Gary Myrah, President-Elect:

As president-elect I have little to report for this edition of the newsletter. Tammy Fruik and Greg Nyn have taken on the responsibility of the conference chair, so I thought I would share thoughts related to my 29 years of experience as a director of special services.

First and foremost I have learned that our position is the lightning rod for problems in a school district. Most of us have weekly (if not daily) opportunities to handle a student, a parent or faculty member who is under stress. In many cases people turn to us to:

- resolve a situation,
- seek a legal opinion,
- find funds to hire someone,
- know the latest changes in state and/or federal regulations,
- provide emotional support during difficult times,
- manage a crisis when it hits a community, to mention a few.

Through the years I have learned from many of you that even as your original aspirations may falter, the most common reason for sticking with being a director is a sincere belief that we make a difference in a child's life. Each of us have had moments of despair as all efforts to help a particular child go up in flames and we experience a sense of failure. Yet we develop resiliency as we receive appreciation from a student who received her/his first 'B' or a parent who sees her/his child smile for the first time due to efforts that we helped make happen.

We as directors of special education/pupil services/ special services have some commonalities. We all care about providing quality education to children with special needs, even when it seems impossible to find the funds to make things work. There is also a general sense of pride as we provide assistance to parents and faculty within the parameters we control. I have yet to find a director that has not had serious emotional turmoil as a parent seeks assistance that exceeds expectations. On a local level most directors have very positive relations with the parents within our communities, and we are concerned when we are portrayed in a negative light.

As we gather at times of conferences we find solace among our colleagues who face similar situations and turbulence. We return home realizing that the issues that we face are not as bad as someone else somewhere in the state. We also return from our conferences with thoughts spinning of regulatory changes as well as innovative techniques to help children succeed. Usually it does not take long for reality to set in and we are back in the swing of things as we again capture the "lightning" that comes flying at us. This is why we need to take the time to attend our professional conferences, so we can build our capacity for providing the best leadership to our parents and staff.

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 Office: (262) 268-6079

### The SAA Capitol Report has been posted to the SAA Web site.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact our office.  
 Also, to access the SAA's full Web site, please see: <http://www.wsaa.org>

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 4797 Hayes Road, Madison, WI 53704  
 608-242-1370 • 608-242-1290 (Fax)  
[john.forester@wsaa.org](mailto:john.forester@wsaa.org)

## Treasurer's Report



Susan Dannemiller, Treasurer

Our statements of financial position and related statements of activities, program, and management expenses and cash flows were reviewed by Grobe and Associates, LLP, Certified Public Accountants, as of June 30, 2005, and June 30, 2006. They concluded: ". . . we are not aware of any material modifications that should be made to the . . . financial statements in order for them to be in conformity with generally accepted accounting principles."

As of 9-30-06 our received income is at 50% of the year's expected total budgeted

amount. Income from conferences and Viterbo credits has not been actualized at this time. Dues have been received at a rate of 85%. Actual expenses to date are at 11% of the year's expected budgeted amount. Conference expenses have not yet occurred. The balance sheet indicates total liabilities and equity at \$224,175, an all-time high for the organization.

Please pay your dues if you have not already done so.



**Check out the Web . . . for pictures of recent events: [www.wcass.org](http://www.wcass.org)**

## WCASS Members Involved on Statewide Committees

It is important for you as a WCASS member to stay abreast of what is happening around the state. The following WCASS members are involved on Statewide Committees representing the interest of WCASS. Feel free to contact any of them for input or questions.

### State Superintendent's Council on Special Education

Brian Anderson, Appleton

### Wisconsin Association of Pupil Service Organization

Marty Armato, Elmbrook

### SAA Legislative Committee

Matt Collins, CESA #9

Carol Zarske, CESA #6

Dave Kwiatkowski, CESA #8

Kurt Eley, Waunakee

Eric Hartwig, Marathon CDEB

Karen Schulte, Janesville

Ann Gamoke, Plymouth

### SAA High School Committee

Gary Myrah, Port Washington

Fred Weissenburger, Eau Claire

### SAA Open Enrollment Committee

Matt Collins, CESA #9

Carol Zarske, CESA #6

Fred Wollenburg, CESA #5

Greg Dietz, CESA #10

Kurt Eley, Waunakee

Eric Hartwig, Marathon CDEB

Jerry Wieland, Green Bay

## Mental Illness and Insurance Parity

Webster's defines parity as "equality, as in value, position or amount"; it is absent for families directly impacted by severe mental illness. The cost of medical care is often bankrupting. Families are given the "choice" of providing appropriate care to their child and facing financial ruin or keeping their assets and hoping that their child's health stabilizes with the services they can afford.

Insurance programs are designed to assist consumers in managing this financial risk. Yet, even for those Wisconsin residents who hold "excellent" health insurance policies, catastrophic medical bills can send families into financial crisis because Wisconsin insurers are allowed to discriminate against people with mental illness. Limits on number of visits, high co-pays, cost-sharing practices and arbitrary benefit limits are allowed regardless of medical necessity.

The line between physical illness and mental illness becomes more blurred every day. Yet, insurers are given the legal right to establish two separate systems of benefits. Years ago, ulcers were thought to be caused by stress; then came the discovery of H. Pylori. Additional advances in bacteriology have led to the discovery of Pediatric Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorders or PANDA's; OCD's caused by the body's reaction to strep infections. Vagus nerve stimulation therapy can give people with debilitating depression a new lease on productive life. Anorexia is curable when treated aggressively as a physical illness. Untreated or incorrectly treated, people with anorexia die very real physical deaths, yet even cardiac symptoms in anorexia may not be covered by insurance because they are an associated physical symptom of a mental illness.

In 1985, Wisconsin's legislature mandated that health insurance policies provide at least \$7,000 in mental health benefits. At that time, the amount would have paid for over 30 days of inpatient care. Today, hospitalization can cost close to \$1,000 per day, not including doctors' fees, yet the benefit amount has not changed. Since 1999, four different bills have been introduced into the state legislature to provide parity or to at least raise the minimum insurance required benefit by the rate of inflation. Bi-partisan support exists for mental health parity, and it is highly likely that

parity would become law, if it were allowed to be put to a vote. Contrary to myth, mental health parity should raise insurance premiums by about 1/2 of 1% and there is ample evidence that overall medical costs actually decrease when parity is enacted. However, special interests have kept these bills from getting out of committee. Wisconsin is now just one of 16 states that does not have some type of parity law.

Should WCASS be concerned about mental health parity? Yes! All of us who work in public schools share the financial burden that lack of access to mental health services creates. When families cannot afford large co-pays for counseling services, or when they reach the yearly benefit limit on mental health services, schools are often left to pick up the pieces. We provide special education assistants, self-contained services, individual counseling, FBA's and BIP's, and hold "\$60K" meetings to develop yet another intervention. When mental health needs are not met, learning does not occur. Lives are sometimes lost. Although lack of parity is not the only barrier to mental health services, it is a significant one that has a simple remedy.

At the winter WCASS meeting, you will be asked to support the **Coalition for Fairness**, an organization committed to making mental health parity a reality in Wisconsin. WCASS members are in a unique position to see both the personal and societal costs of lack of mental health care. I urge you to endorse this very important initiative. To learn more, visit the following Web sites:

- [http://www.dawninfo.org/advocacy/issues/MH\\_fairness.cfm](http://www.dawninfo.org/advocacy/issues/MH_fairness.cfm) – The Disability Advocates Wisconsin Network
- <http://www.mhamilw.org/advocacy/state/parity.asp> – The Mental Health Association of Milwaukee County
- <http://www.nmha.org/state/parity/index.cfm> – The National Mental Health Association

Joanne Grassman, Student Services Director  
Columbus School District, 200 W. School St.  
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# WCASS Region News

**Region 1 Chair: Mary Cimbalnik** (*Mary.Cimbalnik@pewaukee.k12.wi.us*)

**Region 2 Chair: Dave Kwiatkowski** (*davek@cesa8.k12.wi.us*)

Region II is ready to strive and thrive in 2006–07! We already held our first meeting of the year, on September 28, 2006 at the CESA 8 offices in Gillett with 44 members and guests in attendance. This marked the first Region II meeting to be held in the CESA 8 facility and the attendees expressed their pleasure in the hospitality provided by the CESA 8 staff and the Gillett community. The beautiful autumn display on the drive to CESA 8 was reported by many as an additional and delightful benefit!

As is our custom, Mary Gerbig of Davis & Kuehlthau, SC provided our first professional program for the new year. Her topic was “New Law, New Regulations, and New Challenges for 2006–07: A Legal Update.” After a lunch featuring OJ’s world famous pies, we conducted our first business meeting of the year. The primary order of business discussed was succession planning for the Region II Chair position for the 2007–08 school year, as Dave Kwiatkowski plans to retire from that position at the end of this year. Ann Christopherson was welcomed as the new Region II Secretary and will be providing minutes of the meetings for this and hopefully future school years. Barb Behlen was thanked for her years of service to our Region in that position previously. Tim Gantz, our WCASS President provided a brief overview of current issues

and events from the statewide perspective. Dates and locations were tentatively set for our remaining two meetings of the year as: January 25, 2007 at CESA 6 and April 19, 2007 at CESA 7.

Future topics were discussed, with Mental Health Issues tentatively planned for our winter meeting and appropriate behavioral interventions/seclusion & restraint issues planned for the spring.

Following our business meeting, RSN Directors Barb Behlen—CESA 6—and Dorie Pagel—CESA 7— informed us of new events and resources available through the DPI-RSN. Brief presentations were provided by Dave Nass on the new transition requirements under IDEIA 2004 and Michelle Polzin on the CESA 6, 7, & 8 REACH Initiative.

Our Region II group is always searching for relevant topics and presentations from our colleagues. If anyone is interested in presenting on a topic or would like to recommend a presenter, please contact Dave Kwiatkowski at CESA 8 at (800) 831-6391 x 233 or by email (address above). We invite all our members and interested guests to join us for our next meeting, January 25, 2007 at CESA 6 in Oshkosh, when John Humphries from the DPI will be presenting on Students with Mental Health Needs. We hope to see you there!

**Region 3 Chair: John Peterson** (*jpeterson@waterforduhs.k12.wi.us*)

Having recently been appointed to the Region 3 Chair position, I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself. My name is John Peterson and I serve as the Director of Special Education for the Waterford Special Education Cooperative (a cooperative of four school districts: Waterford Union High School, Norway J–7, North Cape, and Washington–Caldwell). This is my third year serving as Director of the Cooperative, and I have enjoyed the challenges that have come with the job. Prior to working in the Waterford area, I worked in the School District of Albany for five years (four years as a School Psychologist and one year as both the Director of Special Education and School Psychologist).

Besides introducing myself, I also wanted to use this opportunity to thank Ruth Hammler, Director

of Pupil Services in the Palmyra–Eagle Area School District, for serving as the Region 3 Chair prior to my appointment and for her overall dedication to the WCASS organization. As Ruth did, it is my goal to serve as a liaison between the WCASS executive committee and the Region 3 Directors to ensure that people’s concerns regarding special education issues are being addressed. I look forward to serving as the Region 3 Chair over the next 3 years and I am grateful for this opportunity.

If you need to contact me regarding any Region 3 or WCASS issues, I can be reached at the contact information listed below or by email (address above):

Waterford Special Education Cooperative  
100 Field Drive, Waterford, WI 53185  
Phone: (262) 534-4034, Fax: (262) 514-2490

**Region 4 Chair: Diane Knudsen** (*knudsend@esschools.k12.wi.us*)

# WCASS Outstanding Special Services Administrator Award

Dear WCASS Member,

Please consider nominating a fellow WCASS member who is deserving of the "WCASS Outstanding Special Services Administrator" award. Enclosed are the criteria and nomination forms for this award. Nominations should be sent to each region's chairperson. **The chairs will then bring their regions nomination for the award to the February WCASS Executive Board meeting.** More than one candidate may receive the award. Questions contact Jan at: 262/376-6143.

Thank you,  
Jan Chapman  
WCASS Award Chair

Nominations are not secret. Ask the candidate to provide information. The person making the nomination will distribute the "letter of support" to appropriate people. The person making the nomination will forward the completed nomination packet to his or her respective regional chairperson.

Include a narrative description for each of the following areas:

1. Active participation in WCASS. Include information on professional memberships, offices, committees and other activities in professional organizations.
2. Innovation **and contributions to special education and/or pupil services.**  
Describe innovation and effective programs and indicate how those programs have positively influenced the field of special services administration.
3. Impact on administrator preparation and/or **quality of services to children.**  
Describe accomplishments of the nominee in the administration of special services programs or in the preparation of special education administrators. Indicate how the accomplishments have impacted/improved services to children.
4. **Professional contributions to colleagues.** Include information on any other honors, awards or recognitions.
5. **Participation in local and state legislative matters which affect special services.**
6. **Years of service in special education/pupil services.**



## CANDIDATE INFORMATION

Name of Candidate

Address

City State Zip

Home Phone Work Phone

Job Title

Employer

Full Time Employer? Yes No

Population and Grades Served

("WCASS Outstanding Special Services Administrator Award" cont. from p. 7)



**NOMINATOR INFORMATION**

Name of Nominator

Address

City

State

Zip

Home Phone

Work Phone

Signature

Date

**LETTER OF SUPPORT**

Name of Candidate:

In the space provided below, state why the candidate should be considered for this award. Give examples of exemplary services to children. (e.g., Provides a full range of school services; performs job in an exemplary manner; earns respect of fellow workers, students and parents; works cooperatively with community agencies for the welfare of children; demonstrates good leadership skills; is a member of the state and national organization, and is well informed of its standards and goals).

Please type, and limit your statement to two (2) pages.

Signature

Name/Position

Address

City

State

Zip

Home Phone

Work Phone

**CANDIDATE STATEMENT**

Please provide us with a statement (limit to two [2] typed pages) describing professional accomplishments of which you are most proud. Your statement should be signed and returned to the person nominating you for inclusion in the nomination packet.