



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
Carlisle Coatsworth Architects, Inc.
(949) 833-1930
MarcyF@CCArchitects.com

Treasurer

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

Directors

Nancy Burt,
Ginger Castillo, CDFA
Karen Henderson
Cindy Loomer,
Connie McKenna, CDFA
Natalie Newman,
Wendy Woolsey, CDFA

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Geri Eckner
Mark Lowry
Judy Merrill

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THE COMMENTARY

January 2013 Edition

A Newsletter of the Society For Design Administration
Orange County Chapter

President's Corner

By Nancy Burt, 2012 President

Happy New Year, members and associates of SDA/OC –

To recap just a few highlights from 2012.....

- Our membership increased over 35% this year – current membership is at 40 members.
- We offered eight educational seminars ranging from Meals and Rest Break issues to Google Architecture to Cloud Computing. We also offered two popular round-tables.
- Our chapter was awarded the Gold Chapter Foundation Award, the highest level possible.
- We provided four informative newsletters to our membership and associates, and continued to keep our website up-to-date with links and information about the AEC industry.
- We participated in our fifth annual Canstruction event raising over \$10,000 and 80,000 cans of food benefitting the Orange County Food Bank. For our 21st consecutive year, we volunteered at Project Playhouse to benefit HomeAid and their efforts to build homes for the homeless.

Three sponsors gave generously this year: HomeBenefitIQ, Dealey Renton & Associates, and Belden Hiramoto & Liu.

The new 2013 Orange County Chapter Board was installed a few weeks ago, and it gives me great pleasure to announce Penny Nelson as the incoming President for the new term. Penny is organized, diligent, and comes with new ideas and strategies to grow the chapter and expand the learning opportunities. She will be joined by newcomer, Marcy Fields as Corresponding Secretary, and returning Board members Betsy Nickless and Diana Dubich as Co-Vice Presidents, Cheryl Mathes as Recording Secretary, and Helen Palermo as Treasurer.

I encourage each of you to become more involved in SDA this year. There are many opportunities for education, networking and development of skills. Please plan to join us for an evening business meeting or a lunch seminar. Another great learning experience will be the annual EDSymposium convention which will be held in May in Williamsburg, Va. Please put this on your calendar as there will be both national and chapter scholarships available.

(Continued on Page 3)

Upcoming Events

January 2013

January 17 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am
Microsoft Tips, Tricks & Shortcuts
Presented by Sue Smith,
Microsoft Office Trainer
Lutron Event Center, Irvine

February 2013

February 7 Business Meeting 5:30 pm
Meeting will be held at Dougherty +
Dougherty Architects hosted by
Helen Palermo

February 21 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am
Roundtable Discussion (Topics may
include HR, Operations, Accounting,
Systems, Insurance, etc.—Bring
Issues of interest)
Lutron Event Center, Irvine

March 2013

March 7 Business Meeting 5:30 pm
Meeting will be held at ValleyCrest
Design Group hosted by Cheryl
Mathes

March 21 Luncheon Meeting 11:30 am
Health Care Reform, presented by
Mike Rankin, e3 Financial
Lutron Event Center, Irvine

Looking Ahead

May 15-18, 2013 EDSymposium 2013
Williamsburg, Virginia

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.



January 13

Susan Crook

February 12

Debora Smith

February 22

Vicki Marcellino

February 23

Connie McKenna

February 25

Cindy Loomer

March 12

Dee Jackson

March 17

Heather Walsh

March 19

Ginger Castillo

President's Corner

(Continued from Page 1)

Please see other areas of this newsletter and our Orange County website, www.sdaoc.org, for further details on dates, times, and places of meetings and seminars, and plan to attend. Take advantage of these offerings to further your career, enhance your worth to your firm, and for your own personal growth. The more you participate, the more you benefit.

Thank you in advance for your continued support of SDA – here's to a great 2013!

Standard Mileage Rates for 2013

The Internal Revenue Service has issued the 2013 optional standard mileage rates used to calculate the deductible costs of operating an automobile for business, charitable, medical or moving purposes.

Beginning on January 1, 2013, the standard mileage rates for the use of a car (also vans, pickups or panel trucks) will be:

- 56.5 cents per mile for business miles driven.
- 24 cents per mile driven for medical or moving purposes.
- 14 cents per mile driven in service of charitable organizations.

The rate for business miles driven during 2013 increases 1 cent from the 2012 rate. The medical and moving rate is also up 1 cent per mile from the 2012 rate.

The standard mileage rate for business is based on an annual study of the fixed and variable costs of operating an automobile. The rate for medical and moving purposes is based on the variable costs.

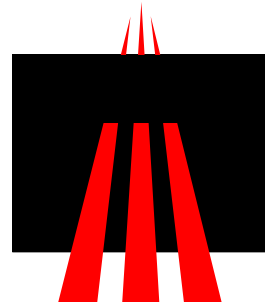
Taxpayers always have the option of calculating the actual costs of using their vehicle rather than

using the standard mileage rates.

A taxpayer may not use the business standard mileage rate for a vehicle after using any depreciation method under the Modified Accelerated Cost Recovery System (MACRS) or after claiming a Section 179 deduction for that vehicle. In addition, the business standard mileage rate cannot be used for more than four vehicles used simultaneously.

These and other requirements for a taxpayer to use a standard mileage rate to calculate the amount of a deductible business, moving, medical, or charitable expense are in Rev. Proc. 2010-51. [Notice 2012-72](#) contains the standard mileage rates, the amount a taxpayer must use in calculating reductions to basis for depreciation taken under the business standard mileage rate, and the maximum standard automobile cost that a taxpayer may use in computing the allowance under a fixed and variable rate plan.

Source: Internal Revenue Service, contributed by Nancy Burt.



SDA's Mission:

To promote the exchange of ideas and educate its members in the related disciplines of design firm administration.

Officers 2013

Penny Nelson—President



Penny Nelson has been the Director of Finance for Douglas Pancake Architects, Inc. in Newport Beach since 2010. Douglas Pancake Architects (DPA) is a boutique architectural practice serving the senior housing and healthcare industry across the western United States. Penny manages the financial, accounting, human resources and administrative functions of DPA. Penny graduated from California State University, Long Beach with a Bachelor of Science in Business Administration: Finance. During her 20+ years of experience, Penny directed the financial and office management functions in manufacturing, technology and advertising firms before joining an architectural firm in 2008. As a relative newcomer to the A/E/C industry, Penny finds SDA to be an invaluable source of information, and enjoys the connections she has made. She is looking forward to her term as President, and hopes she can uphold the tradition of excellence her predecessors have exemplified.

During her spare time, Penny enjoys spending time with her husband and two (almost) grown children, camping, crocheting, and visiting Disneyland.

Cheryl Mathes—Recording Secretary

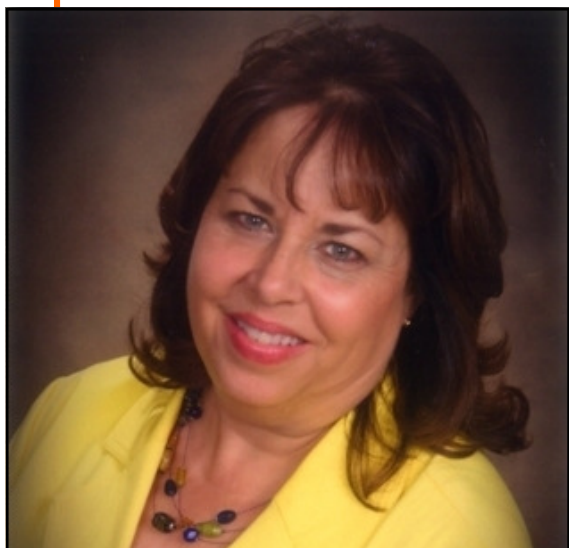
Cheryl Mathes has worked in the A&E industry for over 25 years. She is the Controller for ValleyCrest Design Group, a Landscape Architectural and Planning firm located in Santa Ana, California. As a branch of ValleyCrest Landscape Development, ValleyCrest Design Group supports the development of turn-key design-build landscape architectural projects. ValleyCrest's talented team of professionals collaborate on all aspects of a project; from the initial design conception and development of technical construction documents, through project installation and continued maintenance.

Over the years the SDA has been an integral part in Cheryl's professional career. The programs offered by the SDA give her the opportunity to meet other administrative design professionals, learn and keep updated with current trends, as well as network within the building industry. She has attended national and regional conventions, as well as participated on the local board, monthly seminars, and committees. She enjoys participating in the community outreach programs, such as Project Playhouse and CanstructionOC, and the Annual CanstructionOC Awards Gala. Cheryl is a proud supporter of the SDA and enjoys participating in all that the SDA has to offer.



Officers 2013 (Continued)

Betsy Nickless, CDFA Co-Vice President



Betsy has been in the design profession for over 30 years and was the 2008 recipient of SDA's National Lifetime Achievement Award, the highest honor bestowed by the SDA.

Currently, Betsy is Office Manager of Mark Scheurer Architects, and she serves as SDA's National President-Elect and will assume the position of National President in May, 2013. She has held positions on committees for the National SDA, as well as served as an officer of the Orange County Chapter continuously since the Chapter was founded in 1983. She also proofreads all SDA/OC Chapter publications and announcements for correct grammar and punctuation, attends all Business Meetings and SDA Conventions, and provides all of us with the

background and historical information that only a founding member of our Chapter would know. She has been a member of the Orange County Canstruction executive board since its inception in 2007, and is the Co-Chair for the 2013 event.

Betsy enjoys Five Crowns and Bistango for dining, and her favorite music is Contemporary Christian. She met her husband of 30 years, Steve, at the car races where she was in charge of timing and scoring, and he was doing PR work for one of the teams. They have two grown children.

Diana Dubich—Co-Vice President

Diana Dubich is the Office Manager at GeoSyntec Consultants in Huntington Beach. Geosyntec is a specialized consulting and engineering firm that works with private and public sector clients to address new ventures and complex problems involving our environment, natural resources, and civil infrastructure.

Diana is excited to serve her fifth term on the Orange County Chapter Board and looks forward to involvement with the numerous SDA events throughout the year. She has previously attended two Western Regional Conferences, has been involved with CanstructionOC, and attends as many monthly educational seminars as possible. Diana feels that the knowledge and insight gained from peers in the A/E industry through SDA is priceless!

During her spare time, Diana enjoys wine tasting, warm weather activities, and spending time with her "child", a 4-pound dwarf rabbit named 'Comet.'



Officers 2013 (Continued)

Helen Palermo— Treasurer



Helen has been working in the accounting field for over 40 years, ever since her first job. That first job prompted her to study accounting, resulting in a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration with an Accounting emphasis, all while working full time and raising her daughter. Her experience in the engineering arena began in 1989, and she moved into the architectural field in 2003 when she joined Dougherty+Dougherty Architects as their Business Manager.

Helen and her husband share a passion for historic preservation, both having restored bungalows built in the early 1900s prior to their marriage and are now in the process of restoring their mid-century ranch-style house. She has been a member of the Historic Preservation Committee for the City of Anaheim for many years. When they're not working on their house, Tom and Helen enjoy going on home tours, scouring antique flea markets and salvage yards for period items, gardening and walking their two dogs, Albert and Raisin.

After sitting on the SDA sidelines for a number of years and attending the occasional lunch seminar, in 2009 she was recruited to join the board as chapter treasurer and has served in that position ever since.

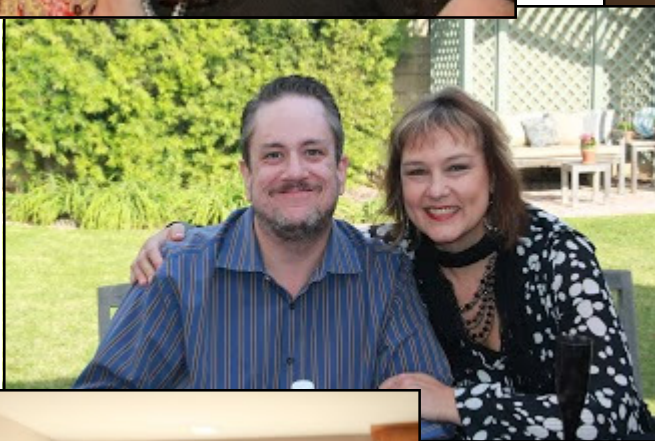
Marcy Fields—Corresponding Secretary

Marcy Fields is the Office Manager/Corporate Secretary of Carlile Coatsworth Architects, Inc. (CCA) a diverse full-service architectural firm with experience in a wide variety of industries with nearly 30 employees. After obtaining her Business (Finance) degree from California State Long Beach University, Marcy became CCA's first official employee in 1991 and has been employed there ever since. Attending SDA luncheons over a number of years and getting invaluable input from the various members, Marcy felt maybe it was time to start giving back to such a worthwhile organization, taking on the position of corresponding secretary.

Marcy has been married to her husband (Doug) for 22 years, and they have a 19 year-old-daughter currently attending Emerson College in Boston. To fill the void with their daughter gone, Doug and Marcy recently adopted a Golden Retriever puppy named Maggie and are currently applying for second jobs to pay for everything she has destroyed.



Holiday Party 2012



More Holiday Pics



And More



Members of the Year 2012

By Nancy Burt

As Chapter President, Nancy Burt selected Diane Sommerville to be the recipient of the Member of the Year for 2012. Although Diane is not employed by an A/E firm, she continues to service the industry and many of us rely on her special knowledge about her given profession.

This year she took on the task of heading up our sponsorship undertaking. She tweaked the master letter until it was just right and then helped with the compiling of the name and address list of potential sponsors. We garnered three sponsors this year for a total of \$1,110.

She took a year or so off from the newsletter duties, but this year was back as our editor. It can be a frustrating job at times but she handles it with grace and style and each newsletter was full of articles of education and information for our members and friends.

She attends many of the monthly business meetings and always has good advice and suggestions for ongoing issues with the chapter. For the past couple of years, she has served as one of the “unofficial” bartenders at the Cantsruction Awards Gala and has volunteered for a number of years with our involvement at Project Playhouse.



By Betsy Nickless, CDFA

It has been tradition that at the end of each year the chapter president chooses one member who has gone above and beyond in the past year to receive the annual Member of the Year Award.

At the Holiday Brunch, Installation, and Awards in December, Nancy Burt, Chapter President, announced that the 2012 recipient was Diane Sommerville. A very big congratulations to Diane for all she does for our chapter and for being the editor of this newsletter!



But in a last-minute surprise, Nancy learned that her very deceptive board had chosen HER to receive the Member of the Year Award too!! Nancy has served as chapter president for the last two years and as a board member for several years before that. She has been a member since 2000.

In the midst of it all, she helped close the company where she had worked for over 20 years and changed careers to the accounting industry (thanks to SDA networking and job referrals!)

THANK YOU, Nancy, for giving of your time, your expertise, your diplomacy, your industry knowledge, your friendship, and your dedication to the SDA.

Fringe Benefits Affected by Tax Relief Act

Contributed by Diane Sommerville

President Obama recently signed the American Taxpayer Relief Act of 2012 (ATRA), which affects the following flex and fringe benefit plans.

Employer-provided Educational Assistance

For income and employment tax purposes, an employee may exclude from gross income up to \$5,250 per year for employer-provided education assistance. Prior to 2001, this incentive was temporary and only applied to undergraduate courses; however, the Economic Growth and Tax Relief Reconciliation Act of 2001 (EGTRRA) expanded this provision to graduate education and extended the provision for undergraduate and graduate education. The recent ATRA legislation permanently extends the changes to this provision for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2012.

Dependent Care Credit

A taxpayer may receive a credit for an applicable percentage of child care expenses for children under age 13 and disabled dependents. The EGTRRA increased the amount of eligible expenses:

- For one child – from \$2,400 to \$3,000
- For two or more children – from \$4,800 to \$6,000

The EGTRRA also increased the applicable percentage from 30 percent to 35 percent. The ATRA permanently extends the changes to the dependent care credit made by EGTRRA for taxable years beginning after December 31, 2012.

Adoption Tax Credit and the Adoption Assistance Programs Exclusion

Taxpayers who adopt children can receive a tax credit for qualified adoption expenses. A taxpayer may also exclude from income adoption expenses paid by an employer. The EGTRRA increased the credit from \$5,000 (\$6,000 for a special needs child) to \$10,000 and provided an income exclusion of \$10,000 for employer-assistance programs.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (ACA) extended these benefits to 2011 and made the credit refundable. For taxable years beginning after December 31, 2012, the ATRA permanently extends the increased adoption credit amount and the exclusion for employer-assistance programs as enacted in EGTRRA.

Employer-provided Transit and Parking Benefits

The ATRA also includes an extension of the employer-provided transit and parking benefits provision through 2013. In addition, legislation increases the monthly pre-tax limit for employer-provided transit and vanpool benefits from \$125 to \$240, which is now the same as the monthly pre-tax limit for employer-provided parking benefits.

2013 Pregnancy Leave Changes

Contributed by Diane Sommerville

The California Fair Employment and Housing Commission (CFEHC) recently issued finalized amended pregnancy disability leave regulations that became effective December 30, 2012. These regulations apply to all employers that employ five or more employees.

- While there is no change in the requirement that employers provide up to four (4) months of unpaid pregnancy disability leave and to continue employer-sponsored health benefits during that time period, the regulations now clarify that the “four months” is actually the number of days the employee would normally work within four calendar months (one-third of a year equaling 17 1/3 weeks). If an employee’s schedule varies from month to month, a monthly average of hours worked over a four-month period prior to the beginning of the leave should be used for calculating the employee’s normal work month.
- “Disabled by Pregnancy” now includes time off for postnatal care, bed rest, gestational diabetes, pregnancy-related hypertension, preeclampsia, post-partum depression, childbirth, loss or end of pregnancy, or recovery from childbirth, loss or end of pregnancy.
- “Related medical condition” has also been expanded to include lactation-related medical conditions such as mastitis. A reasonable accommodation for an employee affected by pregnancy may include lactation accommodation.
- The regulations also include updated notices to employees about pregnancy disability leave rights, and a process employers must follow in accommodating leave and transfer requests.
- For employers with 50 or more employees, the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) and the California Family Rights Act (CFRA) also provide unpaid leave and benefits continuation for serious health conditions and certain other specified circumstances for employees who have worked for that employer at least 12 months and for at least 1,250 hours in the 12 months preceding the leave. The new regulations clarify that the pregnancy disability leave is in addition to any requirement to maintain health coverage during a leave under CFRA. This is significant, as it mandates up to a total of seven (7) months of benefit continuation for CFRA eligible employees disabled by pregnancy or childbirth.

A copy of the new regulations is available in full at www.fehc.ca.gov/act/pregnancyregulations.asp.

Recently Completed Projects



Nueva Vista at La Vida Llena Albuquerque, New Mexico

Architect: Douglas Pancake
Architects
SDA Member: Penny Nelson
Douglas Pancake Architects

City of Buena Park Community Center

Architect: Crane Architectural Group
Construction Manager: Griffin
Structures, Inc.
SDA Member: Karen Henderson,
Griffin Structures, Inc.



Gulf Coast Town Center Fort Myers/Naples, Florida

Landscape Architect: ValleyCrest
Design Group
SDA Member: Cheryl Mathes,
ValleyCrest Design Group



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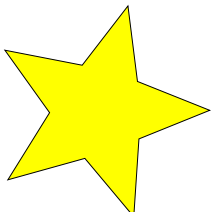
PO Box 10550
Santa Ana CA 92711-0550
3 MacArthur Place, Suite 440
Santa Ana CA 92707
Tel 714 427.6810 ext 230
Fax 714 427.6818
Direct 714 427.3488
kwittman@insdra.com
www.dealeyrenton.com

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Contributors to the Commentary

Nancy Burt
Karen Henderson
Cheryl Mathes
Penny Nelson
Natalie Newman
Betsy Nickless
Diane Sommerville

And thanks to our fabulous proofreader
and photographer,
Betsy Nickless!

A large yellow five-pointed star with a black outline, positioned to the right of the central box.A decorative border made of small yellow five-pointed stars with black outlines, arranged in a rectangular frame around the text.

The Commentary

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Editor

Diane Sommerville
Wells Fargo Insurance Services USA, Inc.
Diane.Sommerville@WellsFargo.com