

# UPTOWN

## Educational and inspiring sessions planned for Annual Meeting

**S**afeguarding Home Rule and developing great leadership skills are two topics on the schedule at the 66th Annual Meeting. The issue of safeguarding Home Rule will be presented in the Opening General Session at 9 a.m. Thursday, July 27, by Dr. Walter Edgar. During the Delegates' Luncheon on Friday, Dr. David Chadwick will give an inspiring presentation on leadership.

Edgar is a well-known historian, professor, public radio host and speaker widely respected for his deep knowledge of South Carolina's past. He brings South Carolina history to life by tying the consequences of historic events to today's political environment. During the opening session, Edgar will explore the historical roots of Home Rule in South Carolina and its importance to the future

vitality of our cities and towns and quality of life for all South Carolinians.

With degrees from Davidson College and the University of South Carolina, Edgar joined USC's history department in 1972 as an assistant professor and rose to the rank of professor in 1982.

Dr. David Chadwick of Charlotte is a graduate of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where he was a member of the 1969 NCAA Final Four basketball championship team. After graduation, he played in the European Professional League for three years.

While at UNC, Chadwick played for one of the great coaches of college basketball, Dean Smith. Using the leadership principles he learned from Smith, Chadwick wrote "Twelve Leadership Principles of Dean Smith," which offers an



Dr. Walter Edgar



Dr. David Chadwick

inspiring message on great leadership. Thousands across the Southeast have heard his presentation, which is sure to be a motivational and uplifting luncheon address.

*Make your plans now to attend the 66th Annual Meeting in Hilton Head Island, July 27-30, 2006. The pre-registration deadline is July 5. For more information, visit MASC's Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).*

### Municipal Association begins new affiliate for court administrators and staff

**W**hether it's sorting through the state assessment procedures on court fines, addressing concerns about court security or evaluating the pros and cons of new court software, court administration staff now have an association working on their behalf to help with these issues.

"Having an association that will train court administrators on consistent procedures is desperately needed in South Carolina," said Diane Anderson, clerk of court for the City of Rock Hill and a member of the planning committee that helped create the affiliate. "I can't wait to start recruiting members."

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## New affiliate continued from cover

The Municipal Court Administration Association (MCAA) of South Carolina has three levels of membership. Active membership is open to court administrators whose primary responsibilities focus on court administration for the entire municipality. This is the only voting membership category of the association.

Associate memberships are reserved for anyone not eligible for active membership, but interested in the principles and practices of court administration. Law enforcement officers, municipal judges, managers/administrators or employees from another county or agency are considered associate members.

"It's important for the association to have a membership for other municipal employees and employees of state and local agencies," Anderson said. "For example, we see the state Court Administration office as an important resource for our association. We want their agency and others to be in our network of members."

The third membership category covers anyone actively engaged in marketing products, services or information to municipal entities.

Steve Willis, city administrator of Lancaster, sat on the planning committee and helped weave technology into the association's mission. "Encouraging the most advanced technologies in the field of court administration is essential for this association," Willis said. "Courts need the best software that is compatible with the city financial software and can efficiently collect and report mandated assessments on court fines to the state. They need innovative security tools in the courtroom to make staff safer, and technology which will offer citizens the ability to make court fine payments online.

"I want this association to be the clearinghouse for good, sound technology that can be immediately used for court offices at reasonable costs," he added.

Speaking of technology, MCAA will soon offer a Web page on the Municipal

Association's Web site for its members. Information of interest to MCAA members, such as training dates and model policies and procedures, will be available. Members will also have access to a listserve that offers an online forum for people with similar interests to participate in discussions or receive information from others on the list.

"Instead of calling another court administrator on the phone for advice on an issue, I will be able to ask all the members on the listserve for their help at once," said Alma Miller, court administrator for the City of Spartanburg and planning committee member. "Instantaneously, I will have many responses and solutions at my fingertips from my counterparts in other cities and towns."

*MCAA will hold its first membership and training meeting August 24 at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Columbia. For more information about this affiliate, contact Michelle James, director of Education and Training, at 803.933.1228 or mjames@masc.sc.*

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## MASC Setoff Debt Collection Program has collected more than \$15 million due to municipalities

**W**ith its active tourism industry, rental properties turn over quickly in Myrtle Beach.

"People come down in the spring and summer looking to get jobs," said Mary McDowell, assistant finance director for the City of Myrtle Beach. "Then if things don't work out, they move."

And frequently, they move without paying their utility bills.

It's difficult for Myrtle Beach and other cities to collect on unpaid bills. But a program offered through the Municipal Association of South Carolina makes it a bit easier.

Through the Setoff Debt Collection Act, the state Department of Revenue

can collect on delinquent accounts or debts owed to municipalities or utilities.

"The Act allowed cities to go back and collect dollars that otherwise would have been written off," said MASC Collections Manager Gail Hampton.

Participants in MASC's Setoff Debt Collection Program submit claims with the debtors' Social Security numbers to MASC. These claims are forwarded to the Department of Revenue.

The Revenue Department checks the claims list against the refunds due to taxpayers. If there is a match, the Department of Revenue sets off the debt, notifies the taxpayer of the setoff and forwards the amount collected to MASC.

Then MASC sends the amount collected to the participant making the claim. A \$25 fee is charged to the debtor by both the Department of Revenue and MASC.

Cities and utilities can use a collection agency to reclaim unpaid bills, but these agencies charge the user a fee, Hampton said. With the Setoff Debt Collection Program, the debtor pays the fee, she added.

Since 1993, the program has collected more than \$15 million in debts, Hampton said.

Debra Courtney, assistant finance director for the City of Camden, said the program works well. Camden mostly collects on utilities and tickets and fines

**DEBT COLLECTION PROGRAM continued on page 3**

# Technology demonstrations at MASC's Annual Meeting to showcase the latest software applications, gadgets and cyber services

Local government leaders have the chance to ask questions and learn about the latest technology from representatives of VC3, MASC's technology partner, during the 66th Annual Meeting, scheduled for July 27-30 in Hilton Head Island. The technology demonstrations will be held in the Technology Center at the Marriott Hotel. Other demonstrations will be held in two mobile vans — CISCO Network On Wheels (NOW) and Microsoft Across America.

## Technology Center demos

### The Day After: Do You Know Where Your Records Are?

If a disaster hit and your computer system died, could you recover all your data quickly and operate from a remote location? Learn how to tell if your city is ready for a disaster.

### Got Wireless?

From citizens searching the Web while sipping coffee at a downtown café to officers using laptops in police cars, learn how your citizens and public safety officers can benefit from connecting to wireless technology.

### Check out MASC's Annual Meeting blog

Join MASC as we pilot a blog project! Annual Meeting speakers and Achievement Award winners will be featured on MASC's first-ever blog site. Pose questions for discussion to speakers, learn about programs that won MASC awards this year or plug in your 2 cents about topics you would like speakers to touch on at the Annual Meeting. Visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) to access the blog site.

### Citizens and Online Services

Are your citizens ready to pay their taxes, water bills or business license fees over the Internet? Discover which applications are best suited for online transactions and how other cities are managing this online service.

### Spam, Spyware and Virus Protection

If your systems aren't protected from spam and spyware, it's just a matter of time before you are hit hard by them. Learn what tools are available and how to put them in place to ensure your network is adequately protected.

### Easy Does it Web Updates

Save money and time in your city by learning how content management tools make updating Web sites easy.

### A-Blogging We Will Go!

Find out how blogging can facilitate a communitywide exchange of ideas on topics that are important to you and your city or town.

### Paperless Council Meetings

The latest technology can make your council meetings completely paperless, from distributing agendas to voting and recording minutes.

### Say Hello to Electronic Filing

Are stacks of files starting to take over city hall? With document imaging technology, your important files can be digitally scanned and electronically stored and accessed through the town's computer system. Moving to electronic filing should be part of every city's disaster recovery plan.

### New e-Toys

Are you interested in the latest gadgets of the 21st century? Try out Sprint's newest Treo 700w, iPods and anti-spam and -spyware software.

## Debt Collection Program continued from page 2

for the police department through the program.

"If it wasn't there, the chances of us collecting money are slim to none," Courtney added.

The Easley Combined Utility System uses the program to collect on past due electric, water and sewer bills, said customer service manager Linda Lesley.

"It's brought in a lot of revenue that

we wouldn't normally get," she added.

*Training for new program participants will be held August 8 in Columbia. Mandatory refresher training for current participants will take place August 9.*

*Training for new programmers will be held August 15. For more information, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc) or contact Gail Hampton at [ghampton@masc.sc](mailto:ghampton@masc.sc) or 803.933.1213.*

## News Briefs



■ The National League of Cities is accepting nominations for the 2006 Awards for Municipal Excellence. These awards identify and showcase outstanding city and town programs that improve the quality of life in America's communities. Nomination deadline is June 21, 2006. For more information and nomination forms, visit [www.nlc.org](http://www.nlc.org).

# SCLGAG program still best deal around: Rate increases lower than national trend

The news is good for some municipal employees and their families who receive health insurance through MASC's self-funded insurance group, the South Carolina Local Government Assurance Group (SCLGAG).

There will be a 6 percent increase in rates for the majority of SCLGAG pool members. This is favorable compared to the national trend of increases in the 8 percent to 10 percent range, said Harvey Mathias, director of risk management services at MASC.

The 6 percent increase applies only to medical coverage. There will be no increase for dental, life or vision coverages, he added.

Although there will be a slight rate increase, SCLGAG made two enhancements to the benefits structure: colonoscopies and a tobacco or smoking cessation program, Mathias said.

Effective July 1, SCLGAG will pay for a colonoscopy once every 10 years beginning at age 50. If there is a family history of colon cancer or a medical problem requiring additional colonoscopies, the procedure would be subject to a deductible or other medical expense, he added.

The tobacco cessation program is through the Free and Clear Program, a national program that has been available

to state employees since January 1. The program is free and offered on a voluntary basis.

The wellness enhancements were made with the idea that everyone could save money in the long term, Mathias said. "Sometimes we have to spend money to save money," he added.

The SCLGAG board has worked hard to keep rates down and create programs that would benefit all cities, said Belinda Harper, city clerk of Seneca and SCLGAG board chair.

"We understand money's tight for all the cities out there," she added.

SCLGAG was not set up to generate a profit, which helps keep rate increases in check, said Orangeburg City Administrator John Yow, who is also a board member. Many cities are exercising the wellness and disease management benefits offered through the insurance group, he added.

"SCLGAG is trying to stay ahead of the curve in our rates and our offerings," he said. "We're always looking at what private companies are doing."

The wellness programs are designed to prevent health problems. SCLGAG offers them to protect the health of its employees and their families and to avoid catastrophic loss down the road, Yow said.

"It's better to spend preventive dollars than catastrophic dollars," he added.

The concept is working in Aiken, according to City Manager Roger LeDuc. "We have worked really hard with a comprehensive program, looking at how we could make lifelong changes with our employees concerning their health," he said.

City of Aiken employees have the opportunity to join health clubs, receive nutrition and physical fitness assessments, and get physicals and eye and dental exams.

"Through the combination, we have been able to see significant cost savings for all of our employees and the city as a whole," LeDuc said.

The 6 percent increase does not apply to all SCLGAG members. Some "modified pool" members will see rate decreases of 5 percent. Others can expect rate increases of up to a maximum of 12 percent, Mathias said.

Meanwhile, SCLGAG will issue new medical identification cards to members beginning July 1. To prevent identity theft, Social Security numbers will no longer be printed on the cards, Mathias said. A single identification card will now be used for both medical and drug benefits.



## Classifieds

■ The Town of Kiawah Island is accepting applications for a town treasurer. Send resumé and salary requirements to Personnel Office, 21 Beachwalker Drive, Kiawah Island, SC 29455, or fax 843.768.4764.

■ The City of Walterboro is accepting applications for a utilities superintendent. Visit [www.cityofwalterborosc.org](http://www.cityofwalterborosc.org) or call 843.549.2545, extension 247. Send resumé

to [droberson@walterborosc.org](mailto:droberson@walterborosc.org) or to City of Walterboro, Personnel Office, 248 Hampton Street, Walterboro, SC 29488.

■ The City of Beaufort is accepting applications for the positions of finance director and chief financial officer. For more information, visit [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org) or call 843.525.6016. Send cover letter, application, resumé and references to Human Resources Manager, City of Beaufort, PO Box 1167, Beaufort, SC 29901, fax 843.525.7013 or e-mail [employment@cityofbeaufort.org](mailto:employment@cityofbeaufort.org).

■ The City of Hartsville is accepting applications for the positions of planning director and division chief for utilities. For more information, visit [www.hartsvillesc.com](http://www.hartsvillesc.com). Send resumé to HR Director, City of Hartsville, PO Drawer 2497, Hartsville, SC 29551.

For the most up-to-date job listings, visit [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).



# MASC past president wins Drummond Award

**A** former Greenville mayor and past president of MASC has been recognized for his years of public service.

Max M. Heller received the fourth annual Drummond Award for Statesmanship during an awards banquet held March 28 in Columbia.

Heller shared the honor with US Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC). The award, named for state Senator John Drummond (D-Ninety Six), is presented by the Drummond Center at Erskine College. It honors individuals who demonstrate leadership and good character in the realm of public service.

"It was pretty clear to our committee that his life has exemplified public service in a nonpartisan fashion," said Paula Harper Bethea, chair of the Drummond Center Founders Board. "He has lived this life of public service and giving back. He's such a worthy individual. He's such a gentleman at every level."

A native of Austria, Heller fled his homeland in 1938 during the Nazi occupation. He made his home in Greenville, SC, where he worked as a stock boy at Piedmont Shirt Company. In 1948, he founded the Maxon Shirt Company. Along the way, he married his wife, Trude.

When Heller retired from his company in 1969, he began his involvement in public life. He was elected that year to the Greenville City Council. In 1971, he was elected mayor of Greenville. During his tenure, Heller was instrumental in sparking the revitalization of downtown Greenville and bringing new businesses to the city.

"It was his vision of the future of Greenville that we see blooming today," said MASC Executive Director Howard Duvall.

Downtown Greenville was beginning to falter in those days, Duvall said. Heller worked to revitalize the area by improving streetscapes and encouraging families to live downtown. He also helped lay the foundation for the

Upstate to become the manufacturing hub it is today, Duvall added.

"He is so much a part of the fiber and fabric of Greenville," said Bethea. Heller garnered the support of business and political leaders to get the work done, she added.

"He worked with every kind of person, with any letter behind their names, any creed, race or religion," she said. "His name is recognized around the state as one that brings people together."

Heller served as president of the Municipal Association in 1977. He also served on the board of the National League of Cities. In 1979, he was appointed by Governor Richard Riley to serve as chairman of the State Development Board, now known as the state Department of Commerce. He held this position until 1983.

Among his many achievements, Heller received the Man of the Year Award from the National Council of Jewish Women in 1970. The Greenville Housing Foundation created the annual Max M. Heller Neighborhood Improvement Award for outstanding neighborhood improvement projects. In 1979, the Community Foundation of Greenville created the Max Heller Internship Program to help students interested in working in city government.

Heller was presented his award by Sen. Drummond and Drummond Center Founders Board members Dr. Joab M. Lesesne and Samuel Tenenbaum. During his speech, Heller said the nation faces many problems.

"We are so divided. How can we be united when religion divides us, instead of bringing us together, which politics should also do?" he asked.



US Senator Lindsey Graham congratulates Max Heller after Heller received the Drummond Award.

Heller said soldiers are fighting in Iraq to ensure that people continue to have freedom. "They are trying to unite us," he added.

Heller deserved to be recognized because he exemplifies dedication to public service, said Dr. Jay West, director of the Drummond Center.

"As a person of vision, he had the ability to not only dream, but to also implement the vision. Today, the residents of Greenville are the beneficiaries of a great leader's vision," West said.

Previous winners of the Drummond Award are businessman Roger Milliken, US District Court Judge Matthew J. Perry Jr. and Charleston Mayor Joe Riley.

Duvall said it's significant that two municipal leaders — Heller and Riley — have received the award for statesmanship.

"Both are cut out of the same cloth," Duvall added. "Although they come from different backgrounds, both are very similar in their dedication to public service."

It's an example of the impact municipal leaders can make, Bethea said. "It's unbelievable what they can do in their little corner of the world," she added.

The Drummond Center for Statesmanship was established at Erskine College to promote and perpetuate statesmanship in South Carolina.

# Main Street South Carolina releases 2007 applications

**M**ain Street South Carolina has developed a new application and selection process for its restructured downtown revitalization program for municipalities. The new application will be released during the 2006 MASC Annual Meeting in Hilton Head Island.

"The application process will ensure new Main Street programs have the support of local government, business and citizens before being accepted in the program," said Beppie LeGrand, Main Street South Carolina manager.

As a nationally designated coordinating program, Main Street South Carolina responds to and meets the needs of local programs while building a network that exhibits high reinvestment ratios, which ultimately increase each year. LeGrand coordinates the resources and services available to each local program.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation's Main Street Center requires each state coordinating program to monitor the progress of each of its local programs through a quarterly

reporting system. The quarterly reports include private and public investment, job creation, building improvements and historic preservation efforts.

Main Street South Carolina will accept new members in January 2007 in its newly reorganized and supervised revitalization program.

*For more information about Main Street South Carolina, contact Beppie LeGrand at [blegrand@masc.sc](mailto:blegrand@masc.sc) or 803.933.1231.*

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## Ten tips for using the budget to communicate the value of cities and towns

**L**ast month's article in *Uptown* outlined the importance of using the annual budget process as a tool for communicating your city's or town's vision to your citizens. More than just a listing of line items, a budget can be the most valuable tool municipal leaders have to communicate their long-range vision and the activities, programs and services that have been funded.

This month's article outlines 10 practical tips for developing a communications strategy that will make the budget come to life all year long beyond just numbers on a page.

**1.** Clearly outline throughout the budget document how spending ties to the municipality's long-range vision and planning.

**2.** Use the mayor's or manager/administrator's letter in the budget document to broadly identify and track multiyear spending and revenue trends and how they relate to budget priorities.

**3.** Include an easily understandable summary of revenue sources and expenditures. Colorful pie charts and graphs work well for this.

**4.** Use the budget year-round as a tool for discussion when municipal leaders speak to civic and community groups, local opinion leaders or legislators.

**5.** Keep local reporters "in the loop" of the budget process. Don't wait until it's time to release the first draft of the budget to outline spending priorities and changes in revenue streams to reporters.

**6.** Paint a clear "cost-benefit" picture of budget proposals to reporters, opinion leaders, legislators and citizens using specific examples of how expenditures affect individual taxpayers and businesses.

**7.** Develop talking points for the mayor, councilmembers and administrative leadership who make speeches to civic groups so everyone is communicating the same message about the budget and vision.

**8.** Create a short list of frequently asked questions about the budget to help explain bureaucratic terms to reporters or citizens.

**9.** Remember to keep the budget as part of your communications year-round, not just during budget planning. Remind citizens, opinion leaders and legislators frequently how tax dollars are being used wisely.

**10.** Incorporate technology to share information on budget planning. If the local newspaper has a blog site, use this to keep citizens informed about budget planning. Incorporate the budget message into electronic newsletters from various city departments. Integrate the budget message into features on the main page of the city Web site.

Municipalities provide a good financial value in return for tax dollars invested. Using the budget as a tool to communicate this value is an important strategy to keep in mind as we work toward increasing the awareness of the value cities and towns bring to the state.

# Crisis communication meeting reveals diverse resources for emergencies

The training room at the Municipal Association was filled to capacity last month when more than 65 representatives of local governments and law enforcement, emergency preparedness and public safety agencies came together to learn about resources for communicating in a crisis.

Lt. Chris Cowan, public information officer for the Richland County Sheriff's Department, helped organize the first meeting of this group in February. After participating in a tabletop emergency preparedness exercise last year, Cowan said he realized the public information staff of various agencies and government entities around the state don't have a formal way to get to know one another until an actual emergency happens.

"We need to have better access to resources and to our counterparts in other agencies so we can be better prepared to respond before a crisis happens," Cowan added.

The Municipal Association got involved with hosting the May meeting because of the important role municipal governments play in responding to a crisis. Greg DeLoach, Hilton Head assistant town manager, participated in the meeting and noted, "The meeting brought together first responders of a different sort — first information responders. Meeting with fellow public information officers and related public employees has an exponential benefit. It allows for networking and the generation of ideas beyond the meeting agenda."

Participants at the meeting represented organizations as diverse as local police and fire departments, FBI, Forestry Service, the US Postal Service, ETV, Mothers Against Drunk Driving and the

South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC).

Mary Nguyen Bright from the state's Emergency Management Division (EMD) stressed the importance of having public information staff involved with all aspects of crisis planning. "We want to build our emergency preparedness exercises to reflect what PIOs really do in a crisis situation," she said. The EMD holds training several times annually specifically aimed at the role of public information officers in crisis planning.

Rick Johnson with ETV's Public Services Network talked about the role South Carolina's public television and radio networks play in communicating important information during a crisis. He also described the training services ETV can provide through statewide teleconferencing.

Representatives from DHEC and *The State* newspaper made a presentation about planning communications strategies in anticipation of a flu pandemic. Linda Lamb, health reporter at *The State*, offered the following tips in working with the media if a pandemic occurs:

- Identify one key contact to deal with the media.
- Avoid the natural tendency to delay releasing any information until all information is available. In reality, it's unlikely all information will ever be available at the same time during a crisis, so giving reporters information when it becomes available helps them make deadlines and get the story out from a credible source rather than relying on rumors from other sources.

- Establish good relationships with local reporters before a crisis occurs. Make sure reporters have current information for key contacts in your city or town, and ensure the municipality's public information staff has the reporters' contact information.
- Understand the daily news cycle and hold media briefings later in the day to accommodate deadlines for newspapers and evening television news programs.

MASC has set up a listserve to share information about crisis communication among the many agencies and organizations represented at this meeting. Speakers and others attending the meeting also provided handouts and helpful Web links to complement the presentations.

*Visit the MASC Web site to access the listserve, download the handouts and link to other resources (click on the "Crisis and Emergency Communication Resources" link in the "Featured Links" section).*



## Educational Opportunities

### SC Association of Municipal Power Systems

■ **June 27-30**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Marriott at the Grande Dunes in Myrtle Beach.

### Municipal Association of South Carolina

■ **July 27-30**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Marriott Beach and Golf Resort in Hilton Head Island. (See related article on page 1.)

### Setoff Debt Collection Program

■ **August 8**, will hold a mandatory training session for new participants to the program at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. This session will explain all aspects of the program and train new employees on using the application. (See related article on page 2.)

### Setoff Debt Collection Program

■ **August 9**, will hold a mandatory refresher training session for all current participants of the program from 9 a.m. to noon at the Columbia Radisson, formerly the Sheraton Hotel and Conference Center. (See related article on page 2.)

### Setoff Debt Collection Program

■ **August 15**, will hold a mandatory programmer's training session for any programmer representing new participants to the program at MASC's office at 1411 Gervais Street in Columbia from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. (See related article on page 2.)

### Municipal Court Administrators Association

■ **August 24**, will hold its first training session and meeting at the Embassy Suites Hotel in Columbia. (See related article on page 1.)

### SC Association of Stormwater Managers

■ **September 8**, will hold its third quarter meeting at the SC Hospital Association in Columbia.

### Municipal Elected Officials Institute of Government

■ **September 14**, will present "Forms of Municipal Government" and "Benefits and Pitfalls of Economic Development." The session will be broadcast via satellite to the 10 regional councils of governments.

### SC Municipal Finance Officers, Clerks and Treasurers Association

■ **October 24-27**, will hold its Annual Meeting at the Hilton Hotel in Hilton Head Island.

For more information about these meetings or other MASC meetings not listed, please call 803.799.9574, or visit our Web site at [www.masc.sc](http://www.masc.sc).



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