

2013 Officers

President

Penny Nelson
Douglas Pancake Architects, Inc.
(949) 720-3850
PennyN@PancakeArchitects.com

Co-Vice President

Betsy Nickless, CDFA
Mark Scheurer Architect
(949) 483-8688
BetsyN@MSA-Arch.com

Co-Vice President

Diana Dubich
Geosyntec Consultants
(714) 969-0800
DDubich@Geosyntec.com

Recording Secretary

Cheryl Mathes
Valley Crest Design Group
(714) 557-5852
CMathes@ValleyCrest.com

Corresponding Secretary

Marcy Fields
Carlile Coatsworth Architects, Inc.
(949) 833-1930
MarcyF@CCArchitects.com

Treasurer

Helen Palermo
Dougherty + Dougherty Architects
(714) 427-0278
HelenP@DDArchitecture.com

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THE COMMENTARY

Summer 2013 Edition

A Newsletter of the Society For Design Administration

President's Corner

By Penny Nelson, President

"Summertime, and the living is easy," so the song goes. My summer has been anything but easy this year, and there have been few lazy days! My office is in the midst of relocating, and for those of you who have experienced that, you know that for administrative personnel it is a crazy time.

However, I have had several moments to reflect on my experiences at EDSymposium13 in Colonial Williamsburg in May, and even implement some of the ideas I learned. At our May luncheon meeting, several of the EDS13 attendees presented a brief overview of the sessions they attended. The lack of time during a one-hour lunch constrained what we could share, and it couldn't even begin to cover four days of seminars, lunches, informal discussions, and general connecting that happens at every EDSymposium. This was my second EDSymposium, but third SDA conference, and I am surprised each time the conference tops the prior one. At each one, I have learned not only ideas and information that educated me more about my profession, I learned more about myself.

This year, we had an amazing speaker who spoke to us about our individual communication styles, and taught us how to recognize the communication styles of others. We learned there are Bold, Sympathetic, Expressive and Technical communication styles, and we learned how to most successfully work with each. She also guided us on "Influencing without Authority," strategies of influence, and "The Art of WOO" (Winning Others Over). She also encouraged us to "future proof" ourselves for the 21st century by continuing to learn new skills, look for new possibilities, and learn new things. She encouraged us to continually look within ourselves by asking: Am I different or better? Am I smarter? Am I still curious? Leaving us with the thought "You cannot be everything you want to be, but you can be more of who you already are." I hope that SDA/OC continues to be a part of your "future-proofing" strategy.

This was my first time attending the annual business meeting of National SDA. I was extremely impressed with the level of professionalism our organization reflects, and how well-run it is. Every person involved in leadership in SDA is committed to excellence, and it shows. From the local chapter officers, to the

Continued on Page 3

Upcoming Events

August 2013

August 20 SDA/OC 30th Anniversary Celebration 6:00 to 8:00 pm
At LePain Quotidien, Fashion Island
Be our guest for a light meal and liquid refreshments as we celebrate 30 years of education and friendship

September 2013

Sept. 1-29 Canstruction
Structures on display
South Coast Plaza

Sept. 4 Canstruction "Strut the Structures" Tour 5:30 pm
Come join us as we take a first-hand look at this year's 'Can-structures'
Garden Terrace, South Coast Plaza

Sept. 5 Business Meeting 5:30 pm
Meeting will be held at Douglas Pancake Architects hosted by Penny Nelson

Sept. 19 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am
Roundtable—Always a hit with our members. Please bring subjects you would like to discuss.
Lutron Event Center, Irvine

Looking Ahead

October 17 Principal Appreciation Luncheon
11:30 am —1:30 pm
"Team Building" by Dr. Patty Malone
Lutron Event Center, Irvine

December 8 Annual Holiday Party, Installation of Officers, Gift Exchange — Hosts: Tom Cannon and Helen Palermo — Invitations will be forthcoming

Job Board

Did you know that SDA maintains a Job Board? This includes persons looking for work as well as firms looking for qualified personnel in the A/E industry. Most of the positions are for administrative staff, as AIA maintains its own job board for licensed architects. If your firm is looking for a person with certain qualifications or if you know someone who is looking for a position in an A/E firm, please contact Betsy Nickless by e-mail at betsyn@msa-arch.com.

Mission Statement:

The SDA advances management and administrative professionals in the A/E/C industry through education, networking, and resources. Our vision is to have an SDA member in every A/E/C firm.



July 2
July 2

Alicia Igram
Penny Nelson

September 2
September 29

Aimee Mandela
Nancy Burt

President's Corner

Continued from Page 1

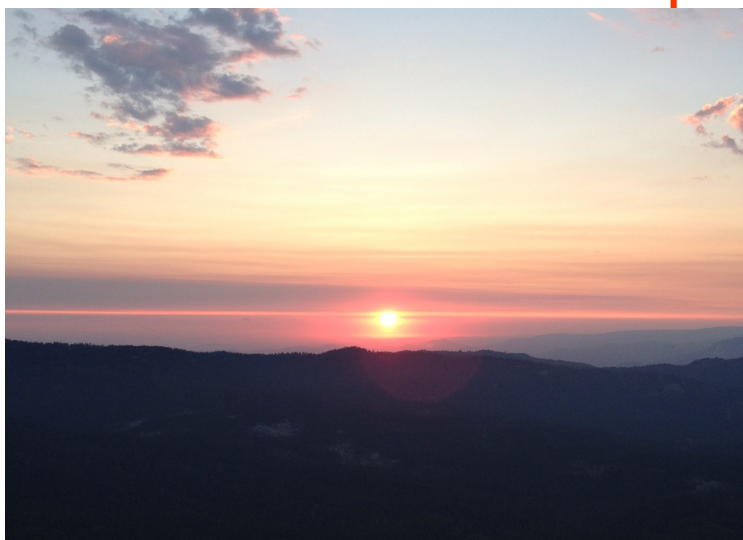
committee chairs, to the national officers, each person is invested in making SDA the best organization it can be. I was saddened to learn of our decreasing membership levels, but encouraged and motivated to help SDA grow again. I'm excited about some upcoming changes which you will begin to see coming out of National, and I'm excited to see growth in our own chapter. When you have time, check out the 2012-2013 Annual Report from National SDA, found on the Governance page at www.sdadmin.org and see what National is doing for our organization.

The highlight of the educational seminars for me was hearing Melissa Esquibel, a Microsoft Certified Trainer. She is an amazing speaker, and took us all on an amazing journey through various Microsoft programs, wooing us with her tips and insights, and giving us tools to help us maximize our efficiency and utilization of these important core office tools. She inspired me to look deeper into the capabilities of these programs, and take advantage of their power. Betsy Nickless and I won free webinars from Melissa, so we will be bringing her expertise back to our chapter – be on the lookout for these dates, because you will NOT want to miss them. Melissa also has a website at www.melissaemct.com where you can sign up for her blog and receive her fabulous Microsoft tips.

One of the greatest aspects of EDSymposium is connecting with people who GET what you do -- people whose work is very much like yours, and people who encounter the same daily challenges and rewards you do. To be in a large group, with so many like-minded people, is priceless! Many of us are the lone wolf in our positions – working with architects and engineers who have no clue what we do, or why we do it. The connection with your peers is exciting, validating, and encouraging. The connections are invaluable as well. I spoke with so many people who have years of experience on me. I asked questions, I picked their brains, and most importantly, I enjoyed getting to know them. I look forward to

reconnecting with these people as well as meeting new colleagues in Nashville at EDSymposium14. I encourage you to plan on attending as well – you won't regret it!

In spite of the busy-ness of this summer, I have managed a couple of small escapes. My husband and I camped last month at Lake Casitas, where we enjoyed the “super moon” and saw a bald eagle's nest. Earlier this month we camped in a remote location in the Sequoia National Forrest, where we braved the 172 steps up to Buck Rock Lookout and enjoyed a delightful sunset up there at 8,502 feet. (See picture below.) We had absolutely no phone, cell or internet service for five days – what a great way to “unplug” and get away from it all! We even enjoyed a thrilling lightning/thunder/wind/rain storm powerful enough to topple some trees. One of these trees lay across our road out in the morning, but with a little muscle, we were able to roll it out of our way and head home. I hope each of you are able to have a little rest and excitement this summer, and return to work refreshed and ready to tackle that list of emails that awaits!



2013 National SDA Awards

EDSymposium brought not only educational seminars, networking, and socializing, but we had plenty of other recognition of our Orange County Chapter as well.

First and foremost, Betsy Nickless, one of our Chapter's founders, was installed as National SDA President for 2013. This is quite an honor, and we should all be proud of her continued dedication to the profession. Not only that, Natalie Newman was installed as National SDA Secretary. Having two members on the National Board is even more exciting.

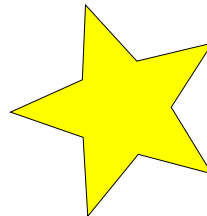


Three of our members were awarded the Profiles of Success at EDSymposium. These awards are based on five areas of concentration:

- Membership and Recruitment
- Leadership
- Education/Professional Development
- Events and Charitable Activities
- Certification

Congratulations to our three members, all of whom achieved Silver status: Penny Nelson, Natalie Newman, and Nancy Burt.

In addition, Diane Sommerville was nominated for and received the STAR Award for our Chapter. The nomination came from the Orange County Board, and the award recognizes significant contributions to the membership of a Chapter through participation and support of its meetings and publications, fundraising, recruitment, or other significant activities. Congratulations to our STAR for 2013!



Member Profile—Claudia Martin

By Natalie Newman

Claudia Martin has been with Eric Kough Architects, Inc. for the past five years as the Project Coordinator / Office Manager, where she does a little bit of everything in their small office.

Eric Kough Architects specializes in custom homes, as well as a variety of retail stores and commercial developments.

Claudia's favorite things about SDA are the monthly educational seminars and the far-reaching networking unit.

Claudia has been married to Eric Kough for 7½ years. She has three children, all girls: Farrell 25, Alliyah 15, and Chanse 12, plus two stepsons: Kory 24 and Grady 21. When asked how she keeps her sanity when all about her are losing theirs, she said "I have pretty much lost my sanity. With two girls still living at home, working full-time, shuffling teenagers around and holding down the fort, I still manage. You just have to laugh!!!!"

Claudia's favorite music is old rock and roll, jazz and county. Her favorite restaurant is Villa Nova, she loves to wear the color green and she has Dave Koz in her CD player. Her hobbies include snowboarding, gardening and cooking. She also likes to read health magazines. The most exciting place she's ever visited is Jamaica.

When asked "If you could have dinner with three famous people, living or dead, who would they be?" she answered: "Audrey Hepburn – she seemed like she was a sweet and amazing woman; John Wayne, I grew up watching all his movies and he had a gentle spirit; and Warren Buffet – I would love to sit and spend an afternoon listening to his philosophy on the economy. I think he is an amazing man."



Free Lunch Seminar—Bring a Guest for Free!

Dear SDA Members and Friends:

Our chapter is growing, but there's always room for more! We have created a downloadable postcard for your use in inviting a colleague or guest to an SDA educational seminar. Please contact Betsy Nickless at betsyn@msa-archcom the downloadable version.

If you're a vendor such as an insurance broker, reprographics vendor, personnel agency, etc. we know that you meet or communicate with a lot of people who could benefit from SDA. This is for you too! Keep a supply in your briefcase or at hand to email.

Be sure to RSVP for your guest when you bring him or her to a luncheon.



SDA's mission is to advance management and administrative professionals in the A/E/C industry through education, networking, and resources.

Excellence in
Design Firm Management **SDA**
Orange County

- ✓ Local, monthly seminars on timely and informative topics
- ✓ Annual EDSymposium
- ✓ The 24/7 access to forums and resources for timely answers to day-to-day questions that managers and administrators encounter (recent topics have included vacation policies, employee vs. independent contractor, policy for release of design documents to a new architect of record, recommendations for financial/project management software)
- ✓ Audio and web conferencing training
- ✓ CDFA – an industry-recognized certification program for design firm administrators
- ✓ Construction® – SDA's flagship design-build competition benefiting the Orange County Food Bank.
- ✓ Monthly publications on timely and relevant A/E/C news
- ✓ Discounts on services (including Staples, Zweig White, Kaplan)

Psychologists' Secrets to Productivity

Do you sometimes feel like your workload is managing YOU, rather than the other way around? Between prioritizing tasks, handling the boss's requests, dealing with interruptions, keeping up with technology and managing things at home, chances are you feel like there aren't enough hours in the day.

Here are some tips on how to beat procrastination and maximize productivity.

- **Do what works for you.** There's an abundance of advice on how to be more productive, but you need to know yourself and pick what will work for you—even if it's contrary to conventional wisdom.
- **Walk away from your desk.** Taking a five-minute break to get up from your desk and move around every hour or two can go a long way toward boosting your concentration.
- **Make time to exercise.** Stress leads to binary (either/or) thinking, distractibility and procrastination. Taking time to reduce stress enhances productivity by keeping you sharp and boosting your capacity for creative problem-solving.
- **Work in chunks.** Most people allocate a certain amount of time to a task; we recommend the opposite. Break the task down into doable chunks and then work until that chunk is done..
- **Take care of small tasks.** Little tasks left undone can nag at you for days, so just take care of them and free up your cognitive resources to handle more important things.
- **Write a first draft without worrying about quality.** If you're feeling paralyzed by writer's block, just get your thoughts down in a rough form. Then you can come back later and make them sound good.
- **Cut yourself off from the Internet.** There's a fabulous Firefox plug-in called Freedom that prevents your computer from connecting to the Internet for a programmed period, thereby removing temptation and allowing you to focus," Beth Buelow says. "If completely going off the grid is too limiting (or too scary), LeechBlock is another handy tool that allows you to block specific sites at certain times.

— Adapted from "[15 Psychology Experts Share Their Best Productivity Tips](#)," Alice Boyes, *Psychology Today*. Borrowed from BusinessManagementDaily.com.

Seminar Re-Cap

Lessons from The Workplace - “You Can’t Make This Stuff Up” Mike Deblieux, SPHR June 20, 2013

Connect and network with each other – we all come to work to work with other people; you are no good by yourself.

Workspace – the layout determines who is included and who is not included

European workers face each other;

Disney workers have rolling desks/cubicles to enable teams to come together;

Restrooms/break rooms placed in the middle of the work stations to encourage socializing.

Zappos – take a tour of their facility in Las Vegas – corporate culture is WOW - new employees get a “yearbook” of stories from other employees about what it’s like to work there.

Disabilities – ask the disabled person what works best for him; don’t assume you know.

Never start by telling an employee what he did wrong – “you were late.” Start by stating what is needed – “I need you to be here at 8am every day.”

Sexual harassment can happen to men as well as women.

Learn how to ask a question then sit back and listen – don’t talk so much – sometimes it’s amazing what you will hear when you keep quiet –

- Use supportive feedback - nodding, “I see your point”
- “I think what you are saying is...”
- Request or wait for confirmation
- Use “I saw” statements – use facts

Tips for Employee Recognition

Five basic areas of recognition:

- Compensation
- Benefits
- Work / Life balance
- Development and career opportunities
- Rewards and recognition

Need to have a feeling of appreciation and gratitude – day-to-day recognition. Example given of the employee who gave notice and then upper management told him how much he meant to the company. The recognition was given too late.

Five key trends:

- Focus and alignment
- Budget 1-2% of payroll for some companies
- Training for managers
- Metrics – how to measure if its effective
- Management support – it starts at the top

Some firms are using wellness programs

Have a program where everyone can participate

Should it be formal – award given to “employee of the year” at annual party or should it be informal – various spot awards or chocolate candy on the desk or can be combo of both.

“Social” recognition – multiple generations – the younger generation wants to feel part of something and more connected.

Present in person vs. email.

Cash compensation does not always have a lasting impact.

Source: Contributed by Nancy Burt. Content taken from a seminar presented by Jaimee Chism, ITA Group.

Building Your Firm's On-Line Reputation

You need to be able to prove your expertise to an audience – what sets you apart from all the other firms out there - how can you get noticed?

Current on line marketing mix is not hitting the target – many firms use generic email newsletters or “store bought” programs with the same information just pasted on their website with social media sites that are not kept active – nothing is unique.

Start with the basics and move up:

Website Blog Email marketing Social media Marketing automation

All activity centers around the firm website – generic content vs. tailored content

Shotgun approach – going after everything vs. Sniper approach – going after a specific market

SEO – Search Engine Optimization

People don't just search for an architect. They search for “architect in Newport Beach.”

Brand—Be specific – where are you an expert?

- Is as important as ever
- Must be clear

Website

- Must have the ability to update on the fly; don't be held hostage by a design firm
- Include blogs and articles
- Why spend \$50,000 on your conference room when only a few will see it – spend the money on your website which could draw many more viewers
- When content is updated it should push out to the firm Facebook, LinkedIn, etc. automatically – no need to manually make updates
- Ensure blogs and articles are part of the website; no need for a separate site
- Use analytics – need to benchmark who is coming to your site and how did they get there – Google? Bing?
- Website should be re-sized to fit the platform – droid phones, tablets, desktops

Build a content map

- Sit down and write down important tasks to accomplish
- Build your team – source the content
- Repurpose emails
- Rewards – young staff or interns would receive a \$25 Amazon card for writing a blog or article
- Interview clients using video, Q&A blog
- Scripted.com - they write the article/tweet/blog based on your requests
- Turn partner presentation into an article
- “Culture” pieces – philanthropy, community service, keep it updated

Source: Contributed by Nancy Burt. Content taken from a seminar presented by Roy Keely, Xcentric.

Strut-The-Structures Tour

The Canstruction structures will be ready to view on August 31, and members of the design community are invited to a special tour of the 2013 structures:

Date: Wednesday, September 4
Time: 5:30 pm
Meet: Garden Terrace, South Coast Plaza

For more information and to RSVP please email info@canstructionoc.org



Sponsor Thank You!!

A big THANK YOU to our new 2013 Sponsors...

We truly appreciate your support and thank you for being such an important influence on our organization.

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Your sponsorship not only gets the full attention of some of the most valuable and experienced managers and administrators in the industry, it will help fund educational scholarships to the annual national convention and support monthly seminars that continually keep these professionals up to date on changing methodologies and strategies.



One of the most visually stunning demonstrations of talent and creativity within the A/E/C community is the annual Canstruction Orange County event. Part team-building exercise, part food drive, and part creative design outlet, Canstruction® takes an ordinary food drive and puts it on steroids! It is a design/build competition using canned and packaged foods as the building materials to create giant sculptures that showcase the ingenuity of the participants.

Local architects, engineers, community groups, and students form teams that design a structure, gather all the food items necessary to build it, then construct their visually and structurally stunning canned art. These structures will be on display and open to the public on both sides of South Coast Plaza from August 31 – September 29 in conjunction with the Festival of Children.

Judging occurs in categories such as Best Use of Labels, Structural Ingenuity, Best Meal, and Jury's Favorite. Winners will be announced at the fundraising Awards Gala on Sunday, September 15, at SOCO (South Coast Collection) in Costa Mesa. Tickets are available online at www.canstructionoc.com. At the end of the event, all of the cans used to create the amazing structures will be donated to the Orange County Food Bank for distribution.

We appreciate the teams that are participating in the 6th Annual CanstructionOC Design Build Competition and are looking forward to seeing the structures they build.
The Teams for 2013 are *(in alphabetical order)*:

AIA Orange County
All County Environmental
Bassenian | Lagoni
Building Trades Network
CH2MHill
Disneyland Resort, Design & Engineering
FIDM – Fashion Institute of Design & Merchandising
Fluor
Gensler
Gregg Maedo & Associates
Hensel Phelps
Jacobs
KTGY Group, Inc.
MVE & Partners / Hall & Foreman, Inc.
Parsons Brinckerhoff
pjhm•architects
Terracon Consultants, Inc.
TCA Architects

EDSymposium 2013

By Natalie Newman

I am truly appreciative of the opportunity to be the recipient of the SDA/OC 2013 National Convention Scholarship. Visiting Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, and attending the educational sessions offered at EdSymposium13 was fantastic.

On my way to the registration desk on Wednesday evening, I walked right into the Welcome Reception where I was greeted by some really lovely friends I haven't seen since last year in Portland or before. As those of you who have attended convention know and for those of you who haven't attended convention, the members you meet from across the US and Canada are an inspiring group of people who will be your friends for life.

The rest of the week consisted of breakfast with SDA Business Partners or Keynote Speakers, attending the Annual Business Meeting, the Awards Luncheon, a Ghost Walking Tour and ending the week at the Installation Banquet on Saturday night where our own Betsy Nickless was installed as the National President, and I was installed as the National Secretary. Orange County is represented!

The educational seminars were superb, and all the feedback from attendees was positive. I wish I would have gone to the Microsoft Excel for Project Management and the Excel Power Tools seminars because everyone who attended those was thrilled on the tips and tricks they learned. I, however, did attend *Building Profitable Relationships in Professional Service Companies*. This session provided insights on how market-driven, client-focused, and knowledge-based firms have an edge on the competition because of their strategic focus, integrated marketing programs, and relationship-based business development. I will be presenting these lessons to my office so we can start the transformation in our firm — not only using our marketing and business development professional, but also project managers, engineers, estimators, and designers — to engage more deeply with our clients and customers in the marketplace.

The *Social Media Hotspots for the Workplace* program addressed legal issues involving Internet activities and their implications for employers and employees. We discussed what rights and protections employees have when they post messages on Facebook, Twitter and blogging, or how employees use their company-issued cell phones, iPads, computers, etc. We explored emerging areas, where technology is ahead of legal standards, and discussed best practices to minimize risks and maintain employee morale.

NOTE: I am on a mission to create a Social Media Office Policy for GBE. I am collecting policies from other SDA firms and will create one from the combined efforts of our membership and share.

The *Plate-Spinning in Outlook (With No Broken Plates)* learning objectives were: Folders, inbox clean-up and management, conversion tools to clean up conversations, using filtering rules, archiving, conditional formatting, how to organize by color and keyboard shortcuts.

EDSymposium 2013

Continued from Page 13

I also learned there are certain HR practices, procedures and systems that you want to have in place in the *HR Toolkit for Success* seminar. This presentation covered what some of the best practices are for HR as well as focusing on the compliance issues that organizations are faced with today. Some of the areas that I'll be updating in GBE's employee handbook are: Compliance with all the new State and Federal Laws, Talent Acquisition, On-Boarding Program – HR Checklist, Benefits, Employee Retention, Personnel Files, Performance Management Process, Staff Development & Training, Employee Recognition Programs, and Employee Communication.

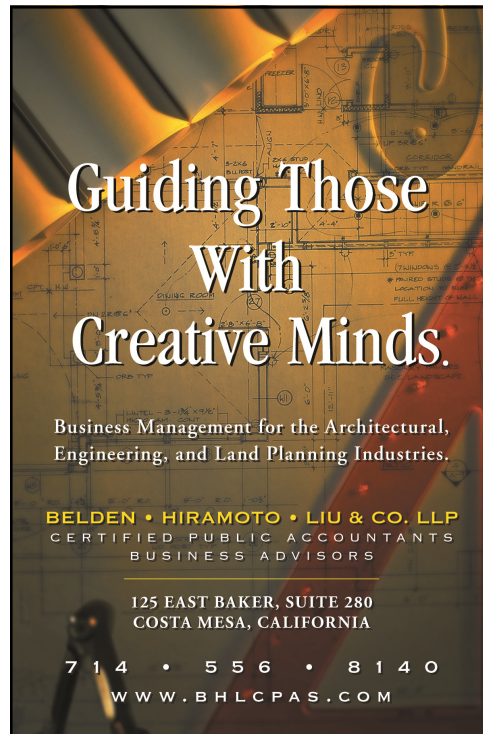
The *Developing Your Reputation as a Leader* case-study presentation helped you identify the 'existing conditions' of your personal brand, setting a goal for where you want to be, analyzing that reputational gap, and designing a plan of action to enhance your reputation. I really appreciated how Scott and William presented the 15 'Tools' for leadership development. It was easy to learn when the presenters followed each tool with a 'Case Study' of successful examples and the 'Next Steps' on how to develop a personal roadmap to build your reputation before moving on to the next tool.

If your firm wants to invest in its future, it should send you to the SDA National Convention every year. What I have learned and brought back to apply to the operations in my company is invaluable. If your boss needs a referral for your attendance next year in Nashville, have him/her call me.

EDSymposium 2013



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Alicia K. Igram, AAI

Vice President and Branch Rep

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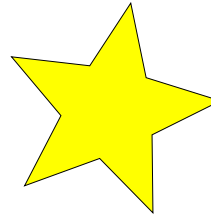
Direct Line 949.680.1789

Fax 949.297.5960

alicia.igram@ioausa.com

www.ioausa.com

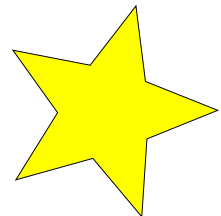
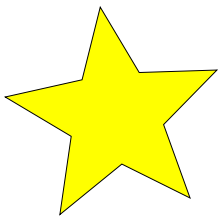




Contributors to the Commentary

Nancy Burt
Penny Nelson
Natalie Newman

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The Commentary

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Editor

Diane Sommerville
HealthInsMatters@cox.net