



### Texas PRIMA Conference a Super(hero) Success:

A host of Superheroes ascended to the Woodlands Texas for another successful Texas PRIMA annual conference. All in all, a total of 480 individuals attended the conference.

As always, we are grateful for our sponsors and corporate members who continue to provide a wealth of information and support to make our conference affordable and beneficial for all.

A conference just doesn't happen and it takes a host of volunteers to make it a success. First and foremost, the purpose of our conference is education so a huge THANKS goes to Regan Rychetsky, this year's conference education chair, and his committee. Without a wide variety of topics and great speakers, our conference is...well just a lot of fun! Speaking of which, the Conference Planning Committee (allegedly chaired by yours truly) worked hard to plan and coordinate events such as the golf tournament, opening night reception, awards luncheon, and other conference activities.

I know that naming names is always dangerous since *many* will be left out, but I have to express another huge THANKS to Y.Etta McCutcheon, who led her committee to make decorations for many conference activities. Donna James-Spruce volunteered...ok was *strong armed* into coordinating much of the opening night reception, and Scott Payne kept us all on task and made sure we didn't miss any details. For all the other "unsung" heroes on the conference planning committee...please know that I and all of us at Texas PRIMA thank you for your tireless efforts!

Ok....now that this year's conference is over....it's not too soon to plan for Galveston! Stay tuned and we will see you there if not before!

*Submitted by David Kester*

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## A Message From The President



*Melissa Sullinger*

Wow! What a year! With just days to go as Texas PRIMA President, it is fun to reflect on 2008. There were plenty of good times and a few challenging moments, too. We have accomplished so much this year for the membership.

2008 was a great year for us. Due to the combined efforts of our members and supporters, Texas PRIMA was able to put on timely and informative training sessions both within our Regions and at the annual conference in The Woodlands. Both the regional planning committee and the conference planning committee did exceptional jobs with these programs.

The annual conference was a delight this year--I will not go into a lot of details but it was absolutely super. On behalf of the Board, I offer a special thank you to the sponsors and exhibitors for providing a theme-orientated exhibit hall for all superheroes to enjoy. The success of our organization is due to the combined efforts of members, volunteers, corporate sponsors and exhibitors, plus a dedicated Board. This was very evident this year. I would like to extend my many thanks for all of your contributions in 2008.

In my first newsletter article this year, I wrote "Perfection is achieved in few people because there are very few of us that are perfect. But as long as you do the best you can possibly do in an ethical manner with your integrity in tact, then you have come as close to perfection and greatness as a human can." I sincerely feel that you as a member and your 2008 Board can look back on this year and see all of the greatness and perfection that we have accomplished together.

Lastly, I would like to welcome our newest Board member, Bill Tarro, to the 2009 Board of Directors. Let's look forward to another great year in 2009.

*From Melissa Sullinger, President-Texas PRIMA*

## 2008 Texas PRIMA Conference - Educational Sessions

This year was another terrific conference at a great venue. The Woodlands proved to have it all from great facilities to close eating and entertainment. The educational sessions were well attended. The main purpose of the Texas PRIMA Conference is to provide a wide array of educational sessions that not only address current issues in the areas of insurance, risk management, safety and workers' compensation, but also covers the basics for colleagues new to the field.

Each year we request potential speakers to submit their proposals for the scheduled sessions, and each year it is hard to narrow the proposals to those who will present at conference. I want to say THANK YOU to all who submitted terrific proposals. It was very difficult to narrow the field this year.

The conference sessions on Wednesday afternoon were well attended, even by those who played in the annual golf tournament. Some of the golf tournament participants were also speakers on Wednesday afternoon, so our schedules were pretty tight.

The agenda was strong starting with Jim Olson, our phenomenal keynote speaker, to the 26 educational sessions and to Dr. Richard Lewis, our closing speaker. Texas Chapter PRIMA strives to provide our members with educational opportunities to challenge their intellect and stimulate thinking out of the box and look for ways to improve their respective programs.

Texas PRIMA is always looking to improve the annual conference, so please do not hesitate to forward your suggestions regarding educational topics for next year's conference. Also, please use Texas PRIMA Conference and Regional Meetings as an opportunity to share your knowledge, experience, and lessons learned with your colleagues.

*By Regan J. Rychetsky*

## Award Winners



Left to right: Melissa Sullinger, Regan J. Rychetsky, James Parker, Barbara Russell, Gary Urban, Dan Mansour

Recognition becomes more than awareness that something has occurred when an event or person is set apart for their accomplishments. That has been the case for members of Texas Chapter PRIMA who have been recognized for their accomplishments. But that level of recognition only occurs when someone takes the time to submit an application nominating the person or program for the award. Without that effort on our members' part, our awards program could not meet the stature of the Texas Chapter PRIMA Awards Program that it now enjoys.

During the course of your daily work, if you become aware your entity or another entity has a successful program or policy, take a moment to complete an application to nominate that entity for an achievement award. You can nominate more than one entity. So don't be concerned if you submit an early application that it may preclude nominating another nomination later. The same holds true for the Risk Manager of the Year and Risk Management Associate of the Year awards. Go to the Texas Chapter PRIMA website and click on the link to access the application forms.

And congratulations to our Texas Chapter PRIMA 2008 award winners.

*Submitted by Dan Mansour, Awards Program Chair*

### To Joey Page from your friends at Texas PRIMA:

“Thank you for all you have done for Texas Chapter PRIMA and the field of Risk Management. Enjoy your retirement.”



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## **Risk Management Achievement Awards**

### **Workplace Violence & Training Program:**

Texas Health and Human Services Commission

Workplace violence is becoming more prevalent, and may be precipitated by internal as well as external elements. The Texas Health and Human Services Commission Risk Management Department developed their Workplace Violence and Training Program in a proactive effort to protect workers, visitors, and clients from violence occurring at the workplace. The program encompasses not only an educational and training component, but engages resources for prevention and control while embracing the key elements of risk management: assessment, prevention, control, and involves both fiscal and community resources.

### **“Promote Safety” Program:**

Rockwall I.S.D.

To create a safer working environment for students and employees, Rockwall ISD developed a “Promote Safety” Program. Safety coordinators from all campuses and departments now attend creatively themed meetings, coordinated to promote specific safety topics in clever (and memorable) ways. In October 2008, popcorn was served while attendees watched “Three Stooges” video clips that emphasized the trio’s lack of safety practices and the monthly Safety Spotlight was entitled “Don’t Let Accidents ‘Pop Up’”. Since the program’s January 2003 implementation, injuries have decreased and there has been a tremendous increase in safety awareness. Safety coordinators often comment, “This is the best and most fun meeting that I attend!”

### **Livewell Health & Wellness Program - Enterprise Risk Management:**

DFW International Airport Board

Over the last several years, DFW Airport Risk Management has led the development of two tangible initiatives, LiveWell and Enterprise Risk Management (ERM), designed to connect the human and operational components of risk, while also enhancing awareness, assessment, and employee commitment. While the two initiatives are distinct, the implementation of both programs has resulted in a culture of active engagement. LiveWell has led to corporate-wide assessment of employee productivity, health and disability; while the introduction of a formalized ERM framework provided a collaborative management tool for evaluating organizational risks, governance, transparency, and strategic business decisions.

## Risk Manager of the Year - Gary J. Urban



Texas PRIMA's 2008 Risk Manager of the Year, **Gary Urban**, brings a unique perspective to risk management developed from a varied career and job assignments. He has been associated with city government since August 1992 — first with the City of San Antonio and, since 2002, as the Director of Risk Management for the City of Waco. Urban has applied his experience and training to develop risk management systems that track everything from driver's license verifications to certificates of insurance that improved the efficiency and functionality of his department. Urban has organized city departments into an effective safety committee that has reduced loss exposure through awareness programs in accident prevention.

During his tenure at the City of Waco, Urban has applied his training and experience from his past careers to develop programs and training that reduce or eliminate loss exposures. He consistently applies risk management techniques that save taxpayers money, while creating a safe work environment for the city's employees. Urban supports and mentors other risk managers as well as supporting Texas PRIMA as a past officer and Board member. Recently, he took the lead to revise the Chapter's bylaws.

Prior to entering the world of risk management, Urban completed a career of more than 25 years with the U.S. Air Force. He began his service as an Air Intelligence Technician and had tours of duty in Texas, Nebraska, and Alaska, in addition to two years in Vietnam.

Urban's other accomplishments include a B.A. in Geography/History from the University of Nebraska; and an M.A. in Public Administration from Webster University. He earned the Associate in Risk Management (IIA-ARM) designation; and is a Licensed Risk Manager in the State of Texas. Urban received the Texas PRIMA Chapter Service Award in June 2008.

## Risk Management Associate of the Year - Barbara Russell

Texas PRIMA's 2008 Risk Management Associate of the Year, **Barbara Russell**, has been with the risk management team at the Garland Independent School District (Garland ISD) since September 2001.

Garland ISD has approximately 7,500 employees and is the largest employer in the City of Garland. Employee safety is always at the forefront of this risk management department. One of Russell's top priorities is the safety of approximately 400 commercially licensed drivers that transport about 17,000 students twice a day. Garland has a fleet of 660 vehicles of which 282 are school buses.

The programs that Russell has put in place include continuing safety meetings with drivers, accident remediation training, and working within the district and city to create safer traffic conditions. Due to these programs, accidents have decreased appreciably and an increased awareness has been placed on accident prevention.

Russell is also responsible for insuring that the district is in compliance with the U.S. Department of Transportation regulations. Besides the fleet safety responsibilities, Russell works with the safety specialist and the workers' compensation specialist at Garland ISD to provide a safer workplace for their employees.

Russell was a legal assistant for five years and before that a claims adjuster for five years. She has a property and casualty adjuster's license and received her Associate in Risk Management designation in May 2007.



# 2008 Texas PRIMA Golf Tournament

We had a “Chamber of Commerce Day” for the tournament this year. I do not believe we could have scripted a better day. We now place this tournament in the annals of Texas PRIMA history, and it was a great one! The Panther Trails Golf Club was in great shape; the staff was very personable; beverage service was super; and the scores were low. November golf can be unpredictable in Texas, simply because it can be 75 degrees one day and 45 degrees the next with the wind blowing at 15 to 20 knots (remember Austin in 2005).

We want to thank Texas PRIMA Platinum Sponsors: JI Companies; CIGNA; McGriff, Seibels and Williams; and AS&G Claims Administration for generous contributions to make this tournament a success. Without their support, the tournament would not be as successful or as much fun.

Congratulations and thank you to everyone who participated in the Conference Golf Tournament as either a player or volunteer.

*Submitted by Regan J. Rychetsky, Golf Chair*

## THE 2008 TEXAS PRIMA GOLF TOURNAMENT TEAM WINNERS:



**1<sup>st</sup> Place:** Mark Barta, Archie Kountz, Parker Chambers



**2<sup>nd</sup> Place:** Travis Brashear, Shain Carrizal, Keith Alberts



**3<sup>rd</sup> Place:** Bruce Norvell, Derrick Brown, Marvin Townsend



**Closest to the Pin – Men:**  
Archie Kountz

## INDIVIDUAL HONORS WENT TO:

**Longest Drive – Ladies:** Jillian McKenzie

**Longest Drive – Men:** Shawn Whitlow

**Closest to the pin – Ladies:** Shelly Kennedy

**Closest to the Pin – Men:** Archie Kountz



## Dirk Johnson Named General Counsel at DWC

The Commissioner of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation, Rod Bordelon, recently named Dirk Johnson as the Division's new General Counsel, filling the position previously held by Norma Garcia.

Prior to being selected, Johnson was the Deputy Public Counsel for the Office of Public Insurance Counsel where he reported to Bordelon. Johnson previously held positions at the Office of Attorney General and Texas Medical Board. He has a Law Degree and a Master's Degree in Business Administration from Texas Tech University.

*Submitted by Randy McNeel*

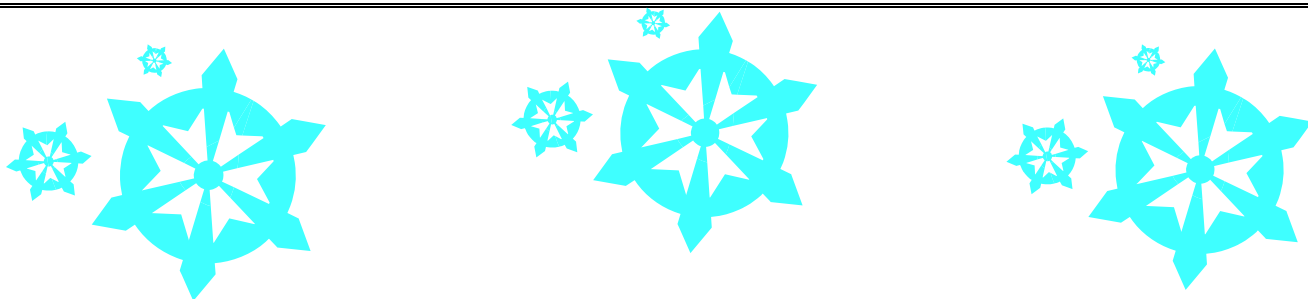
### LAST CHANCE: PRIMA MEMBERSHIP NOW HALF OFF



PRIMA has created a new membership initiative specifically for its chapter members. As a member of a local PRIMA chapter, you know the benefits that come from being part of a group. Now you can join PRIMA National for half price and reap the benefits of a national network of public sector risk managers. If you are not currently a PRIMA National member, now is the time to join. For more information on this initiative, please visit the Chapter section of [www.primacentral.org](http://www.primacentral.org).

**From now until December 31, 2008, join PRIMA for 50% off! That's right; YOU can join PRIMA for half price! Don't delay...put the power of PRIMA membership to work for you today!**

For more information, contact Allyson Little, membership-marketing manager, at 703-253-1270 or [alittle@primacentral.org](mailto:alittle@primacentral.org). This offer is available to new PRIMA members only and only for GOVERNMENT members.



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#### About This Newsletter

This newsletter is published quarterly for the benefit of Texas PRIMA members. However, the opinions expressed in the newsletter are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the views of Texas PRIMA. The aim of this newsletter is to provide information to our members about Chapter events and risk management issues. Please send news, information, comments, etc. to the editor via email, [hdkaplan@garlandisd.net](mailto:hdkaplan@garlandisd.net). The deadline for the next issue of this newsletter is February 20, 2009.