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The Official Publication of the New York State Society for Human Resource Management

FALL 2010

The Abortion Controversy Enters the Workplace



The Voice of Human Resources for New York State



Inside:
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2010 State Conference & Solution Center
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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK...

BY **JOHN LEWISON, SPHR**

Editorial Director

With this issue we start our tenth year of publication—continuing our mission to be current, relevant, useful to our readers, and “the voice of HR in New York.”

In case you missed it, this year's state conference and exposition – *Harnessing Your Human Assets* — was a hum-dinger. Held in historic Saratoga Springs, NY the conference provided participants with unparalleled learning experiences, lots of recreation and things to do, and gambling on the ponies (although we'd never tell). With over 60 vendors and exhibitors, and a sold out attendance the 2010 conference and “Solution Center” were declared a huge success. (See article and photos on page 18.)

This issue of *HR Now* brings together a number of insightful articles on key topics for human resource professionals. We start with an article by Eric Matusewitch, PHR, CAAP, that walks us through the migration of the abortion controversy as it now enters the workplace. Eric is former deputy director of the New York City Equal Employment Practices Commission, and lectures frequently on affirmative action topics. We think you'll find his article both interesting and insightful.

We follow this with an article about 529 college savings plans and whether they are right for your company.

Our “Focus On...” column – which highlights a key society volunteer each issue—is about Jeanne Stewart, SPHR, District Director, Hudson South.

Lastly, a brief word of thanks to the volunteers who work on *HR Now* magazine, and who have made it the award-winning publication that it is. A special thanks to those who helped put the piece on the state conference together (photos and all); and we note with thanks the fine work of John Ho, Esq. who authors our “Ask the Experts” column. As always, we want to hear from you, so just email us at jlewis@nysshrm.org. ▸

Respectfully,
John Lewison, SPHR
Editorial Director



This issue of *HR Now* brings together a number of insightful articles on key topics for human resource professionals.

MISSION STATEMENT – NEW YORK STATE SHRM

The mission of the New York State Society for Human Resource Management, Inc., is to:

- Promote the educational and professional development of members in New York State through support of SHRM services
- Create value for and serve the interests of SHRM members-at-large and members of SHRM affiliated chapters in New York State
- Advance the progress and presence of SHRM to the Human Resources community in New York State through programs, conferences, and other activities
- Provide volunteer and leadership training opportunities at state, area, and national levels
- Enhance communications between national SHRM, the New York State Society for Human Resource Management, and SHRM affiliated chapters in New York State

Who We Are

The New York State Society for Human Resource Management, Inc. (sometimes called the “state council”) is your link between affiliated local chapters and national SHRM. Its structure consists of volunteer leaders, with officers elected, and committee chairpersons, functional directors, and district directors appointed by the council.

SHRM's volunteer leadership structure links members with the Board of Directors, the policy-making body of the society. Each chapter president serves as a voting member of the state society.

Ed.

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*While affiliated with SHRM, each chapter is an independent body, and as such has its own bylaws governing membership.

BY **BARRY MANUS**
State Director

In September, nearly 400 HR professionals and more than 60 exhibitors converged on Saratoga Springs, NY for NYS-SHRM's 22nd Annual Conference and Solution Center. And what a conference it was! The feedback from the sold out crowd of both attendees and exhibitors was that this was the best conference in recent memory. If I may quote from a long time attendee and active SHRM member, Dennis Ryan of Clifton Park, NY, "This conference exceeded everyone's expectations... kudos to the entire conference planning team".

And what a team it was! I can't express my appreciation enough to all who helped on the conference planning committee and for all the work that went into producing such a well received conference. Thank you also to the volunteers who helped during the conference. You can find out more about the conference in the article in this issue of HR Now.

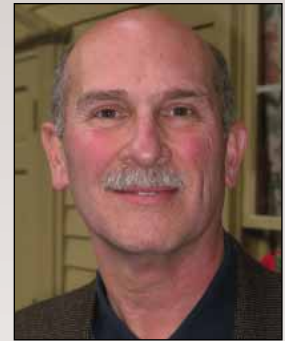
We've received many comments that people were prevented from attending after it was sold out a month before the conference. We would have liked to register all who wanted to attend however the fire regulations limited our desire to do so. The good news is that our venue is currently under construction and will open with a larger ballroom able to accommodate upwards of another 100 people.

What's next? Before the planning of the state conference was completed, we were already in the planning stages of our first ever state-wide Diversity and Inclusion Conference. This conference, headed up by our Diversity Director, Fannie Glover, is set for April 5 and 6, 2011, once again in Saratoga Springs. Take a look at our website (www.nysshrm.org) for more information.

This is our 4th year and we are very excited that interest and participation in the **Best Companies to Work for in NY** program has grown each year as feedback about this exciting NYS-SHRM initiative continues to WOW us. The evaluation and analysis period for the **Best Companies program** ends in December and those who make the list will be notified in January. However they won't know where they rank on that list until the gala awards dinner on April 21st in Albany. Is your company one of the best? Go to www.bestcompaniesny.com for more information.

I am always interested in our member's thoughts about what we do and how we can do it better. Email me at barrym@bravoHRservices.com. ▀

Barry Manus
State Director, NYS-SHRM



This is our 4th year and we are very excited that interest and participation in the Best Companies to Work for in NY program has grown each year as feedback about this exciting NYS-SHRM initiative continues to WOW us.

New York State SHRM Announces Diversity Leadership Conference

Date: April 5 & 6, 2011

Where: Historic Saratoga Springs, NY

Location: Saratoga Hilton Hotel

Mark your calendars and join us in historic Saratoga Springs, NY for NYS-SHRM's inaugural Diversity & Inclusion Leadership Conference "Building a Culture of Diversity and Inclusion."

A keynote speaker is Nereida (Neddy) Perez. Neddy has more than 17 years of experience in the field of human resources, diversity, and external relationship management.

She currently is Vice President of Inclusion and Diversity for National Grid. She's also held key diversity positions with KPMG, LLP (as their Diversity Officer), Sodexo, Royal Dutch/Shell, and United Parcel Service. She has partnered on a variety of diversity related projects in the UK, the Netherlands, Nigeria and Latin America.

This promises to be an exciting and informative event. Please join us. For more information contact Fannie Glover, NYS-SHRM Diversity Director at FGlover@earlycareandlearning.org.

Are NY529 Plans Right for Your Employees?



One simple way to make your company's benefits package even more appealing to employees is to add a 529 College Savings Plan.

Currently, there are currently more than seven million 529 accounts open in the United States; and more companies are making it easy for their employees to save by offering such plans as a voluntary benefit.

What is a 529 college savings plan?

A 529 College Savings Plan is an investment vehicle designed to enable parents (or anyone for that matter) to save systematically for future college expenses. These plans are popular because they offer a combination of low-minimum and high-maximum contribution limits, investment flexibility, and attractive tax advantages. Many states allow certain contributions to be deducted from state income taxes, and qualified withdrawals are free of federal and most state income taxes.¹

Since 2002, the total assets invested in 529 plans across the country have grown over 500% to more than \$117 billion.² In fact, the 529 industry has enjoyed double-digit growth in assets every year but one.

Clearly, parents, grandparents, relatives and friends of future college students are committed to saving with 529 plans—your employees included.

Sponsored by individual states, 529 savings plans allow account owners to choose from a range of investment portfolios and make contributions to them over time. Earnings and losses vary based on the market performance and the investment portfolios.

Anyone can open an account for a future student. And the savings can be used to pay for qualified higher-education expenses—tuition, certain room & board and expenses, fees and books—at any eligible educational institution that meets federal guidelines. This includes virtually all undergraduate and graduate colleges and universities, and technical schools in the United States and many institutions abroad.

Why should my company offer this option?

Employers have a great opportunity to help employees save for future higher-education costs. Consider these benefits:

1. It can help give your company a competitive edge;
2. There are no reporting requirements, such as Form 5500;
3. Payroll deduction makes it easy for employers and employees. In many cases, the contributions are processed just like any other clearing house (ACH) direct deposit;

4. No new systems or additional burdens on Payroll/HR departments;
5. Usually, 529 savings plans offer the benefit of payroll direct deposit at no additional cost to your company;
6. Some providers also offer free support and resources to help you get set up, promote the benefit, and educate your employees about the 529 savings plan.

How do I get started?

First, find out what's available in your state. Then look to see who's managing the plan, the fees charged, and the investment choices you have. If you're happy with the plan, then call the provider and see if payroll deduction and onsite support are available for your company. Nearly all 529 plans are state-sponsored and many of those plans have special benefits for residents of that state.

Don't keep it a secret. After you've selected a plan, it's time to let the employees know about it. Host a workshop or launch of some sort. Include a payroll stuffer or memo to explain why you've chosen to expand your benefits package to include college savings.

Finally, always follow up. Whether it's open enrollment or new hire orientation, make sure to have current materials on hand about your state's 529 plan.³ ▶

To learn more about 529 plans visit
www.savingforcollege.com
or www.collegesavings.org

¹ Before starting a 529 plan you should check with your or your beneficiary's home state to see if it offers any tax or other benefits for contributions to 529 plans. Earnings on non-qualified withdrawals may be subject to federal income tax and a 10% federal penalty tax, as well as state and local income taxes. Tax and other benefits are contingent on meeting other requirements and certain withdrawals are subject to federal, state, and local taxes. It's best that you seek competent accounting help before proceeding.

² Source: FRC Data Quarterly Reports (2002-2009)

³ Investment returns are not guaranteed, and you could lose money by investing in a 529 plan. The Comptroller of the State of New York and the New York State Higher Education Services Corporation are the Program Administrators and are responsible for implementing and administering the *Direct Plan*. Upromise Investments, Inc. and Upromise Investment Advisors, LLC serve as Program Manager and Recordkeeping and Servicing Agent, respectively, and are responsible for day-to-day operations, including effecting transactions. The Vanguard Group, Inc. serves as the Investment Manager. Vanguard Marketing Corporation markets, distributes and underwrites the *Direct Plan*.


The Abortion Controversy Enters the Workplace

BY ERIC MATUSEWITCH, PHR, CAAP

The US Supreme Court ignited a firestorm 37 years ago with its decision affording abortion constitutional protection. *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113, (1973). The recent controversies surrounding President Obama's commencement speech at the University of Notre Dame, and the nomination of Judge Sonia Sotomayor to be an associate justice of the Supreme Court (both in May 2009) indicate that abortion remains a hot-button political topic.

The abortion controversy has also entered the workplace. For the past three decades, courts have been ruling on discrimination claims by employees who had (or sought to have) abortions, and who requested workplace accommodations due to their religious beliefs regarding abortion. This litigation has chiefly involved the major federal antidiscrimination statute: Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.





Title VII applies to employers with 15 or more employees and bans discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. In 1978, Title VII was amended by the Pregnancy Discrimination Act (PDA). The Act provides that discrimination on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions constitutes unlawful sex discrimination. Furthermore, the US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), the administrative agency charged with enforcing Title VII, has taken the position that the PDA bars an employer from discriminating against a woman because she has had an abortion. EEOC, “Guidelines on Discrimination Because of Sex,” 29 C.F.R. pt.1604 App.

Several courts have similarly held that abortion is a “related medical condition” under the PDA. Relying in part on the Guidelines, a federal district court ruled in 1995 that an employer violated Title VII by discharging an employee who “contemplated” having an abortion.

The plaintiff in this case, Kimberly Turic, worked at a hotel restaurant with a primarily Christian staff. After becoming pregnant, she discussed having an abortion with her supervisors. News of this matter spread among staff members, who began openly discussing the proposed abortion in a manner disruptive to the work environment. They also tried to convince her not to terminate her pregnancy. Turic’s supervisors, who believed she was “instigating” the turmoil, told her she would be fired if she continued to discuss her considered abortion at work.

The plaintiff was eventually fired for allegedly failing to perform her job adequately. The district court determined, however, that the employer’s decision violated the PDA since “but for her

consideration of abortion, [Turic] would not have been fired.” The ruling was upheld on appeal by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. According to the appeals court, “Since an employer cannot take an adverse employment action against a female employee for her decision to have an abortion, it follows that the same employer also cannot take adverse employment action against a female employee for merely thinking about what she has a right to do.” *Turic v. Holland House*, 849 F. Supp. 544 (W.D. Mich. 1995), *aff’d* (pregnancy discrimination) and *rev’d* (punitive damages), 85 F. 3d 1211 (6th Cir. 1996).

In 2008 the Third Circuit Court of Appeals similarly found that firing an employee for having an abortion is a form of pregnancy discrimination. The facts of this case are particularly sad: The “Jane Doe” plaintiff worked as a graphics designer for CARS, a car insurance business with offices in several states. During her pregnancy, she learned that the baby had severe deformities. In accordance with her physician’s recommendation, she and her husband chose to terminate the pregnancy. Jane claimed her husband called the vice president, notified him that she would be having an abortion the next day, and received his approval for her to take one week of vacation the following week. CARS, however, discharged her for “job abandonment” several days later —on the same day as the baby’s funeral.

Doe filed a PDA action against her employer. The Court of Appeals, reversing the district court, held that the PDA’s coverage extended to women who elected to terminate their pregnancies. In so doing, the Court relied on the ruling in *Turic*, the EEOC Guidelines, and language from the legislative history of the PDA that “no employer may fire or refuse to hire a woman simply because she has exercised her right to have an abortion.” *Doe v. C.A.R.S.*, 527 F.3d 358 (3rd Cir. 2008).

Title VII also bars discrimination on the basis of religion, and requires employers to reasonably accommodate an employee’s religious beliefs unless the accommodation would pose an “undue hardship” to the employers’ business. In 1997 the US Supreme Court defined the term undue hardship to mean that an employer is not required to incur more than a *de minimis* cost when accommodating an employee’s religious practice. *Trans World Airlines v. Hardison*, 432 U.S. 63 (1977). The Court has also made clear that an employer that offers a means of reasonably accommodating an employee’s religious needs is not required to accept another solution recommended by the employee. *Ansonia Board of Education v. Philbrook*, 479 U.S. 60 (1986).

Some Title VII rulings involve workers who refused to participate in abortion-related assignments based on their religious beliefs. In a 1979 case, for example, the plaintiff was employed by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and applied for a promotion to the position of reviewer in the Exempt Organizations Division. The reviewers were authorized to issue final rulings regarding the tax exempt status of non-profit organizations.

The IRS denied the plaintiff a promotion because he refused, based upon his religious beliefs, to work on applications from organizations that supported abortion. During the Title VII litigation, the plaintiff introduced evidence that less than two percent of the review's workload would have involved such organizations. The federal district court found that the IRS violated Title VII since accommodating the employee would not result in undue hardship to the employer. The court noted that the number of applications the employee might refuse to handle would be relatively insignificant compared to his total workload. *Haring v. Blumenthal*, 471 F. Supp. 1172 (D.D.C. 1979), cert. den., 452 U.S. 939 (1981).

Employees whose religious beliefs prevent them from performing abortion-related assignments, though, will generally lose in litigation if they reject reasonable accommodations offered by the employers. For example, in a Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals ruling, the plaintiff police officer declined an assignment to provide security at abortion clinics for religious reasons.

The appeals court ruled that the employer had satisfied its obligation to provide reasonable accommodation through the availability of a transfer—without any loss in pay or benefits—to another district without an abortion clinic. The court held that the employer

was not required to remove the conflict by providing the employee's preferred accommodation, which was to remain in his current district while declining clinic duty. *Rodriguez v. City of Chicago*, 156 F.3d 771 (7th Cir. 1998).

Employers also have an obligation under Title VII to reasonably accommodate employees who advocate against abortion in the workplace in a non-disruptive manner. One of the more interesting cases involving an anti-abortion proselytizer is *Wilson v. U.S. West Communications*, 58 F.3d 1337 (8th Cir. 1995). Here, the plaintiff was a Roman Catholic who claimed that a religious vow required her to wear a button with a two-inch color photo of an aborted fetus, with the words "Stop Abortion."

The plaintiff claimed she had made a vow to God to wear this particular button until there was an end to abortion or until she could no longer "fight the fight." In response, other employees complained of harassment, a 40 percent decline in productivity occurred, and some employees refused to go to meetings attended by the plaintiff. To resolve the acrimonious atmosphere, the company gave the employee several options: wear a less graphic button or cover it while at work. When the plaintiff refused these accommodations, she was fired.

The US Court of Appeals for the Eighth Circuit ruled that, under Title VII, these options reasonably accommodated the employee's religious observance, and that to do more would place an undue hardship on the company by creating a hostile environment for the plaintiff's coworkers. The employer was therefore justified in terminating the plaintiff.

In addition to Title VII, there are a number of federal and state "conscience clause laws" that allow health care providers to refuse to provide abortion services based on religious or moral objections. The federal Church Amendment (42 U.S.C. sec. 300a-7), for example, was passed in 1973 in response to *Roe v. Wade*. The law prohibits entities that receive

■ **abortion controversy**
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Focus on...

Jeanne Stewart, SPHR, District Director, Hudson South

Each issue of HR Now focuses on a key volunteer leader of NYS-SHRM. In this issue we highlight Jeanne Stewart, SPHR, District Director, Hudson South



HRN: *Jeanne, thank you for agreeing to our interview. Let's start off with your background. Where did you grow up, what college did you attend, and what organizations have you worked for?*

STEWART: Riverdale and Mount Vernon, NY, College of Mount St. Vincent for my BA and Iona College Hagan School of Business for my MBA in HRM. I have worked for YAI National Institute for People with Disabilities, St. Mary's Healthcare System for Children, Montefiore Medical Center and I currently am VP Operations for my family owned moving and storage company located in NYC and Raleigh, NC, Marrins' Moving Systems, LTD. and Dir HR Client Services for Employment Practices Advisors, Inc.

HRN: *Interesting background. How did you get into the HR field?*

STEWART: in 1988 when I graduated it was a very tough market. I really thought I wanted to be a computer programmer which was my concentration in college. After a few interviews where the hiring managers told me I would be better off in an interactive job than a lone programmer I listened to them and worked as a Personnel Assistant in a Nursing Home. I fell in love with the field!

HRN: *Your district includes the Long Island, Middletown, NYC, Poughkeepsie and Westchester chapters. What is your mission as district director?*

STEWART: To be a resource for the Presidents of the local SHRM Chapters, to support the State Council and the State Director and to give my time and talents to the NYS Conference.

HRN: *How can you make a difference in your capacity as district director?*

STEWART: I have visited the chapters and provided educational programs. Recently I spoke on Business Ethics in an Economy with a Downturn. I participate on conference calls with SHRM and attend meetings to secure resources for the local chapters.

HRN: *What other volunteer positions have you held in the SHRM family?*

STEWART: I have been active in HR/NY as Legislative and Legal Committee Chair, Managers' Forum Chair, Secretary, VP of Programs, and Chapter President.

HRN: *Which role gives you the most satisfaction?*

STEWART: VP of Programs and President as in these roles I was able to encourage people to use their time and talents to give back to the profession.

HRN: *What would you tell graduate students today considering HR as a career?*

STEWART: To shadow someone currently in the job to see if it is an area you think you would benefit and enjoy and ask questions!

HRN: *How can NYS-SHRM best promote the HR profession?*

STEWART: By continuing to promote ethics in the field and offering exceptional educational programs.

HRN: *Is there anything else you'd like our nearly 14,000 members to know?*

STEWART: I would like to encourage the members to get involved in the local chapter in a capacity or with a talent you are not currently using in your job. Volunteering is a great way to expand your skill set.

HRN: *We heard that you have won some awards. Can you share that with us?*

STEWART: Yes. I am a recipient of the Lazarus Brieger Award presented by the HR/NY Chapter for outstanding leadership.

HRN: *Congratulations. Jeanne, thank you very much. I am sure our members have enjoyed learning more about your volunteer role and your views on our profession. ▀*



Ask the Experts...

BY JOHN HO, ESQ.

Readers are invited to submit their questions about human resource practices and employment law to *HR Now*, where experts in their fields will provide timely answers. Email your questions to the editorial director at jlewis@nysshrm.org.

Q We interviewed a qualified female for a customer representative position. However, she has two small children and we think her child care needs will interfere with her ability to perform her job. Can we turn her down on this basis?

—Elizabeth M., Westchester County, NY

A Probably not. Although federal EEO laws do not, per se, prohibit discrimination against caregivers, there are circumstances in which discrimination against caregivers might constitute unlawful disparate treatment. Employment decisions that discriminate against workers with caregiving responsibilities are prohibited by Title VII if they are based on sex or another protected characteristic, regardless of whether the employer discriminates more broadly against all members of the protected class. For example, sex discrimination against working mothers is prohibited by Title VII even if the employer does not discriminate against childless women. The EEOC has published enforcement guidelines addressing the unlawful disparate treatment of workers with caregiving responsibilities. It can be found at <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/caregiving.html>.

Numerous other discrimination laws such as the FMLA and ADA have also been used in bringing family responsibilities discrimination (commonly referred to as “FRD” litigation) claims. Furthermore, although New York law also does not expressly protect “caregivers,” it recognizes familial status as a protected characteristic which could be used as the basis of a claim. In fact, a new report by WorkLife Law provides a detailed picture of the current state of FRD litigation, including a 400% increase in the number of cases filed and an average verdict of more than \$500,000. The report also describes common fact patterns that lead to FRD claims, shows the number of FRD cases filed in each state, and provides numerous case examples. The report can be found at www.worklifelaw.org/pubs/FRDupdate.pdf. ▸



About the Author: *HR Now* is indebted to John Ho, Esq., who is a member of the law firm of Bond, Schoeneck & King, PLLC, and resident in its New York City office. A core practice of the firm is labor, employment and benefits law, representing management exclusively. Mr. Ho can be reached at 646-253-2320, or by email at jho@bsk.com.

— from the editor’s desk — continued from page 14

funds under four federal statutes from engaging in employment discrimination against doctors or other medical personnel who either perform abortions or who refuse to perform abortions on religious or moral grounds. Jon O. Shimabukuro, *The History and Effect of Abortion Conscience Clause Laws*, CRS Report RL34703, October 8, 2008, available at <http://file.wikileaks.org/file/crsRL34703.pdf>.

The *Turic* and *Doe* cases establish that women who experience adverse employment actions because of an abortion are now clearly protected by Title VII. Employers should therefore not refuse to hire, terminate, or discriminate in any other way against an applicant or employee because that person has, or seeks to have, an abortion.

In addition, companies must attempt to reasonably accommodate employees whose religious beliefs and practices prevent

them from performing abortion-related assignments. Under Title VII, though, the employer is neither required to make a reasonable accommodation that requires more than a *de minimus* cost nor accept an alternative accommodation offered by the employee (as long as the employer’s proffered accommodation resolves the conflict). Finally, health care institutions should familiarize themselves with federal and state conscience clause laws to avoid unlawfully discriminating against medical providers who object to abortion services on religious or moral grounds. ▸



Eric Matusewitch, PHR, CAAP, former deputy director of the New York City Equal Employment Practices Commission, teaches a course on the “Fundamentals of EEO Law” for New York University. He is the author of the *Manager’s Handbook on Employment Discrimination Law* (Andrews Publications, 2000) and 147 articles on that topic. He can be contacted at ematuse@aol.com.



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2010 State Conference and Solution Center Attracts Sold Out Crowd

This year's state SHRM conference – *Harnessing Your Human Assets* – was held at the Saratoga Hilton Hotel in famed Saratoga Springs, NY, and what a terrific conference it was. With over 60 exhibitors and sponsors, and a staggering 400 human resource professionals attending from around the state, the 2010 Conference and Solution Center was declared a huge success.

“It’s one of the best attended state conferences, the location is just perfect, and we have already reserved the same location for next year’s conference,” said Fernán Cepero, PHR, Conference Chairperson and State Director Elect. “A number of new attendees and exhibitors were on board for this event,” noted Barry Manus, State Council Director of the NYS-SHRM, “and both groups told us that their experience exceeded their expectations.” A small core team and numerous volunteers from across the state put a tremendous amount of work and creativity into pulling off a terrific conference. “What made it very special,” said Manus, “is that we were able to sell out as we celebrated our 22nd anniversary in offering state conferences to New York human resource professionals.”

The opening general session was facilitated by Deborah Mourey, Social Media Sherpa, Marketing Strategy Consulting, who led a panel taking on the timely topic of “To Tweet or Not to Tweet.” Attendees learned the pitfalls and vagaries of on-line social networking and managing “tweeting” in the workplace from expert panelists as John Bagyi, Esq, SPHR, Jennifer Loftus, MBA, SPHR, and Diane Pfadenhauer, Esq., SPHR. To say this discussion was enlightening would be an understatement.

Conference participants had the opportunity to select from a number of high quality concurrent sessions on “how-to” topics, such as HR’s Leadership Role: Initiating the Tough Conversations, to an examination of workplace trends, to how to ride the social roller coaster. Other sessions included how technology is changing the workplace, to lessening the costs of organizational behavioral risk, to the power of passionate work. Other sessions on leadership, HR metrics and using total rewards to motivate employees drew standing room only crowds. What could be better?

Although the sessions were rigorous, rich and practical in content, participants had ample opportunity for casual networking. Whether it was enjoying the unique sights and sounds of famed Saratoga Springs, or the ice cream social in the new and improved Solution Center, or sharing a meal in the spacious conference ballroom, a good time was had by all.

The highlight of the conference was keynote speaker Bill Rancic’s outstanding presentation on innovation: how to think like an entrepreneur in corporate America. Keynoter Karl Ahlrich, SPHR, and his CEO, COO and CFO panel did a great job giving an outsider’s view of strategic HR with metrics about how others feel about the HR function. The conference concluded with general session four and a dynamite presentation by Scott Christopher of The Levity Effect who talked about why it pays to lighten up. It was a hilarious session that offered listeners something practical while still having fun. Christopher is co-author of the best-selling book *The Levity Effect: Why it Pays to Lighten Up*.

A special thanks to the 2010 Conference emcee Susan Post, SPHR, NE Regional Director from SHRM. She gets a resounding round of applause. To her we say “Thank you for a job very well done.”

No description of the Conference and Solution Center would be complete without mentioning the more than 60-plus sponsors, vendors and exhibitors who showed attendees the latest programs, products and services available to the human resource community... a very special thank-you to all of our sponsors and partners. They were wonderful to work with.

Finally, a special thanks to the conference core team, headed by Fernán Cepero, PHR, State Director Elect, and State Conference Chairperson. His team of committee chairs included Jeanne Stewart, SPHR and Deb Shigley, PHR (Programs), Christine DePeters (Registration), Colin Adams, GPHR (Solution Center), Robin McConnell (Hospitality), Melissa Frisina (Volunteers), Barry Manus (Publicity), Grant Schneider, SPHR (Technology), Jon Helmin, PHR (Treasurer), and Annette Guido (Sr. Advisor). Said Cepero, conference chair, “This was a fantastic group of volunteers, and I am very pleased to have had them lead us in our 22th Anniversary Conference.” We agree. ▀



Deb Shigley, Fannie Glover and Jeanne Stewart (L to R) of the conference programming committee.



Bill Rancic, Keynote Speaker addresses conference attendees.



Barry Manus, State Council Director and Frank O'Connor, Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve with Statement of Support for ESGR.



Conference Committee members (l to r) Fernan Cepero, Jeanne Stewart, Grant Schneider and Ned Hirt assist with raffle drawing in Solution Center.



Karl Ahlrich, Keynote Speaker discusses what CEO's, COO's and CFO's think about HR.



Jason Hudson (R), Wilton, NY, is celebrated by Ned Hirt after winning raffle prize.



Ice cream break in the Solution Center.



Deborah Mourey facilitates panel on social networking with Jennifer Loftus, Astron Solutions, John Bagyi, Esq., Bond Schoeneck & King and Diane Pfadenhauer, Esq., Employment Practices Advisors.



Conference attendees listen intently during concurrent sessions.



Nicole Beckford, NYC, and Barry Manus, State Council Director enjoy ice cream break in the solution center.

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