

# THE INDEPENDENT VOICE

News from the International Ombudsman Association

## Over 600 Members Strong

BY JAN SCHONAUER, IOA PRESIDENT



JAN SCHONAUER

These are exciting times: our 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference soon to unfold; the IOA Journal underway; state legislation being considered to protect ombuds-

man confidentiality; the Database Categories Task Force measurements of our work in academic, government and corporate settings. These initiatives have enormous potential to influence, improve and expand our practice. We are fortunate to have many colleagues contributing to the future of our Association, and the profession.

IOA is currently the premier provider of training and support to all organizational ombudsmen. We continue to receive feedback that our training is vital to those who currently practice or who hope to establish an ombudsman practice. Since last summer, PMA, our management association, has noted an

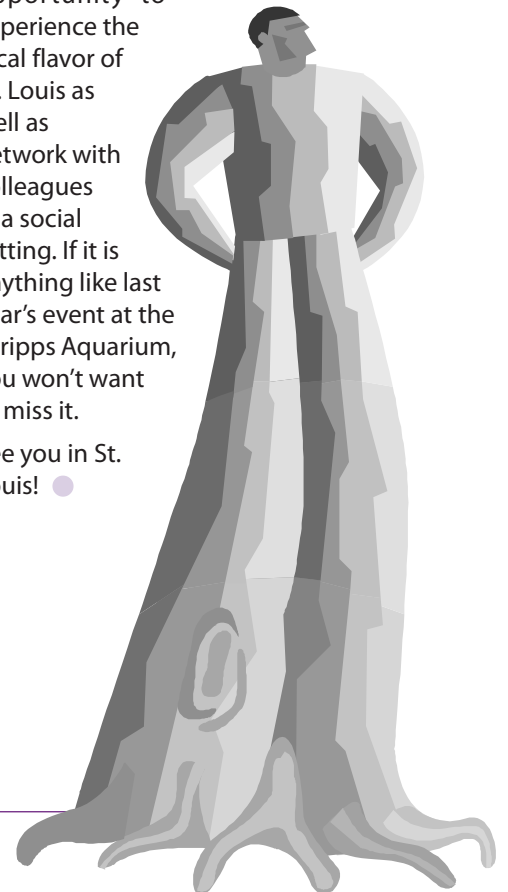
increase in requests for information about starting an ombudsman office. These requests have come from all sectors, including colleges and universities, corporations and government agencies. We estimate that there is currently an average of 10 requests per month.

IOA continues to grow; we are now over 600 members strong. As we grow, I hope we remain accessible, transparent, engaging and a true community.

We hope to see you at the conference. It promises to be three and a half days of learning with opportunities to engage colleagues from all sectors and locations. The organizers have provided an excellent program to strengthen your skills and build your network of "ombuddies." With 4 half-day pre-conference courses, 24 concurrent sessions as well as plenary and keynote speeches from leading experts in the conflict resolution field, the conference will be a wonderful learning experience for the most experienced ombuds to those who are new to the field. For

anyone who is interested in becoming more involved in the work of the IOA, you are invited to Friday afternoon's concurrent session with the IOA board and committee chairs who will be happy to answer your questions. This is a very useful session for those who would like to assist in the growth of the IOA and the ombudsman profession but aren't sure how to go about it. Don't forget the River Boat Dinner Cruise on Thursday evening. This is a terrific opportunity to experience the local flavor of St. Louis as well as network with colleagues in a social setting. If it is anything like last year's event at the Scripps Aquarium, you won't want to miss it.

See you in St. Louis! ●



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IOA CONFERENCE, APRIL 11-14, 2007

# Strengthening our Foundations

BY VICKY BROWN AND JOHN S. CARTER, CO-CHAIRS

The **Adam's Mark Hotel** in downtown **St. Louis, Missouri** is the site for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of the International Ombudsman Association to be held **April 11-14, 2007**.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 11

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Wednesday, April 11 offers one full-day pre-conference course and four half-day courses.

- **Roger Schwarz**, an organizational psychologist, will lead "The Skilled Facilitator" in the full-day offering.

Half-day courses include:

- "IOA Standards of Practice and Code of Ethics: Understanding the Core Principles of an Organizational Ombuds Practice" facilitated by **Tim Griffin, Toni Robinson, and Dave Talbot**;
- "Challenges to Neutrality" facilitated by **Marsha Wagner, Wilbur Hicks, and Howard Gadlin**;
- "Understanding Conflict: A Socio-Psychological Perspective for Ombuds" led by **Camilo Azcarate and Nick Diehl**;
- "Teaching Lessons for the Teachers" taught by **April White Castaneda**.

A festive **welcome reception** for all conference attendees will be held Wednesday evening.



## THURSDAY APRIL 12

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**Jan Schonauer**, President of IOA will provide the welcome for the first full day of the general conference, **Thursday April 12**.

- The keynote address, "Crucibles for Change: Ombuds as Leaders in Challenging Times" will be delivered by **Laura Michelle LeBaron**.
- **Richard Reuben** will present "Workplace Democracy Issues."
- **Chuck Howard, Sean Banks, Judy Bruner, and Kevin Jessar** will discuss "U.S. Law and Legal Update."

Attendees will not want to miss the **IOA Annual Business and Luncheon Meeting**.

Early Thursday afternoon concurrent offerings include:

- **Tom Sebok, Nancy Erbe**, and distinguished ombuds colleagues with "Variations in Ombuds Practices Around the World";

- **Howard Gadlin & Kevin Jessar** presenting "Working with Larger Workplace Systems";

- **Roger Schwarz** facilitating "Helping Get Better Results and Build Stronger Relationships Often in Ways You Didn't Think Possible";

- "Knowing Your Ombuds Business Through Your Customer: Large Investments in Select Inquirers" will be led by **Peter Hopkins**;

- **Laura Michelle LeBaron** will teach us about "Thriving Together: Building a Culture of Dialogue and Inclusivity."

Late Thursday afternoon concurrent sessions include:

- **Frank Fowlie and John Zinsser** with "Using Analytical Data to Evaluate the Performance of an Ombuds Office";

- **Mauricio Ramos** presenting "Awaken the Fire Within: Motivating Individuals into Action Through Coaching";

- **Mike Turpenoff** will facilitate a dynamic panel consisting of **James Lee, Jan Schonauer and Carol Scott** who will discuss "Commonalities, Differences, Opportunities, Tools, and Best Practices";

- **Tom Barnette, Michael Eisner, and Nick Diehl** will facilitate a panel discussion with **Marsha**

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**Wagner, Sean Banks and Howard Gadlin** entitled "Standards of Practice-Practical Applications to Real World Challenges";

- **Jerome Fields and Sterling O'Ran** will amaze attendees with their presentation on "Life as Ombudsman to the Incarcerated."

A **River Boat Dinner Cruise** on the mighty Mississippi River is the crowning jewel to this exciting first day of the 2007 IOA Conference.

## FRIDAY APRIL 13

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On **Friday April 13**, attendees will be welcomed to St. Louis by **James Weddle**, Managing Partner with Edward Jones Investments, Inc.

- The keynote address "Dealing with the Emotional Side of Conflict: A Practical Framework for Ombuds" will be delivered by **Daniel Shapiro** from the Project on Negotiation at Harvard University Law School.
- **Mary Rowe** and outstanding panelists including **Doris Campos-Infantino, Claudia D'Albini, David Miller and Marvin Neal** will share valuable insights into key trends for ombuds in the coming year as they look into "The Crystal Ball."
- **Sector forums** will provide important opportunities for attendees to discuss critical issues with colleagues.

After a **superb networking lunch**, ten concurrent Friday afternoon sessions will provide more exciting educational opportunities. Early offerings include:

- **Wayne Blair and Laurie Mesibov** facilitating "The Ombuds as a Teacher";
- **Katherine Ziff and Elizabeth Graham** will help ombuds with "Strengthening our Skills: Intervening with Suicidal Ideation";
- **Blaine Donais and Shari Swoish** will facilitate the first of a two-part seminar, "Strengthening the Foundations of Conflict Management Systems-A Diagnostic Approach";
- **Members of the IOA Board and chairs of IOA Committees** will host a "Conversations" session;
- **Wendell Jones** will lead a fascinating discussion of "A Primer for Ombudsman: Boundaries Between Process and Content Foci."

Late Friday afternoon concurrent sessions include:

- **Blaine Donais and Shari Swoish** with "From Understanding to Renewal in Conflict Management Systems Building";
- "Empowering the Ombuds Office and Communicating with Powerful Players: Presidents, General Counsel, and Others in Your Organization" facilitated by **Sean Banks** and **Judy Bruner** of the IOA Legal & Legislative Affairs Committee;

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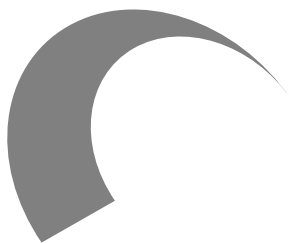
- **Tom Sebok, Beatriz Dale, Joseph Ganci, and David Miller from the IOA Database Categories Task Force** will discuss "Comparing Apples to Apples";
- **Latasha Fox and Brian Carter** will share insights on "Ombudsman by Phone";
- **John Simonetti** will facilitate a roundtable discussion of "Best Practices for Corporate Ombudsman."

## SATURDAY APRIL 14

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Attendees will be treated to an outstanding offering of presentations for Saturday April 14, our closing day.

- The keynote speaker is **Greg Firestone** who will excite attendees with "Neutrality, Impartiality, and More: What's an Ombuds to Do?"
- **David Brubaker** will deliver a plenary address "All About Assessment"
- The **President** of IOA will discuss "IOA Reflections and Visions: 2007-2008."



Final concurrent sessions on Saturday April 14 include:

- **Alan Lincoln** will be joined by **Mary Rowe** and **Tom Sebok** of the IOA Journal Editorial Board talking about "The Role of the IOA Journal and Research in the Ombudsman Field";
- **Debra Casey** will elaborate on "How Research can Support Ombuds Work";
- **Members of the Legal & Legislative Affairs Committee** will facilitate a discussion of "Questions for the Legal Experts";
- **C.J. Larkin** and **Pamela DeVoe** will share their exciting experiences about "International Opportunities for Conflict Resolution and Alternative Dispute Resolution."

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For more information on how you can be a part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference of IOA, please phone, **1-908-359-0246**, email **info@ombudsassociation.org**, or visit us on-line at **www.ombudsassociation.org**

If we can do anything to help you prepare to attend the 2007 IOA Conference, please don't hesitate to contact us. We sincerely hope to see everyone in St. Louis April 11-14, 2007. ●

## Remembering Michael Phillips

*Michael Phillips, Indiana State University Ombudsperson, died on January 18, 2007. In memory of him, Tim Griffin, University Ombudsman of Northern Illinois University, has kindly shared the following reflections:*

It was at a UCOA conference in Denver, now more than ten years ago, that I first had the pleasure of spending time with Michael Phillips as we walked together from the host campus to an adjacent business district looking for a good place to have lunch. It was quickly apparent that Michael was a very friendly and engaging person; and I was immediately struck by the warmth of his personality, his caring spirit, and his appreciation of good cigars. During the ensuing decade, occasional phone calls allowed us to catch up with each other's personal and professional trials and tribulations. I especially looked forward to the opportunity to share some time with him at those annual conferences he was able to attend.

Michael's broad and easy smile always communicated an unconditional acceptance for every person he met. He was a gentle soul, and it's hard to imagine him ever taking offense or expressing anger. Perhaps this is because he seemed to never allow his ego to drive his feelings or behavior, being always more concerned with the needs of others than with his own. Michael's passing will be keenly felt by those of us who had the pleasure and the privilege of knowing him as a friend and colleague.

# What Are You Going to Do?

BY TOM BARNETTE, REGIONAL OMBUDSPERSON, AMERICAN EXPRESS AND NICK DIEHL, ASSOCIATE OMBUDS, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY WITH COMMENTS FROM MARSHA WAGNER, COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY-CHAIR OF THE IOA STANDING COMMITTEE ON PROFESSIONAL ETHICS, STANDARDS OF PRACTICE AND BEST PRACTICES

In our December edition of **The Independent Voice**, we asked readers for responses to a scenario that involved the senior leader of an organization influencing the Ombuds practice. Following is a recap of the scenario and how our readers responded:

## SCENARIO

A visitor to your office claims that a senior manager, who is considered a “star,” has been verbally abusive. You feel this is an important issue since you have heard similar concerns from others who have quit for the same reason. With the permission of your visitor, you contact the senior manager in question to discuss the situation. The senior manager dismissively laughs and says the employee is an overly-sensitive complainer. With that response you contact your boss who is the direct supervisor of the senior manager and holds the highest position in the organization. Your boss says he/she will look into the situation. Two days later your boss calls you and tells you that he/she will “handle this” and that you should not contact the senior manager again nor discuss the situation with anyone else including the person who raised the issue (please assume that you do not report to any other supervisor or board).

## DO YOU?

1. Remove yourself from the situation since you have fulfilled your obligation to raise awareness of the problem.

**1 response: 5%**

2. Step away from the situation, but request that your boss update you on what steps have been taken to resolve the issue.

**3 responses: 14%**

3. Agree to stop actively pursuing a resolution, but let your boss know that you may need to discuss similar complaints with future visitors.

**8 responses: 38%**

4. Continue to informally monitor the situation even though you have been directed not to.

**4 responses: 19%**

5. Insist on being informed about how the situation is being handled.

**5 responses: 24%**

Several readers also shared comments, some of which appear below:

- I think I would not be able to fulfill my boss' request not to discuss the matter further with the person who raised the issue.
- I would also remind my boss that person that raised the issue needs to be informed that some action has taken place. The person that raised the issue needs resolution. If the person hears nothing, then the employee concerns program takes a negative hit. And bad publicity can ruin a program.

- I report only to the director of my entire organization. That relationship consists only of my periodically describing my activities in general terms. It does not include any provision for having the director tell me what to do, or not do, in any of my interactions with clients. The conduct of “the boss” in the scenario represents an inappropriate compromising of the ombuds independence.
- While I would agree to not actively pursue a resolution, I would inform my boss that I must provide my visitor with some feedback regarding this situation. Additionally, I would keep my eyes and ears open for any additional complaints concerning this senior manager.
- This seems to be a classic example of why we need the cornerstone of Independence.
- The most important thing I need to do is to educate my “boss” about my role.
- If the boss does effectively resolve the situation, there will not be any more complaints. I would also point this out.

The editors requested some additional comments about this scenario from **Marsha Wagner**, who chairs the IOA Standing Committee on Professional Ethics, Standards of Practice and Best Practices. Following are the thoughts Marsha graciously provided:

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*(What Are You Going To Do  
continued from page 5)*

- **NEUTRALITY** suggests that the ombuds should monitor his/her responses to offer options to the visitor and speak with the senior manager impartially, whether the alleged offender is a “star” or not. The ombuds should be very careful not to appear to have made a judgment.
- **INDEPENDENCE** suggests that the ombuds is accountable to the professional Standards of Practice, rather than to the direction of his or her boss, regarding how to address concerns. The ombuds might remind the boss of this principle of independence, and explain the importance of **CONSISTENT PRACTICE** — for example, being available to discuss any follow-up or future concerns with the original visitor, as he or she would with any visitor.
- **BEST PRACTICES** include understanding of the organizational culture, and the use of tact and diplomacy. The ombuds clearly understands now that this is a sensitive issue, and will use discretion (such as considering carefully whether or not to discuss it with anyone else, or waiting to follow up until after more information surfaces, such as additional complaints or new incidents or observations by others). The ombuds may wish to close the discussion with the boss with interest-based negotiation and a mutual understanding of future communications between ombuds and boss, if additional concerns arise, so the boss and the senior manager can benefit from the ombuds’ “early warning” role and not be blindsided if there is a pattern with negative retention consequences.

## OUR NEW SCENARIO FOR THIS EDITION:

### What Are You Going to Do?

Following is another hypothetical scenario that an Ombuds might face. We invite you to weigh-in with what you would do next by “voting.” We will publish the cumulative results of the response in our next issue. We recognize that limiting Ombuds to one, exclusive option is a bit artificial and not what you typically do in your Ombuds practice. But to keep this manageable, please select one option that you would choose among those listed.

#### INSTRUCTIONS

Please think about the following scenario. To record your response, click on <http://tinyurl.com/2qsw08> or copy and paste this link into your web browser. Or visit the Members Only section of the IOA website [www.ombudsassociation.org](http://www.ombudsassociation.org) for the survey link. Please choose only one of the options listed. Comments are welcome, but keep in mind that we may publish some of the comments in the newsletter at our discretion. Let us hear from you.

#### THE SCENARIO

A visitor complains about “disrespectful” treatment in the workplace by their boss. The individual has complained about the supervisor in the past, but has not felt heard and is frustrated and angry. The person seems to have an abrasive communication style, so it is easy to imagine friction with the supervisor. During the meeting the person says that he/she might raise an allegation of sexual harassment against the supervisor since that seems like the only thing that will “get people’s

attention.” When asked why he/she thinks that sexual harassment has occurred, the response is that it really hasn’t, but it is one way to be heard.

#### DO YOU:

1. Acknowledge that the visitor has a right to raise an allegation and say no more about that option?  
**OR**
2. Point out that it seems like a bad strategy to launch a complaint with no basis for the complaint?  
**OR**
3. Encourage the visitor to follow that path as one of the remaining ways to prompt action?  
**OR**
4. Tell the visitor that it is unethical to make an accusation they know to be untrue?  
**OR**
5. Not comment on the statement at all and focus on other options.



# Choosing Business Leaders with Integrity

BY KENNY MOORE, OMBUDSMAN

**B**efore I came to work in corporate America, I spent 15 years in a monastic community as a Catholic priest. Actually the work's proven to be quite similar, only the pay's now a lot better. With all the recent scandals plaguing the business world, the question of integrity often arises: How can I tell if an executive is trustworthy? What are the signs to look for in promoting leaders in this new era of doubt and suspicion? With 20 years in the workplace, here's my litmus test for gauging executive credibility and trust.

## HOW DO THEY TREAT WAITERS?

Character is revealed by how we treat those with no power. Watch how executives act around folks who have a vulnerable stature in the community: waiters, secretaries and bathroom attendants. People who are powerless draw out our internal dispositions. No one watches how you treat those on the margins. If what we do when nobody's watching reveals character, start paying closer attention. Executive assessment has now become as plain as day.

If you can't join your corporate bosses for lunch, do the second best thing. Observe how they act around children. Johnny Carson never liked having kids on *The Tonight Show* because they stole the limelight and often got more

laughs. People who are focused on themselves and require absolute control and personal adoration don't mix well with children. So at the next company picnic, be vigilant about how your leaders respond to the kids in the crowd. It's more statistically significant than 360-degree feedback.

## CAN THEY PASS THE "CARL SANDBURG TEST"?

This Chicago poet was the champion of ordinary folks, the common men and women of the workplace. Pay attention to how executives relate to the folks who make up the rank and file of organizations. These are not your high potentials that get chauffeured away for Executive Development. They're the ones who do the chauffeuring or stay behind and get the work done. Corporate success resides in engaging their passion and commitment. Sam Walton's spirit must have plummeted when news reached Heaven about rogue Wal-Mart managers locking store doors and forcing their laborers to work unpaid overtime. I wonder if there's an Enron in the making somewhere in that corporate culture.

Look closely at how executives treat their daily laborers. Do they talk with them and invite them to any of their employee meetings? Do they have a personal relationship with a few and

know something about their families? It gives me hope when I see my leaders authentically relate to our entry-level workers. If it were up to me, Sandburg's "The People, Yes" would be required reading for climbing the corporate ladder. I believe most of the world would respond favorably to a C.E.O. who could quote poetry.

## WHAT'S THEIR "INTERIOR" BUSINESS CONVERSATION?

Part and parcel of business life is making decisions. Whenever I can, I listen for the hidden dialogue that's used in pondering and resolving ethical business issues. What goes into the executive's moral judgment-call? Is it only about profit, sales and career advancement? Is there any semblance of an "interior life" that exists within this business leader? Some consideration of purpose, meaning or legacy? Are there other facets being viewed: impact on the customer, the environment and the local community? Was some thought given to corporate values, ethical principles or (God forbid!) employees' feelings?

I still remember the day when I was hosting an executive meeting and we were informed that one of our managers had just died of cancer. As the President shared the news with

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**(Choosing Business Leaders with Integrity  
continued from page 7)**

the group, he then asked for a minute of silence for him and his family. Moments later, we composed ourselves and continued the meeting. This small gesture said volumes about how the executive viewed his workers and their contributions. I think that was the juncture where I fell in love with my company. Something inside me realized that corporations are truly human systems — they live, breathe and grow. And I decided that they're worthy of my affection. It's sort of like being with family. Not that I always like what they do, but I work at loving them just the same.

**DO THEY OCCASIONALLY  
SEE THEMSELVES AS PART  
OF THE PROBLEM?**

I've grown weary of hearing every C.E.O. who gets before the media, glibly announce: "We have no ethical problems in my company." Huh? If we've learned anything in these recent months — it's that all man-made systems are flawed and full of mistakes. As long as organizations are comprised of people, they're not going to be infallible institutions. This is something even the Catholic Church, experts on infallibility, have recently come to appreciate. The

revealing executive question is: "What is *your* contribution to the problem that you've come here to explain away?" If they see none, then we're in for trouble.

Not that I'm asking all executives to bare their corporate souls in public, but business leaders need to create the environment for surfacing flawed practices and taking decisive action. This line of thinking has a confessional aspect to it, and the priest in me likes it. I find that those who have the humility to acknowledge corporate shortcomings offer us some hope that business justice will eventually be served.

**CAN THEY MAKE THE  
WORKPLACE FRIENDLY  
FOR ARTISTS?**

My favorite definition of integrity is "... a firm adherence to moral and artistic values." The moral part of this discussion is obvious. The artistic side often gets lost in business. Executives can't rely solely on accountants and engineers to safeguard the integrity of our corporate institutions. We need artists to complement their efforts. They are the ones who have the language, mythology and requisite

skills for building the spiritual side of business. In large part, it is the voice of the artist that has remained silent during these corporate failures. It is they, however, who are the shamans of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Business and religious leaders have left us feeling violated and without hope. We need spokespeople for the Sacred and the True, which co-exists within the world of commerce. Our organizational charts long for those who can use word, color and brush to reveal that the world has become surprisingly small. That my individual action reverberates across the globe. Artists remind us that misdeeds done by a few can injure the many. Just as we look to our internal "adult" for moral direction, we should look externally to the poets, painters and mystics in our places of work to shore-up the frailty of the human condition in the marketplace. Like Walt Whitman of old, I believe that present day artists will usher in a new era of celebration in business ... revealing the sacredness of the human spirit, its vast potential for world good and its rectitude in the face of deceit and transgression.

It's a message of hope. The Corporate world could use more of it these days. I believe it's a legitimate demand to place upon our leaders. ●

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P.S. If you're thinking about writing me, give in to the temptation. I love getting mail ... and being influenced by what you have to say. Please e-mail me at [kennythemonk@yahoo.com](mailto:kennythemonk@yahoo.com). **Kenny Moore** is co-author of *The CEO and the Monk: One Company's Journey to Profit and Purpose* (John Wiley and Sons, 2004), rated as one of the top ten best selling business books on Amazon.com. He is Corporate Ombudsman at a New York City Fortune 500 energy company. Reporting to the CEO, he is primarily responsible for awakening joy, meaning and commitment in the workplace. While these efforts have largely been met with skepticism, he remains eternally optimistic of their future viability. Kenny can be reached at [kennythemonk@yahoo.com](mailto:kennythemonk@yahoo.com) or (973) 956-8210.

# Maryland Court Ombuds Q&A

BY MICHAEL EISNER, MICHAEL EISNER MEDIATION SERVICES



**E**d Modell, JD, ACC ("Associate Certified Coach" pictured left), was appointed on May 1, 2006 as the first Work-

place Ombuds for the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) of the State of Maryland. The Workplace Ombuds office is a one-year pilot program to evaluate its usefulness for the organization. Ed practiced law in Washington, DC for nearly 30 years before giving up his practice in 2002 for medical reasons. He has been conducting mediations for over 10 years and, in 2005, became an executive and life coach certified by the International Coach Federation (ICF). In 2006, Ed also served as President of the Metro DC Chapter of ICF.

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**Q: Why was the workplace ombuds office created for the Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) of the State of Maryland?**

**A:** The workplace ombuds office was created for two reasons. First, an outside consultant study of AOC personnel recommended its creation to improve the working environment. Second, and probably more importantly, the Chief Judge of Maryland, Robert Bell, has been a pioneer in a variety of creative alternative dispute resolution (ADR) processes and, without Chief Judge Bell's full support, the office probably would not exist.

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**Q: Who was involved in creating the office?**

**A:** The actual job description for the workplace ombuds position was the product of the AOC Conflict Management Committee, which includes representatives from all of the departments and units within AOC, together with officials of the Maryland Mediation and Conflict Resolution Office, which oversees and funds many of the ADR programs in the State of Maryland. It is my understanding that this group also consulted with Howard Gadlin, the head of the ombuds office at the National Institutes for Health (NIH), who has actually become a mentor to me in the process of establishing the AOC workplace ombuds position.

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**Q: How many and what types of employees may use your office?**

**A:** My office is available to the 300 or so employees at AOC. These are the people in Annapolis, Maryland who support the court system throughout the State of Maryland. About half of these employees work in Judicial Information Systems. The other half are in the HR, Procurement, Finance, Family Administration and Court Research & Development departments.

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**Q: Where do you report?**

**A:** I report directly and solely to Chief Judge Bell, with whom I have met several times when difficult issues have come up. I also meet quarterly with the AOC Conflict Management Committee to provide statistical information and to collaborate on ways to improve my services.

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**Q: What steps have you taken to publicize the office and its purpose to your constituency?**

**A:** Since it is a new position, I began asking for help on the IOA listserv to get samples of brochures and charters or terms of reference from other ombuds offices. I then tailored these to my specific situation. I began to publicize the office by attending the senior executive staff meeting in order to introduce myself to the heads of AOC and its departments, and to ask for their support for the pilot project. I then attended all of the smaller group staff meetings in the various departments, where I passed out brochures and discussed my role as an informal, voluntary and totally confidential resource to resolve workplace concerns, as well the limitations on my position (e.g., I am not authorized to accept formal notice for

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***(Maryland Court Ombuds  
continued from page 9)***

grievances or complaints). I was also invited to make a presentation at the AOC-wide stakeholders meeting, where I gave a short talk about active listening techniques. I periodically send out emails to all AOC employees to let them know when I am holding office hours in Annapolis and how to contact me to set up an appointment for a meeting.

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**Q: What challenges have you found in establishing the office?**

**A:** My greatest challenge, as I quite candidly told everyone I met at AOC, is to establish trust in my ability to keep all discussions absolutely confidential and that I could offer help whether through conflict coaching, one-on-one mediation or group facilitation processes. As in any organization that adds an ombuds position, there has been a healthy dose of skepticism that I can deliver on these promises. At my first meeting with a visitor, I give out a copy of the charter signed by Chief Judge Bell to show that I have his support for the confidentiality of the discussions. Hopefully, I have met these challenges during the first eight months of the pilot project.

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**Q: What are the most common types of issues brought to your attention?**

**A:** The most common issues have been difficulties in communication, primarily where employees need help figuring out how to discuss a touchy subject with their co-workers or managers. In these instances, I use my coach training to ask powerful

questions that enable the visitors to find the most positive and productive way to approach the issue. There have also been more serious issues brought to my attention, which I really cannot discuss for confidentiality reasons.

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**Q: How do most visitors contact your office (phone, email, office visit, off site meeting)?**

**A:** Since I do not have my own office during the pilot project, and the office I am using to meet visitors is located away from the AOC offices, most of the initial contacts with me have been by email and phone. In about half of the contacts, I have been able to help resolve the concern by discussion over the phone. In the other half of the contacts, I have met with the visitor for one or two sessions. I have also conducted mediations and meetings facilitations for some of the AOC employees who have come to me.

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**Q: How is the success of the office being measured?**

**A-** The success of the pilot project is being measured both quantitatively and qualitatively. In terms of numbers, I am reporting statistical information to Chief Judge Bell and the Conflict Management Committee. I have been told by another ombuds at a large university that roughly 5% of the population served can be expected to visit the ombuds each year. Percentage wise, we have already hit that figure in the first 8 months of our AOC pilot project.

We are measuring the success of the office qualitatively by evaluation forms that I developed with the help of the IOA listserv, and then in collaboration with the AOC Conflict Management Committee. I give the survey form along with a stamped envelope to all visitors, and ask them to complete the form anonymously and to send it to the chair of the Conflict Management Committee. Unfortunately, only a small percentage of visitors have actually completed and returned the survey form.

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**Q: What challenges do you envision in the future for the office?**

**A:** The next challenge will be to determine if the pilot project has been a success and the workplace ombuds position should be extended either for another year or indefinitely. This decision will be made by Chief Judge Bell with input from the AOC managers and the Conflict Management Committee. If the ombuds office is extended, and I certainly that hope it will be, there may be an effort to expand its scope to include the other 2,000 or so court employees who work for the District and Circuit Courts through the State of Maryland, and the courts of appeals located in Annapolis. Chief Judge Bell has expressed the desire to have one ombuds for one judiciary. The expansion of the office will have additional challenges in terms of geographic scope and serving six or seven times the number of employees served by the pilot project.

***(continued on page 11)***



*(Maryland Court Ombuds continued from page 10)*

**Q: What steps do you plan to take to meet these challenges?**

**A:** If the pilot project is extended and expanded\*, I would travel to the various courts throughout the State of Maryland to introduce myself and hopefully gain the trust of the many other employees whom I will serve. I believe that maintaining open lines of communication with managers and employees, and being accountable to do what I say I will do, are the best ways to make a workplace ombuds program a valuable and respected resource. ●

\*Editor's Note: The program has been extended with broader employee coverage. The specific details are still being worked out.

## Effectiveness Corner

BY JAN MORSE, EFFECTIVENESS SUBCOMMITTEE

An emerging trend in organizations, from college campuses to corporations is the marked shift from an emphasis on process to outcomes. Metrics and measurability in the form of "Scorecards" and other assessment tools have become key components as organizations move to a more non-linear, iterative model to accomplish goals and improve performance.

Ombuds Offices have a critical role to play in these processes and can help their organizations answer the questions "How are we doing, and how do we know?, Where are the problems?, and How can we do better?"

Aggregate data collected by the ombuds can help to inform the company of problems on the horizon and emerging trends and can help to monitor the effectiveness of these changes.

While for most of us the focus is most often on the individuals with whom we work every day, the collection and analysis of critical aspects of these cases can be an effective component of the feedback loop needed to improve the overall functioning of the institution. Providing demographic and trend information is essential to making that contribution to our organizations and is a core function of an Ombuds office. ●

*One of the goals of the Effectiveness Committee, (a standing subcommittee of the Ethics and Standards of Practice Committee), is to increase awareness of the importance of the Organizational Ombudsman measuring their "effectiveness". The "Effectiveness Corner" will be a regular feature of **The Independent Voice**, written by members of the committee.*

*Watch for information on gathering data, tracking trends, and making that information relevant to your organization. Learn from top leadership in member organizations what "effectiveness" means to them in terms of the role of their ombudsman.*

*Readers may submit ideas or questions for the "Effectiveness Corner." If you wish to become a member of the Effectiveness Committee please contact **Carolyn Noorbakhsh**, 303-275-3221 or email [Carolyn\\_noorbakhsh@nrel.gov](mailto:Carolyn_noorbakhsh@nrel.gov).*



# European Ombuds Group Meeting

BY KAREN CAMPBELL, REGIONAL OMBUDSPERSON, AMERICAN EXPRESS

There is a group of Ombuds in Europe who meet twice a year on an informal basis to share best practices and to openly discuss challenges and opportunities. There are typically around 8 Ombuds present from organisations across Europe who take turns hosting the meeting on their premises. Three of the Ombuds now form the IOA European Advisory Committee working with **John Barkat**. They are **Danielle Fischer-Lebailly** from Masterfoods, **Steve Cordery** from UTC and **Karen Campbell** from American Express. The general consensus is that this is a great networking opportunity for like minded individuals to get together informally, especially when our nearest Ombuds colleagues may be some 8 hours away and in a different time zone!

Our last meeting was held at Mars Chocolate Factory (part of Masterfoods) and **Danielle and Hans Nentjes** (also from Masterfoods) very kindly arranged for us to have a tour and even more importantly a taste of the wonderful confectionery made on the premises! The attendees at the last meeting were a mixture of Organisational Ombuds, a Classical Ombuds and some Ombuds who are not members of IOA.

One challenge we face in Europe is recruiting new Ombuds members, so any suggestions that anyone may have to boost our numbers will be gratefully received. At the last IOA Conference, we scoured the attendee list and are very pleased that we now have two new recruits who have joined us.

We began the meeting with an overview of Masterfoods Company and reviewed the minutes from the last meeting. We then undertook a group discussion to look at how we manage Ombudsmanry in our different organisations which was a very interesting exercise (we are always open to learning and trying something new!). I have included a summary of our findings below:

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS:

- Being an Ombudsman implies a fair amount of traveling within a country or across countries
- In international organisations, the Ombudsman team is made up of 4 to 5 Ombudsman, geographically organised; "Europe" typically includes Middle East and Africa
- The number of employees covered per Ombudsman varies a lot: from 7000 to 80, 000
- 'Dialogue' Administrators for "minor" issues is a way to cover huge populations and to overcome cultural and language issues (this is a model utilized by UTC who have selected local employees in the different businesses and countries to be first point of contact for employees to surface issues via the 'Dialogue' system.)
- The case load is around 3% of the population with extremes from 1% to 8%
- In the EOG, for 2 of us the Ombudsman role includes investigation and decision power: they are the

final stage after formal appeal process; for those operating as international Ombudsman in private businesses, the role is an influencing role: they are not or should not be the last resort

- Visits to sites are primarily driven by "demand" (number of people who raise issues or cases that need investigation) and also by potential "risk" identified by Ombudsman

After this discussion we donned our hard hats, ear protectors, goggles and white coats and toured the factory seeing how the fantastic chocolate bars and sweets are made from the raw material to the finished product (mmmmm.....I can still smell the chocolate now!). After lunch and yes some more chocolate we continued our meeting and discussed IOA and how this group can fulfill the role of the IOA European Advisory Committee and we prepared a response to **John Barkat** outlining this. Our next agenda item was sharing external and IOA training opportunities and providing feedback to the group. This has been a very useful initiative in the past with two of us completing a mediation course following the recommendation from a fellow European Ombuds.

Finally, we agreed we will be congregating at American Express in late March for our next meeting (a challenge to compete with all that

*(continued on page 13)*

*(European Ombuds  
continued from page 12)*

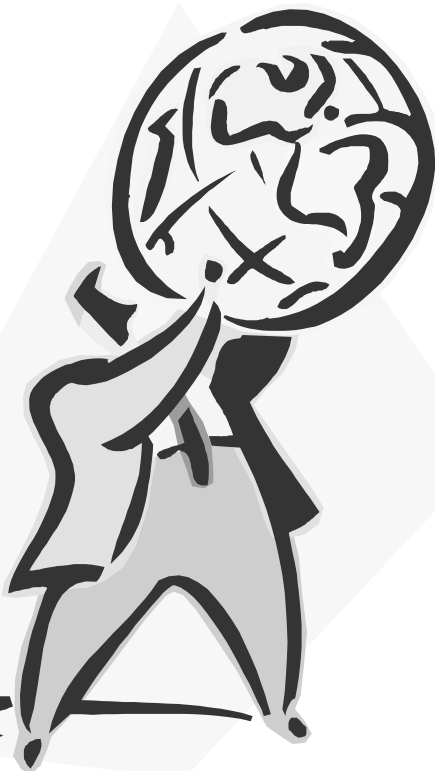
free chocolate from Masterfoods!)  
and said our good-byes after a very  
successful and enjoyable meeting! ●

This article gives you a flavor of the  
discussion points we like to share  
between us; if you want to know  
more about us and/or if you are  
interested in joining our European  
Ombudsman Group which also  
covers Africa and the Middle East,  
please don't hesitate to contact us by  
email and it will be a pleasure to  
provide you with any information  
you wish to have about our group.

**Karen.b.Campbell@aexp.com**

**danielle.fischer-lebailly@eu.  
effem.com**

**steven.cordery@utc.com**



## IOA COURSE OFFERINGS

### APRIL 2007

#### 2007 IOA Annual Conference

Adam's Mark Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri, USA

**Pre-Conference Courses**, Wednesday, April 11, 2007

**General Conference**, Thursday, April 12 to Saturday, April 14, 2007

*Please visit the IOA website for further conference details and to register.*

### JUNE 2007

African Development Bank, Tunis, Tunisia, Africa

1. **Ombudsman 101**, June 11 - 12, 2007
2. **Ombudsman Support Role**, June 13, 2007
3. **Ombudsing in the Field**, June 13, 2007
4. **Helping People Come Forward**, June 14, 2007

### JULY 2007

The Red Lion Hotel on Fifth Avenue, Seattle, Washington, USA

1. **Ombudsman 101**, July 16-18, 2007
2. **Ombudsman 101 PLUS**, July 18, 2007
3. **Specialized Course: Legal Issues in an Everyday Ombudsman Practice — Answers to the Questions You Have Always Wanted to Ask**, July 19, 2007
4. **Specialized Course: Defining Effectiveness for the Ombudsman Office**, July 20, 2007

### OCTOBER 2007

The Hilton Philadelphia, City Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA

1. **Ombudsman 101**, October 15-17, 2007
2. **Ombudsman 101 PLUS**, October 17, 2007
3. **Intermediate Workshop: Skills for the Experienced Ombudsman**, October 16-17, 2007
4. **Specialized Course: Drawing from Psychology: Theories of Solution Focused/Problem Solving Therapies**, October 18, 2007

# Welcome New Members

## MEMBERS

### **Palmira Campos**

Ombudsperson  
Dell Inc.  
Nashville, TN

### **Harold Gardner**

DTE Energy Company  
Detroit, MI

### **Luc Martin**

Ombudsman  
Parks Canada Agency  
Gatineau, Quebec, Canada

### **Kathryn Simmons**

Ombuds  
University of Wisconsin, Madison  
Madison, WI

### **Jane Voichick**

Ombuds  
University of Wisconsin  
Madison, WI

### **Margaret Watson**

Director  
Merrill Lynch  
New York, NY

### **Jane Bermont**

Ombuds  
Edwards Angell Palmer & Dodge  
Boston, MA

### **Nancy Deering**

Vice President  
Merrill Lynch  
New York, NY

### **John Fernandes**

Ombudsman  
County of Los Angeles  
Los Angeles, CA

### **Susan Park**

Ombuds Officer  
University of Hawaii at Manoa  
Honolulu, HI

### **Barbara Shogren Lies**

Ombudsperson  
Shogren Ombudsperson Services  
Riverside, CA

### **Hagai Tenenbaum-Erez**

Auditor General and Ombudsman  
State of Israel, Ministry of Transport  
Beitdagan, Israel

### **David Wells**

Lead Ombudsman  
Snap-on Incorporated  
Kenosha, WI

### **Tineke Willemsen**

Ombuds for Students  
Leiden University  
Leiden, Netherlands

### **Karla York**

Senior Management Analyst  
Florida Department of Revenue  
Tallahassee, FL

### **Isabel Calderon**

Ombudsman- Americas Region  
Mars, Inc.  
Hackettstown, NJ

### **Dennis DiPlacito**

Associate Ombudsman  
University of California, Irvine  
Irvine, CA

### **Bishop Buckley**

Senior Advisor on  
Workplace Harmony  
United States Agency for  
International Development  
Washington, DC

### **William King**

Ombudsperson  
University of Massachusetts,  
Dartmouth  
North Dartmouth, MA

## ASSOCIATE MEMBER

Liz Tomaszewski  
IS Supervisor/ Ombuds  
Worcester Polytechnic Institute  
Worcester, MO

## AFFILIATE MEMBERS

### **Amanda Shaffer**

Faculty Diversity Specialist  
Case Western Reserve University  
Cleveland, OH

### **Mary Margaret Biedermann**

President  
MB & Associates, Inc.  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

### **David Cowell**

Registered Representative  
Metlife Financial Service  
Santa Rosa, CA

### **Rachel Jones**

Attorney  
Heller Ehrman, LLP  
San Francisco, CA

### **John Schmidt**

Contract Ombuds  
John D. Schmidt  
St. Louis Park, MN

### **Jeremy Sussman**

Attorney  
Jeremy D. Sussman, Attorney  
New York, NY

### **Marcia Wilmot**

Mental Health Counselor  
Silver Spring, MD

### **Roy Forbes**

Director, HR & Employee Relations  
MGM Grand Detroit  
Detroit, MI

### **Joan Engel**

Ombuds Consultant  
Career Concepts, Inc.  
Plymouth Meeting, PA

### **John Gribas**

Faculty Ombudsman  
Idaho State University  
Pocatello, ID

### **Michael Zeytoonian**

Attorney and Counselor At Law  
Hutchings Barsamian  
Wellesley Hills, MA