



President's Message

Dear Fellow Public Administrator:

On behalf of the membership and council of the Delaware Association for Public Administration (DAPA), I'd like to thank you for your continual support and enthusiasm! Over the past year, we've reached out to a number of public administration professionals, higher education faculty and staff, and students through well-planned and successful programs that many of you have either attended and/or helped plan.

We're hoping to continue this trend and look forward to your participation in the coming year. Here are a few opportunities we have planned this fall:

- **Brown Bag Lunch Panel Session on October 12, 2009, 1:00 p.m. at the Composites Manufacturing Science Laboratory (Room 106/Conference Room)**
"Careers in Public Service," featuring University of Delaware School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy (SUAPP) alumni
- **Joint DAPA and SUAPP Event on November 11, 2009, 6:30 p.m. at the Roselle Center for the Arts, University of Delaware**
"University of Delaware Policy Institute," coordinated by Dan Rich, Professor of Public Policy in the College of Education & Public Policy at the University of Delaware
- **Annual DAPA Awards Dinner on December 3, 2009, 6:00 p.m. at the Embassy Suites, Newark**
DAPA will recognize the recipients of the 2009 DAPA Public Service Award and the 2009 DAPA Outstanding Student Public Service Award. Speaker TBD



Julia O'Hanlon
President

These events are intended to carry out our organizational mission of promoting public service and offering important networking opportunities, advice, and information to our members and those that are interested in public administration and related fields. As noted by ASPA President Paul Posner in his August 2009 letter, professional organizations like ASPA and DAPA provide important resources and perspectives for both students and professionals—particularly in these times of change and uncertainty.

As we begin our fall recruitment, we remind you to take advantage of these resources by renewing your membership to ASPA and/or DAPA for the 2010 calendar year. If you are not already a member, we hope you consider joining. ASPA members automatically become DAPA members, and ASPA offers discounted rates for students and new professionals. For additional membership information, please visit: www.aspanet.org or www.dapanet.org/join.html.

As a member, we anticipate your becoming active in DAPA through its various committees as well as opportunities to nominate and support public service leaders and students who are striving to make a difference in our communities here in Delaware. Two award winners will be announced at our Annual Awards Dinner on December 3rd: the **2009 DAPA Public Service Award** and the **DAPA Outstanding Student Public Service**



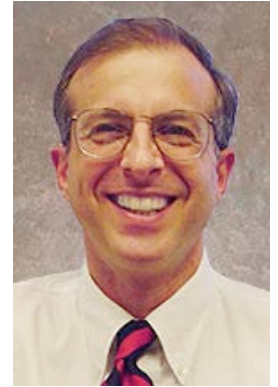
Award. If you have a candidate(s) in mind, we strongly encourage you to nominate and/or support them by visiting www.dapanet.org/awards.html.

If you have additional ideas for programs, events, or sponsorships, please feel free to contact me at jusmith@udel.edu or 302-831-6224. We look forward to your continued participation and interest in promoting public service here in Delaware.

Julia O'Hanlon, MPA
President

ASPA National Goings-on

I traveled to Washington, D.C., on September 12 for a meeting at ASPA's national headquarters. Prior to that, none of us had been aware that a large protest rally sponsored by the Tea Party Patriots and others was also scheduled for that day in D.C. The trains I rode in both directions were filled with people on their way to and then from the march. I noted on the return trip that the participants—post-protest—seemed to be talking more of their enthusiasm about participating in the event than of their loathing for politicians and bureaucrats. I still didn't try to tell them anything about my day, however. My day on September 12 included two items of interest here, and I presume you will be more interested in them than the Tea Party folks would have been.



First, ASPA's monthly newspaper, *PA Times*, has suffered a severe drop in advertising sales. It has thus gone from making a modest profit for ASPA to costing enough money (about \$30,000 a year) that it may be necessary to make dramatic changes in its format. This is likely to include reducing the number of issues per year and/or the paper's size and number of pages, in addition to ways to expand its online presence and look for additional revenues. As chairman of the paper's editorial board, I have convened a working group to study possibilities and make recommendations for the paper's reinvention.

We will be soliciting opinions from the national membership via a short survey sometime in the not-too-distant future. But for now, I would very much appreciate any comments from DAPA members: What do you most like about the current *PA Times*? What would you like to see more of, less of, or just different? How much do you value receiving a printed paper, and what electronic formats and features would be most valuable from your perspective? Please let me know your thoughts. Unsolicited advice is also welcome.

Second, some of you are aware that DAPA has been trying to get the national council of ASPA to approve a special status for us as a chapter of the national organization. ASPA does not allow chapters to offer chapter-only memberships. Instead, those interested in joining a chapter must join the national organization as well. DAPA currently gets around this by having two nominally distinct organizations—the Delaware chapter of ASPA, and an affiliated Delaware Association for Public Administration.

There is at least one precedent for ASPA to allow a special-interest *section* (the Association for Budgeting and Financial Management) to offer a section-only membership, and in late June we sent a letter to ASPA President Paul Posner requesting a similar dispensation for our chapter. I asked him about the status of our request while I was in D.C. on the 12th. One major concern he expressed is that it might cost ASPA members, if people selected the less costly DAPA-only membership over a full ASPA membership. Adding and retaining members is currently one of ASPA's top priorities as an organization. I was able to explain to him why I think the arrangement we proposed is unlikely to promote DAPA-only memberships (we explained this in our June letter as well), but he, nonetheless, expects that ASPA's leadership as a group will decline our request.

—by Jonathan Justice

Engaging the Next Generation of Public Servants

When you were six years old, what was your view of public servants? Did you even have an idea of what public service is?

This past spring, DAPA president Julia O’Hanlon and council member Kathy Wian, who both work at the University of Delaware’s Institute for Public Administration, partnered with a local elementary school on a project that would heighten young people’s awareness of the importance of public service in our society.

Having a germ of an idea of what could be done to help celebrate Public Service Recognition Week, O’Hanlon and Wian approached Newark, Del., first-grade teacher Jo Anne Deshon—wife of DAPA member Mark Deshon—to talk with her about collaborating on a lesson plan that would involve her John R. Downes Elementary School class and maybe serve as a model for the entire grade level school-wide or beyond. She quickly came up with a plan.

The concept was simple: Deshon would talk with her class about jobs grown-ups have, have them try to identify which jobs they felt were truly important or that benefited other people or that helped the world in some way, then each of the kids would write about a particular job from their own perspective and illustrate the page on which it would appear. Deshon decided to have the kids write their thoughts in the form of a “thank you” letter to a type of public servant. So the project integrated social studies, writing, and art.

“The kids were immediately enthusiastic!” Deshon said. “After brainstorming jobs from A to Z, they started choosing the jobs they most wanted to write about.”

Earth’s Best Jobs

public service workers help the world



Having borrowed the raw pages from what the class titled “Earth’s Best Jobs,” DAPA produced a small booklet and added the subtitle “public service workers help the world.”

At the May 6 meeting that DAPA co-sponsored with the University of Delaware’s School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy, the 28-page, full-color booklet was showcased to complement the meeting’s theme and accent Public Service Recognition Week. This meeting featured American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) President-Elect Paul Posner, who spoke about public service as being the “bedrock of American society.” DAPA had prepared a display for the event, which showed samples of the children’s artwork and a few copies of the finished booklet.

Deshon invited two of her students (left) to stand with the display and help answer questions during the opening reception.

Wian notes, “The booklet authored by Mrs. Deshon’s first-grade class far

exceeded our expectations. Participants enjoyed the opportunity to chat with her students and listen first-hand to their views about public service.”



A couple weeks later on behalf of DAPA, O’Hanlon (far right) and Wian (far left) visited Deshon’s classroom to present certificates of appreciation to the children, share with them the finished booklet, and give them a pizza party as a way of saying “thank you” for making this booklet such a hit.

O’Hanlon reflected on the visit. “During our visit with the class, the students were so excited to talk about what went into creating the booklet. Each one remembered his or her specific role in putting it together.” She went on to say, “This type of partnership is important to keeping future generations engaged and excited about public service and

aware of all the people who carry out important jobs within their community.”

Based on this project, O’Hanlon (right, with kids) has submitted a poster proposal for the next ASPA annual conference (to be held in March 2010). DAPA plans to make the booklets available for a small donation, the proceeds from which will support DAPA’s efforts to educate children about the importance of public service.

Deshon, who was interested in implementing this project in her classroom from the beginning, said, “The kids were so proud of the finished project and loved the attention they received from DAPA!”

Wian added, “I believe we all felt humbled and encouraged by these young citizens and left [the May event] feeling a little better about our work and little more hopeful about the future.”

— by Mark Deshon



Editor’s Note: If you are interested in a copy of “Earth’s Best Jobs” for a small donation to DAPA, contact Julia O’Hanlon.

Economic Stimulus and Broadband: Broadband Basics for Public Administrators

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) provides billions of reasons for public administrators to care about broadband. To be exact, congress appropriated \$7.2 billion of the stimulus package for expanding broadband access. As this money is invested, professionals in public and nonprofit settings will be relied upon to understand broadband's capabilities and the issues and opportunities relative to broadband deployment in their organization and community.

While the terms "broadband" and "high-speed Internet" are often used interchangeably, there is far from clear consensus on broadband's definition. Most parties agree that broadband is a fast, feature-rich, and multi-platform telecommunications solution. Broadband speeds range from about 15 times to several hundred times faster than dial-up Internet connections. The fast speeds and "always on" characteristics of broadband enable applications ranging from easily attaching large files to emails and reliably surfing banking and travel sites to quickly transferring medical images and streaming live video feeds. Digital Subscriber Line (DSL), cable, fiber to the premises (FTTP), satellite, and wireless fidelity (Wi-Fi) are examples of the platforms that provide broadband connections.



Major broadband policy issues relate to supply, demand, and measurement. Studies by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation (OECD) and the Pew Internet & American Life Project point to an undersupply of broadband infrastructure and service in the U.S. OECD consistently ranks the U.S. in the middle of the pack among its 30 member countries on statistics including the percent of households with broadband access and average advertised download speeds, while a 2009 Pew study reports that 46 percent of U.S. households in rural settings use broadband in the home compared to 67 percent of non-rural households. Particularly in low-density, rural areas, providers often say that they are unable to earn enough return on their investment to warrant service provision.

Demand and measurement also loom as key issues influencing the provision of broadband. Even if broadband service were universally available, the Pew Institute reports that a substantial portion of the population would not subscribe to broadband due to factors such as inability to pay and lack of interest in or knowledge of potential applications. Currently no complete map exists that measures the relative connectivity of areas across the U.S., making it difficult to track progress and target areas for investment.

Public administrators can play at least three key roles in furthering the deployment of broadband infrastructure and service. First, they can become educated about various broadband technologies and the opportunities that high-speed connections afford their organizations and communities. Next, public administrators can seek to collect and share information with the public about the current state of broadband services in the community.

Third, public administrators can play a leadership role in the regional expansion of broadband infrastructure and service by implementing applications that benefit their organizations. For instance, the May 2007 issue of *Governing Magazine* recounted the City of Corpus Christi, Texas's efforts to install and use a municipal Wi-Fi system that allows for remotely reading utility meters, streaming surveillance videos for public safety purposes, serving mobile employees with data on the go, and more. These investments pay off for governments by making operations more effective and efficient, and can provide the infrastructure and examples necessary to spark the expanded adoption and use of broadband by businesses and households.

In Delaware, work is underway to better understand the current state of broadband infrastructure and plan for expanding coverage and adoption. The Delaware Department of Technology and Information took the lead in preparing a proposal for ARRA funds to support broadband mapping, planning, and infrastructure improvements. Details on this proposal and all the proposals submitted nationwide can be found at www.broadbandusa.gov. In other statewide efforts, the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration published a "Broadband Opportunities for Sussex County" report that details many of the broadband topics public officials should understand (www.ipa.udel.edu/publications/SussexBroadband.pdf).

With three rounds of stimulus funding anticipated, and billions of dollars yet to spend, public administrators are bound to get better acquainted with broadband in coming months.

by Troy Mix

Teaching in the Shadow of Kilimanjaro

I asked Aron what he learned in school today. His response: "Nimecheza." (translation: "I played.") At first, I thought he didn't understand my Swahili. I then asked Tarimo, my host brother, to repeat my question to Aron. Tarimo did and then explained to me that the teacher only comes to Aron's class a few days a week because she has to split her time with the other classes. On the days that Aron doesn't have a teacher he just plays. He's only six years old. How is that possible? How does he learn without a teacher?
—journal entry, July 22, 2009

Aron's school story is not uncommon in Tanzania. There is an extreme shortage of teachers, especially in the public schools. This summer I had the honor and privilege of teaching at two schools in a rural community in Tanzania. It was by far the most rewarding experience I have had in my entire life.

As part of my Master of Public Administration degree requirement at the University of Delaware, I had to do an internship during the summer. I spoke with a fellow student in the School of Urban Affairs & Public Policy, and he gave me information about a nonprofit that he was in the process of starting. The organization, Volunteer Kilimanjaro, would host international volunteers and place them in various schools and nonprofit organizations in Tarakea, Tanzania (a rural community located in northeastern Tanzania, near the base of Mount Kilimanjaro). This experience sounded like a dream internship to me; I would be able to gain international, professional experience while making an impact on the lives of many.



My first placement was at a private elementary school. My responsibility was to evaluate the teaching methods and the school in its entirety. Many Tanzanian schools lack teachers with formal training, so the school director hoped for simple changes the teachers could make to improve their teaching. I was able to use skills I had learned from my graduate coursework and directly apply them to my project for the school. In the classrooms, I served primarily as a teacher's assistant because the school was fortunate enough to have teachers for every class.

The rest of my time was spent teaching English at a government high school. Similar to the situation with my neighbor Aron, the students at this school did not have a teacher for every class. I taught five classes of first- and second-year students, each a class of some 40 and 60 students. All of my students were still in the early stages of learning English, because, in their government schools, Swahili is the language of instruction for the elementary schools and English starts in high school. Even though I was only with them for a short time, they became more comfortable speaking and writing in English.

At both of my schools, the students were extremely passionate about education. They were excited to learn, which, in turn, made me extremely excited to teach. Each of my students taught me so much during my time spent with them. The experience instilled a passion in me; I truly know that I made a difference in these kids' lives during the few months I spent there. My experiences focused my desire to be of public service to others through research and teaching. My goal is to return after graduation to teach and develop formal methods to assist Tanzanian schools in improving the quality of education offered to their students, in the shadow of Kilimanjaro.

by Graceanna Enzinger

Collaborative Group Helps Towns Take Big Steps in Small State

Imagine that your state has only 57 municipalities. For some states, that might be a stretch even for a single county! Here in Delaware, where there is only one medium-sized city (Wilmington, pop. 73,000) and a few small cities, with the rest comprising small towns and villages, it has been more difficult to realize the potential of e-government across the board.

In 2000, when I came to work for the University of Delaware's Institute for Public Administration (IPA), one of my tasks at this public-service unit was to help move some of this state's local governments into the twenty-first century in terms of how they were serving their residents. With my background, this meant helping towns grasp the potential of the World-Wide Web in government-to-citizen interaction.

At the time, less than a third of Delaware's municipalities even had a presence on the Web—well below the national average. I began by making presentations at annual municipal league functions and offering an occasional seminar on the benefits of electronic government. Over several years, having had little success at getting the message across on a statewide scale, I came to understand that in a small state like Delaware, relationships are paramount. This notion became the basis for convening a new professional group.

One of the true advantages of a state whose length can be traveled in two hours is the facilitation of statewide meetings. My initial call to convene the Delaware Municipal Web Developers Group (MWDG) in October 2006 drew what would become a solid nucleus of 20-25 individuals representing municipalities of varying size from small hamlets to Wilmington. The group comprises a rich mix of positions and talents—town clerks, town managers, IT professionals, graphic designers, public relations professionals, finance officers, retiree volunteers, and a GIS expert. No one has to travel more than an hour in any direction to get to its meetings, which are held in Dover.



The meeting agenda always includes a speaker and individual website progress reports from constituents. These two elements alone provide for great discussion. The three-hour format has greatly facilitated learning, as it is common for questions that have emerged to be answered knowledgeably during the meeting. Towns take turns providing lunch, which gives members additional time to network before the formal meeting begins.

Three years later, 34 of the 43 municipalities that have a website and the three county governments are currently represented in the MWDG. IPA convenes this group (www.ipa.udel.edu/mwdg) quarterly and facilitates the securing of speakers, as directed by the group's steering committee. The state's Government Information Center, which has been responsible for national "Best of the Web" honors for its state portal, has also plays an important advisory/service role within the group.

The beauty of this group is that, through the simple networking, support, and education that happens at the meetings, it has helped accelerate the progress of *all* participant municipalities, big and small. Though it can't take complete credit, it is no accident that the number of Delaware municipalities with a local government Website has more than doubled within this decade. Moreover, local governments have begun to take this kind of service to its citizens more seriously and, in doing so, come up with a better digital interface with the public.



The Town of Bethany Beach, one of Delaware's foremost seaside resort communities, spent nearly three years planning and developing its site, including an initial survey of residents, many of whom live in the Washington, D.C., area in the off-season. The collaborative nature of the MWDG helped foster the process. Tracy Mulligan, who served as the town's communications committee chair during this process, put

it this way, "My attendance [at MWDG meetings] added an important dimension to our town's Website redevelopment project. I was able to bring back valuable information to the town manager and appropriate committees in several areas, including the expertise and assistance available through the state's Government Information Center, names and contacts of additional vendors that were useful when we developed our RFP, and an awareness of the need for specific Website policies authorized by the Town Council as well as examples of such policies."

"In addition," Mulligan says, "I had the benefit of seeing what other towns were doing and the Website issues they were encountering. Last, but not least, were the detailed comments about our Website project and the encouragement offered by the Institute for Public Administration. We had a better project experience and were able to develop a better product as a direct result of our involvement with the MWDG."

New members are continually being added, as towns hear about the group. The tiny Town of Ocean View, located just west of Bethany Beach, sent a representative a year ago for the first time. After the meeting, Ocean View's Finance Director Lee Brubaker commented, "I've been attending training/networking sessions for about 35 years, and yesterday's was one of the best. Even with the broad 'mix' of expertise and talents, all participants were involved and took away, I believe, new things to think about and helpful ideas. It was a productive three hours."

Even small towns in small states can do big things if people with similar agendas work together. It's been gratifying for me professionally to witness such progress. More than that, the way the MWDG blends collaboration and public service can be a model for others.

by Mark Deshon

Sussex County Budget Strategies During the Economic Downturn

Preparing the 2010 Sussex County annual budget was unlike most years. Compiling the 2010 county's balanced budget was exceptionally challenging, what seemed to be an almost impossible task. The budget committee comprising the County Administrator, Finance Director, Budget and Cost Manager, and the Director of Accounting needed to propose a budget that maintained the existing county services during the midst of a major economic downturn. Adding to the difficulty were the falling revenues of the housing industry (down \$2.2 million), the falling revenue of realty transfer tax (down \$5.2 million), a decrease of \$1.9 million in state funding for the Paramedics while not using appropriated reserves to balance the General Fund, which was \$2.6 million in FY 2009. These factors totaled a 22 percent projected decrease in General Fund Revenues.



The budget committee began the budget process in February 2009 by meeting with each department. When a department brought in its proposed budget, the committee took a careful look at the history of spending. Any discrepancy from what history showed and what was being proposed was addressed promptly at the meeting. Travel for training was cut to a minimum. Only training related to certification was kept in this budget. In addition, a contingency account was set up for capital purchases, such as computers and cars. No department was budgeted a capital-item replacement unless the item was broken. The contingency account would be used throughout the year to replace broken items only. Setting up a contingency account allows the County Administrator to have stricter control over what is being spent throughout the year. The committee felt if the item was placed in the department's budget, the department could spend the money a little more easily.

The next area where departments saw a decrease was in their staffing. Before an early-retirement offer was given, General Fund staffing decreased by 35 employees, representing an eight percent decrease from FY 2009. The decrease was created by not filling positions when staff resigned and by moving the accounting for 12 employees to the water and sewer budget. These employees' duties were primarily water- and sewer-related. With the changes noted plus an increase in contribution of \$40 a month per employee for health care, 25 out of 27 General Fund departments saw a decrease in their budget.

Another area of the budget that had to be reviewed was the county's grant-in-aid program. The committee found the best way to handle this situation was to make consistent cuts across the board. Fire companies and libraries saw an eight percent cut in their grant, whereas the other grants were cut in half. Without the obligation of contributing to the Open Space program in FY 2010, the grant-in-aid budget decreased \$2.5 million, or 25 percent.

Making multiple cuts, the budget committee still needed to look at the county's drying-up revenues. The committee did several things to increase revenues to close the deficit. More General Fund expenses were charged to the water and sewer districts, the reimbursement for which created \$550,000 revenue in the General Fund. For example, the personnel department was always funded entirely through the General Fund; however,

24 percent of the county's employees work in the water and sewer area. Also, Sheriff revenue was projected to increase by \$1 million. The Clerk of the Peace increased its fees. In addition, the committee proposed to receive reimbursements from the Pension Benefit Fund of \$1.4 million, which was the first time this had been done since the fund had been set up.

It can be easily seen that the 2010 Sussex County Annual Budget is a "baseline" budget, as stated by County Administrator Dave Baker during his presentation to County Council. The budget was cut 16 percent from FY 2009. Anticipating another tough budget preparation with 2011, the County Council offered an early-retirement option. As a result, 11 more employees retired on June 30, 2009. None of those positions have been filled. Throughout the year, the committee continues to look for ways to lessen government spending as revenues continue to decrease.

by Gina Jennings, Sussex County Council Director of Accounting

Public Administration and Private Education

When I began my graduate coursework, if asked whether I envisioned myself as an educator, I would have dismissed it without a thought. The reason I enrolled in the M.P.A. program at the University of Delaware revolved around my desire to enter public service and hope of working my way into the local political arena. Besides, I had no background in education and at that time had little aspiration to venture in that direction.

As graduation neared in the spring of 2003, however, my initial plan of transforming a Legislative Fellowship into a full-time position slowly faded into obscurity due to the economic climate and talk of the state's hiring freeze. Law school, an eventual goal of mine for years, looked more likely in the next few months than I had anticipated. Eager to add some real-world experience to my résumé, I contacted local schools and businesses in hope of securing any position while the economy rebounded. The initial results—so few opportunities—were more than humbling.

Through some twist of fate, Salesianum School, a private, Catholic, all-boys, secondary school in Wilmington, Del., offered me a position as an Assistant Principal and Director of Activities after a thorough interviewing process. At 24 years old, not only did I find myself teaching a sophomore World History class but also at the table with school administrators, trustees, and local community leaders. This job involved aspects of education, management, finance, program evaluation, and strategic planning. My M.P.A. degree may not have directly led me on this course, but it more than prepared me for what the job entailed.



The Director of Activities primarily oversees the extracurricular programs—basically, anything possible that occurs outside of the academic day. On a daily basis, I drew on skills and knowledge I learned from the M.P.A. program: managing budgets for more than 45 student clubs and activities, evaluating school programs and activities already in place and those proposed, and supervising and assessing school moderators using newly created measurable objectives. Furthermore, understanding the intricacies of courses such as management and decision-making, organizational management, and human resources aided me when revising the school's strategic plan and the Middle States' accreditation process.

As I reflect on my time spent in Graham Hall [at the University of Delaware], I owe my level of preparedness for school administration to the M.P.A. program. Although my position as an Assistant Principal at a private secondary school fell somewhat outside of the typical scope through which a public administration program aims, it demonstrates how durable and applicable the degree is.

After four years, I transitioned from school administration into teaching full-time, so I could begin to bring to fruition my goal of attending law school. I retained, now as a faculty moderator, a club that a former teacher and I had expanded a few years ago. This year our Minority Coalition has taken steps to reach out beyond the walls

of our school into a new initiative aimed at providing service to our local community, particularly to demographic groups that remain underrepresented at Salesianum. It is my expectation that my experience in the M.P.A. program will be as valuable now as ever.

by Frank Mieczkowski

Member Profile: Kyle Sonnenberg, Newark City Manager

When the Newark, Del., city manager retired from his position after 21 years of service, it presented a challenge and an opportunity, not only for the city but also for Kyle Sonnenberg, now a DAPA member.

Sonnenberg was chosen as the clear favorite from three final candidates to succeed Carl Luft as city manager and began in his new post on November 1, 2008.

Since receiving his Master of Public Administration degree from the University of Delaware, Sonnenberg had served for 28 years in a variety of municipal settings—from a large metropolitan city (Dallas, Tex.) to suburban (McKinney, Tex.) to more of a small retirement community (Southern Pines, N.C.) to a city largely comprising military families (Fayetteville, N.C.).



One of the things Sonnenberg likes about working in municipal administration is variety, so it seemed only natural to him *not* to seek a new job within a city of the same or similar community profile. “I always wanted to live in a university community,” he says. Having spent his whole career in the south, he adds, “Plus, I grew tired of the heat and humidity, and my parents live in Malvern, Pa.”

What excites him most about being a city manager are the possibilities to make a difference for people. “I’ve always had an interest in public issues. My father worked for a private corporation his whole career. That would not interest me at all! I value things that governments do. We’re impacting people’s daily lives, and that’s why I’m in this line of work.” Knowing what he does about the real need for committed public officials in this country, Sonnenberg wishes more citizens would get involved at this level of public service.

Not that being a city manager these days is a picnic—far from it. Like most other communities in this current recession, Newark faces huge fiscal challenges. But the biggest challenge he sees is more philosophical. “In general, I believe the biggest challenge is the disconnect [in the public’s mind] between the cost to provide services and the services they [the public] receive.”

Balancing resources and expenditures is becoming paramount. Sonnenberg insists that Newark’s resources are not keeping pace with the services the city is providing its residents. So, from his perspective as Newark’s city manager, he will be looking to place more emphasis on economic development and building up the tax base and less emphasis on the utility systems paying the bills.

Reflecting on his master’s program at Delaware, in which his concentration was Urban Management and Personnel Management, Sonnenberg said the most valuable course he took while here was a land-use law course. “Little did I know at the time that I’d be so involved in land use.” Grateful for the full University Fellowship he received to come here for his graduate degree, he credits several of his professors, including

DAPA members Jeff Raffel and Jerome Lewis, for the quality education. He fulfilled his internship requirement at the Philadelphia Zoo, a position that Lewis helped him secure.

Raffel says of Sonnenberg, “He was always a great student. He and another student were instrumental in helping us shape the management decision-making course [in the MPA curriculum].”

Sonnenberg has received three awards from the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) and received the University of Delaware College of Education & Public Policy’s Outstanding Alumni Award in 2003. He is a 1979 Phi Beta Kappa graduate of The College of William and Mary and graduated from the MPA program at the University of Delaware with a 4.0 GPA.

In addition to his membership in DAPA, Sonnenberg is a member of ICMA and the Congress for the New Urbanism, among others.

When not on the job, Sonnenberg has a variety of hobbies/interests, including mountain biking, stone sculpting, gardening, raising exotic birds, and traveling.

His wife Mary, who’s been involved in education, is now an assistant professor at the University of Delaware’s Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood. They have one son, Eric, who recently graduated *summa cum laude* from The College of William & Mary and is now in medical school at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

by Mark Deshon