

Community Services Reporter

... The Latest News on Community DD Services Across the Country

Nancy Thaler Named New NASDDDS Executive Director

The Board of Directors of the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services has named Nancy Thaler to replace Bob Gettings as the Association's Executive Director. A member of the Association's Board of Directors from 1995 to 2003 and President of the Board from 1999-2001, Ms. Thaler assumed her new duties as chief executive officer of the organization on March 1. Mr. Gettings will assist her during a four-month transition period before retiring on June 30.



family could afford. Government-administered services will, for many people, determine the extent to which they will actualize their potential and achieve even their most modest dreams. NASDDDS plays a very important role in supporting state agencies responsible for designing and administering large services systems and working with other national

groups to promote best practices. As a state director I experienced the benefits of membership in NASDDDS and I hope to maintain and expand on the extraordinary organization Bob Gettings has built over the past 35 years."

"I am honored that the members of the NASDDDS Board of Directors have selected me to serve as the Executive Director," Ms Thaler said. "I consider myself very lucky to be able to work at something I love and believe in. Government plays a significant role in the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities and their families. Their services and supports are not covered by insurance and the cost is far more than the average

Interest in DD Services. Ms. Thaler first became interested in developmental disabilities when she was an undergraduate in college. "I used to see children who lived in an institution walking in the town of Scranton, [Pennsylvania]" she said. "Right after graduation; I walked into that [same] institution and asked for a job. There was

(Nancy Thaler continued on page 7)

Inside This Issue...

Pennsylvania Mentors' Network Boosts Communication	2
Growth in Community Services to Continue Under Proposed California DDS Budget	3
Washington Study Group Recommends Consolidated Family Support Program	4
BUDGET BRIEFS: Florida, Montana, North Dakota	5
ANCOR Announces Recipients of 2007 Community Builder Awards	6
STATESIDE	8
RESOURCES	9

Pennsylvania Mentors' Network Boosts Communication

Oftentimes, the attempts of a person with disabilities to communicate are dismissed as an odd behavior or meaningless gesture. The problem usually lies, however, in not really understanding that person's mode of communication. The Communication Mentors' Network in Pennsylvania has been working for the past five years to teach others about assistive technology and alternative and augmentative communication in order to help those with disabilities to live more full and independent lives. They provide assessments of individuals' communication skills and offer strategies to help them be understood. The Communication Mentors' Network is a project of Networks for Training and Development Inc.

Rosa McAllister, Assistant Executive Director of Networks for Training and Development, tells the story of one fellow who frequently raised his arm, shook his hand, and was similarly ignored. Then someone figured out what he was really saying: "That thing over there – I want it, I want it now!" explained McAllister. "One of the premises we have come to is that everybody communicates and has varied ways of communicating. But all of us, even our most loving, well-meaning caregivers don't call it communication. We call it a 'behavior' or 'that's just the way he is.'"

The Communication Mentors' Network started in north-central Pennsylvania and is now active in seven counties. Over 100 mentors have graduated from the Network's nine-month course. "Some graduates return and rewrite their jobs entirely to incorporate their new means of teaching communication," McAllister explained, "Others serve to create a number of major policy changes in their organizations – including nonprofits and provider agencies." It's hard to measure the number of individuals positively impacted by each mentor's work and help after their graduation, but in total over 200 people have been helped in some way by the Communication Mentors' Network.

Many individuals needing mentors' help – guidance with assistive technology and communications training – had been turned down by other more traditional therapies and programs.

(*Mentors' Network* continued on page 9)

Community Services Reporter (CSR) is published monthly by the National Association of State Directors of Developmental Disabilities Services. *CSR* is supported in part by grants from the Administration on Developmental Disabilities (ADD) to the Institute on Community Integration/UAP, University of Minnesota and the Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts Boston. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of ADD. Subscription rates, one year, \$95. Address changes, subscription requests, and correspondence should be sent to NASDDDS, 113 Oronoco Street, Alexandria, VA 22314; Tel: (703) 683-4202; Fax: (703) 684-1395 or (703) 683-8773.

Executive Director Robert Gettings
Editor Kara LeBeau

Subscription Information

Name _____
Organization _____
Address _____

City _____
State _____ Zip _____
Tel _____
Fax _____
Email _____

Please sign me up for a one year subscription to:

Community Services Reporter \$95 _____
Perspectives \$95 _____
Combined Subscription \$145 _____

Copyright © 2007 by NASDDDS. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means (including, but not limited to: electronic, mechanical, photocopying, photographing, recording, or transferring via email to listservs, etc.) without prior written permission.

Growth in Community Services to Continue Under Proposed California DDS Budget

Over 200,000 children and adults with developmental disabilities are expected to receive services during the upcoming fiscal year under the budget which California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger presented to the state legislature on January 10.

The governor's FY 2007-08 budget for the state Department of Developmental Services (DDS) includes \$3.5 billion to purchase community services through a statewide network of 21 nonprofit regional centers, plus an additional half billion dollars to cover the costs of regional center operations. Once the cost of operating five state developmental centers and two satellite facilities (\$712 M) and central office operating costs (\$40 M) are included, the department's total proposed budget for FY 2007-08 totals \$4.3 billion.

Community Services. The governor's budget would continue the state's long-standing commitment to fully funding community DD services, as required under the provisions of the Lanterman Developmental Disabilities Act. This unique state law requires DDS to ensure that needed community services and supports are made available to all eligible children and adults with developmental disabilities in the state. These services are purchased through a statewide network of 21 regional centers operating under contract with DDS. The governor's budget projects a 4% growth in the regional centers' caseload during the upcoming fiscal year, with the total caseload increasing from 212,155 in FY 2006-07 to 220,600 in FY 2007-08. To cover this caseload growth and other requirements, the budget projects an 8.4% increase in purchase of services funds

(from \$2.8 billion in FY 2006-07 to \$3.0 billion in FY 2007-08).

The budget includes costs associated with a 75 cent-per-hour increase in the state's minimum wage, effective January 1, 2007 (from \$6.75 to \$7.50 per hour), plus an additional 50 cent increase in the minimum wage, effective January 1, 2008. These increases are

expected to raise operating costs within the state's DD service system by \$26.4 million in FY 2006-07 and \$71.4 million in FY 2007-08. Steps also are underway to increase federal Medicaid reimbursements for non-medical transportation costs within the state's DD service system.

State Developmental Centers. The number of residents served in state-operated developmental centers is projected to decline by 245 during FY 2007-08 (from 2,834 to 2,589). A majority of these placements (145) are expected to occur as part of the

completion of the state's multi-year plan to close Agnews Developmental Center by June 30, 2008. Funds to complete the closure plan are included in DDS' FY 2007-08 budget. The aggregate number of staff employed by state developmental centers is projected to decline by 368, or 4.8%, (from 2,834 to 2,589). Meanwhile, the aggregate DC operating budget will drop by 2.5% or \$18.4 million (from \$730.6 M to \$712.3 M).

FMI: To access a summary of DDS' FY 2007-08 proposed budget, go to the department's website (<http://www.dds.ca.gov>) and click on to "Governor's Budget" under the "Highlights" section. ■



Washington Study Group Recommends Consolidated Family Support Program

The Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD), a unit of the Washington Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), recently forwarded to the state legislature a plan for consolidating existing, state-funded family support programs. The plan, prepared by a stakeholders group organized by DDD officials, was submitted in response to a legislative directive issued during the 2006 session of the Washington legislature.

Background. Approximately two-thirds (67%) of the individuals receiving DDD-funded services (35,700 persons) live in the home of a family member. It should come as no surprise, therefore, that the general aim of the Division's family support program is to keep families intact by providing them with assistance in caring for their family member with a developmental disability.

DDD began to provide family support services in the 1970s. Over the succeeding three decades, several additional family support program authorities were enacted by the state legislature to address perceived needs at the time. Currently, the DDD family support program is composed of three separate authorities, each with its own eligibility criteria, program rules, and funding base. During FY 2005, 254 families received varying awards under the Traditional Family Support program, based on level of need. Payments under this program ranged from \$1,700 annually for low need families to \$15,400 for highest need families when Medicaid personal care payments (which some families also received) were not taken into account. A total of 621 families received \$1,500 annually under the Family Support Opportunity program in FY 2005, with 51 families eligible for a \$452 per month "serious need" supplement. Finally, the legislature created a Family Support Pilot program in FY 2006 that is intended to provide a flexible form of funding. A total of \$900,000 has been appropriated to fund this program during FY 2006 and \$1.6 million in FY 2007. In addition to these programs, DDD separately awards grants to cover one-time family emergencies and Community Services Grants that are intended to improve the capacity of local

communities to help families that are supporting individuals with developmental disabilities in their homes. Overall, the division spends about \$4.1 million (in state general revenue funds only) on family support services through these various program authorities.

During its 2006 session, the Washington Legislature included proviso language in the DSHS biennial appropriation measure directing DDD to recommend a strategy for integrating state-funded family support program. Division officials created a stakeholder group to assist in the preparation of a report to the legislature on this subject. It is important to note that the study mandate was limited to state-funded family support services and, consequently the resulting report does not encompass family services furnished through the state's four DD-related home and community-based waiver programs.

Findings and Recommendations. The division's report was filed with the legislature on November 1, 2006. It contains a series of findings and related recommendations for streamlining and improving the management of state-funded family support services. The current multiple program structure, the report concludes, creates confusion and fosters the ineffective use of available resources. With this finding as a backdrop, the report recommends that:

- The Traditional Family Support program, the Family Support Opportunity program, and the Family Support Pilot program be combined into a single FS program with a unified set of eligibility criteria, benefits, and program rules. One-time emergency service payments should be an integral part of the new, consolidated FS program.
- Enrollment in the new program should be prioritized based on family need, especially in view of the long waiting list of unserved families (estimated to include 9,875 families as of October 2006). Priority assignments should be based on a new, system-wide
(*Family Support Program* continued on page 5)



BUDGET BRIEFS...

Florida, Montana, North Dakota

FLORIDA. Florida's new Governor Charlie Crist recently released his budget recommendations for FY 2007-08 that includes \$119 million to cover the growing demand for waiver services through increased utilization from existing customers, and to provide waiver services to customers transitioning from the developmental services institutions.

Money has also been earmarked to take care of citizens with developmental disabilities that find themselves in extreme need due to a caretaker or housing crisis. Over \$7 million will be used to care for 500 new crisis customers in the upcoming year and another \$6.7 million will pay for the crisis customers that will enter the program this year.

Also, the proposed budget provides \$6.6 million to allow the agency to serve more people in its Mentally Retarded Defendant Program.

MONTANA. Montana Governor Brian Schweitzer is proposing a \$35 million – or 21% – increase for developmental disability services and supports programs for the next biannual budget. The governor's budget

(Family Support Program continued from page 4)

- needs assessment instrument which DDD is currently developing in response to an earlier mandate by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee.
- Family income for children and personal income for adults should be a factor taken into account in determining eligibility for the new FS program.
 - The division should develop rules governing the reallocation of unspent funds to avoid having scarce dollars return to the state treasury (as sometimes occurs under current policy).
 - The division should initiate a major outreach effort and training program to ensure that families and direct contact workers (e.g., case managers) understand the benefits available through the restructured

includes \$11 million to reduce the waiting lists for services by 50 to 100 people, local newspapers said, and an \$18 million increase over the next two years to provider agencies to increase direct support workers' pay.

NORTH DAKOTA. In his budget proposal for fiscal years 2007-2009, Governor Hoeven also proposed increasing funds for direct support workers by giving them about a 60-cent-per-hour wage increase. The total amount of state funds he is proposing for DD services is about \$119 million – more than \$25 million more than the 2005-2007 biannual budget.

Both Montana and North Dakota must allocate more state funds to cover decreases in federal funds for Medicaid reimbursements per new lower Federal Medical Assistance Percentage rates.

FMI: To review the proposed budget for **Montana's** Disabilities Services Division, click on <http://www.dphhs.mt.gov/dsd/ddp/governorsbudget.PDF>. To read the proposed budget for **North Dakota** DD services, see http://www.thearcupervalley.org/DHS_-_DD_analysis_by_LC_1-7-07.pdf. ■

FS program and how the program is managed.

- The report contains a recommended structure for the new, consolidated FS program. Benefits would fall into four payment ranges, beginning at \$2,000 per year for families with moderate needs and topping out at \$6,000 per year for families with "severe" needs. Families supporting both children and adults would be eligible to participate in the new program. The division also has a request pending for additional state family support funding in FY 2008 and FY 2009.

FMI: A copy of DDD's report on "State-Funded Family Support Programs" can be downloaded from the division's website at <http://www1.dshs.wa.gov/ddd/index.shtml>. Simply click the link at the upper right-hand corner of DDD's homepage. ■

ANCOR Announces Recipients of 2007 Community Builder Awards

The ANCOR Foundation recently announced the 2007 recipients of its Community Builder Award: Options Day Service Program of Lenexa, Kansas, and Region Ten Quality Assurance Commission of Rochester, Minnesota. The award recognizes exemplary and praiseworthy initiatives and programs that create inclusive communities and meaningful opportunities for people with disabilities. The recipients of the Community Builder Awards are selected annually from peer nominated organizations who have taken the lead and achieved notable success in building communities of inclusion for all.

The Options Day Service Program receives the award in the provider category for implementing a creative day service program that fosters community inclusion. The program effectively connects 30 participants with meaningful volunteer, cultural, and advocacy opportunities throughout Lenexa and in other parts of the state. The hallmark of the program is its emphasis on the individual and enabling participants to choose when and where they would like to spend their time. This has not only helped consumers develop self-confidence, but has diversified and expanded the social circle of all members of the community.

Participants choose from a variety of activities every day. For those interested in volunteering, opportunities to spend time at the Humane Society, Meals on Wheels, and other local organizations are available. For those wanting to learn more about the world around them, individuals may go on field trips and attend outings at local factories or other places of interest.

For those seeking to get involved with advocacy and outreach, individuals have the opportunity to meet with other self-advocates and discuss important issues. There

are also choices that build self-confidence, address key political issues, and offer opportunities to meet with state legislators.

The Region Ten Quality Assurance Commission receives the award in the community category. With little funding and a grassroots approach to effecting change, the Commission has engaged a broad range of community members (government, advocates, service providers, family members, service users) as participants and partners in improving services and supports for community members with disabilities.

Based on the successes of and interest in the Region Ten model, the Minnesota Legislature requested a study and recommendations on the feasibility and potential expansion of regional quality assurance models throughout Minnesota. The Commission has further received recognition and promotion as an innovative model of community support by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, the Minnesota Department of Human Services, and other state and national organizations.

Through its Community Builder Award national recognition, the ANCOR Foundation hopes to further its vision of inclusive communities for all by showcasing vibrant and successful inclusion strategies and models from both the service provider community and the community at large.

The awards will be presented at ANCOR's Annual 2007 Management Practices Conference on March 25 in San Diego.

FMI: To learn more about ANCOR and its programs, visit <http://www.ancor.org/foundation/index.html>. ■



ANCORFoundation
INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES FOR ALL

703-535-7850

www.ancor.org/foundation.htm

ancor@ancor.org

(*Nancy Thaler* continued from page 1)

something beautiful about those kids that drew me to them.” With that inspiration, Ms. Thaler began her career in 1971, when the idea of moving people from institutions to the community was just taking off.

After working as a direct care worker in private institutions, she and her husband opened a group home for six children with developmental disabilities, three of whom were residents of Pennhurst Center, a state institution which was under litigation and would later close. She then followed the career path of many in the field – working in a variety of supervisory and administrative capacities with Ken Crest Services, a nonprofit community service agency in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

State Government Service. For 10 years, Ms. Thaler served as Deputy Secretary for Mental Retardation in the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare. Major strides were made in downsizing and closing six large state-operated centers and expanding home- and community-based services during her 16-year tenure with the department (including six years as director of the Office of Mental Retardation’s Bureau of Community Services).

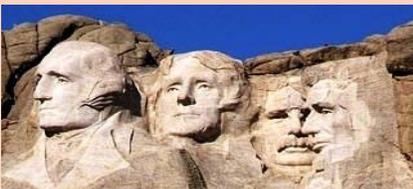
“My most satisfying work experience was in state government serving under a governor and a cabinet secretary who understood and supported the program and with a team of staff in the Pennsylvania Office of Mental Retardation that was just the best,” she explains. “WORKING AS A TEAM [her emphasis], we expanded the community system and strengthened the infrastructure so

that people on the waiting list and people leaving state institutions could not only get community services, but could have a good life too.”

Federal Government and Current Work. After leaving Pennsylvania State Government in 2003, she served for two and a half years as the Director of Quality Improvement Strategies with the Disabled and Elderly Health Programs Group within the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). In this capacity, she played a crucial role in the development of a new Medicaid home and community-based waiver application process and in articulating the components of a comprehensive statewide quality management system for home and community-based services.

Ms. Thaler is currently Vice President of Liberty Healthcare Corporation, a firm based near Philadelphia that specializes in assisting public sector agencies in designing, staffing, and managing a wide range of public programs serving people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, those with behavioral health needs and individuals in the criminal justice system. She holds a Master’s degree in Public Administration from Villanova University and a Bachelor’s degree from Misericordia College.

Ms. Thaler (née Kuzma) is a Pennsylvania native and resides in Tunkhannock, Pennsylvania, with her husband, Karl. As parents of a son with disabilities, she and her husband have experienced the positive impact a strong community service system can have on the lives of people and their families. ■



**NASDDDS
2007 Mid-Year Meeting
May 9-11, 2007
Holiday Inn Rushmore Plaza
Rapid City, South Dakota**

Preparing the Workforce — the Next Generation and Beyond

Break-out sessions will focus on three themes:
Building a Direct Support Workforce; Leadership;
and Managing a Nontraditional Workforce.

Additional information will soon be available from the NASDDDS website
<http://www.nasddds.org>

- STATESIDE -

New York Governor Announces OMRDD Director

Nomination. New York Governor Eliot Spitzer and Lieutenant Governor David Paterson announced January 18 the nomination of Diana Jones Ritter to serve as Commissioner of the Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD).

They also announced the nomination of Richard F. Daines, MD, President and Chief Executive Officer of St. Luke's-Roosevelt Hospital Center in New York City, to serve as Commissioner of the Department of Health.

Diana Jones Ritter has served as the Executive Deputy Comptroller in the New York

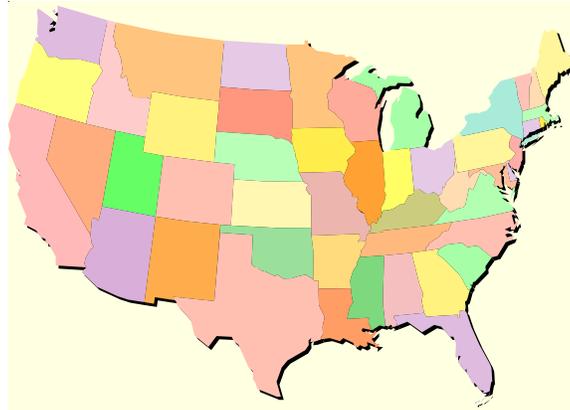
State Office of the State Comptroller since 2003. While there, she served in a number of capacities, including Deputy Comptroller in the Division of Administration from 2001 to 2002, Assistant Deputy Comptroller in the Division of Management Audit and State Financial Services from 1995 to 2001, and as Executive Deputy Director in the Office of Public Health from 1993 to 1995. Previously, Ms. Ritter was the Associate Commissioner of Administration and Quality Executive in the New York State Office of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities from 1990 to 1993. She received her B.S. degree from Morgan State University. Both nominations must be approved by the state Senate.

FMI: To learn more about the New York OMRDD, visit <http://www.omr.state.ny.us>.

Agency Name Changes on the Horizon?

Massachusetts State Representative Michael Costello has taken a unique approach to getting support for his bill to change the name of the state's Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) to the Department of Developmental Services (DDS). He launched a video, "Labels are for Jars Only," from his website that features numerous self-advocates explaining why the

current DMR name is degrading and offensive and needs to be changed. Representative Costello will introduce the name-change bill to the state legislature next week. Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong (MASS), an organization of self-advocates with cognitive and developmental disabilities, is one of the bill's sponsors.



Is Ohio next? The director of Ohio's Association of County Boards of Mental Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OACBMRDD), Dan Ohler, is urging Ohio's new governor, Ted Strickland, to drop "mental retardation" from the state agency's name: the Ohio Department of Mental

Retardation and Developmental Disabilities (OMRDD), a local newspaper reported.

OACBMRDD is considering making the same change for its name this year, and three Developmental Disabilities county boards in Ohio – Delaware, Fulton, and Washington – have already dropped the pejorative "mental retardation" from their board names. A fourth, Union County, is considering the change. Proponents of the state and county board name changes, local newspapers say, feel the term "mental retardation" is "redundant and degrading."

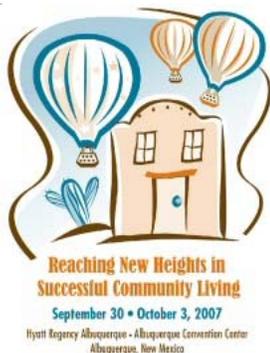
OMRDD is responsible for the regulatory oversight of the state's 88 MR/DD county boards and provides training and technical assistance through the support of regional consultants; ensures quality of care; and credentials County Board employees through the registration and certification process.

FMI: Massachusetts: To view the video, "Labels are for Jars Only," go to <http://www.mikecostello.org>. To learn more about MASS, visit <http://www.massadvocatesstandingstrong.org/home.php>. **Ohio:** To see what's new at OMRDD, go to <http://odmrdd.state.oh.us>. ■

- RESOURCES -

The 23rd National HCBS Conference. *Reaching New Heights in Successful Community Living*, the 23rd National Home and Community Based Services Conference, takes place September 30 - October 3, 2007 in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

The National Association of State Units on Aging and the New Mexico Aging and Long Term Care Services Department are pleased to announce "Reaching New Heights in Successful Community Living," the 23rd convening of the National Home and Community Based Services Conference.



This conference is designed for a broad range of professionals who administer and operate HCBS programs at the national, state, and local levels. Attendees include administrators and direct service staff of government, nonprofit, healthcare, and long-term care organizations, as well as policymakers, researchers, educators, and social service providers. The last day of this year's conference, October 3, will

(Mentors' Network continued from page 2)

The Network works with individuals and various agencies, schools, and places of employment to create capacity. "We're blurring lines across agencies to build a local network," McAllister explained. "And even across counties, we're helping to establish networks in north-central Pennsylvania across three counties and in southeast Pennsylvania across four counties – we're getting people to work across agencies and across counties."

Mentoring activities include Communication Clinic Days when mentors can come and bring people or others can come and work with them. But there's one notable difference, McAllister says, "we're not speech and language pathologists – even though some mentors may be in those professions. We don't just work with the person needing services, we work with the person and all of their supporters – all their teams, because we're not going to

feature joint programming with the 2007 Southwest Conference on Disability.

FMI: Proposals for workshops, open forums, poster sessions, and pre-conference intensives are currently being accepted. To find out more about submitting a proposal online, being an exhibitor, and/or registering to attend, visit the conference website at <http://www.nasua.org/waiverconference/>.

New Tool Helps States Calculate Benefits of Direct Support Worker Programs. The Paraprofessional Institute recently released an online calculator that allows states to calculate the impact of their investments in developing their direct support providers through pay increases, training, and other initiatives.



For over a decade, the Institute has been working to promote improvements in wages, benefits, and training opportunities for direct support workers serving elders and others with disabilities.

FMI: Access the new tool by clicking on <http://www.directcareclearinghouse.org/roi/index.html>. ■

be there the next day or night if they have something important to say."

Offices set up for mentors serve many purposes – as a meeting place and a lending library, for example. "This is a space where mentors can come to learn and come together to do assessments," McAllister explains. In many instances, the offices serve as a type of community center.

Similar projects are being discussed and/or replicated in Los Angeles, New York, and in Virginia and Vermont.

FMI: To learn more about the Communication Mentors' Network and the Networks for Training and Development, see <http://www.networksfortraining.org>. For further questions, contact Rosa McAllister at 610-935-6627 or rosam@networksfortraining.org. ■