

AN RSVA ANNUAL CONVENTION EXPERIENCE IN PHOENIX

***By: David Hanlon, Ways and Means Chair, California
And Roy Harmon, Roadside Rest Area Chair, California***

Each year at the annual ACB Convention, RSVA offers a full schedule of meetings sharing new ideas, as well as holding annual elections, our annual auction and Karaoke Nite, Casino Nite, luncheons, and hospitality experiences. This year, the RSVA experience was held in Phoenix and coincidentally RSVA welcomed its newest affiliate, Arizona RSVA, into the RSVA family. Welcome to ALL Arizona Randolph-Sheppard Vendors!

On Sunday, July 11, 2010, RSVA President, Charlie Glaser welcomed the attendees with an introduction of all the participants present. This was then followed by a panel moderated by Roy Harmon, RSVA Roadside Rest Area Chair, on "Roadside Rest Area Issues". Panel participants were Janet Wetmore, Illinois, who reported that with the end of the fiscal year in June, Illinois, with two day's notice, closed all of their Welcome Centers. In Illinois, the Welcome Centers are in the same buildings as the vending machines and restrooms. The closing of these centers has definitely affected the vending sales as people now think the vending is closed as well since they have to walk through the Welcome Centers to get to the machines.

Charlie Carroll, Alabama, reported their roadside rest vendors have worked hard to establish a good working relationship with their State Department of Transportation folks. They have vendors at all of Alabama's rest areas. Ron Eller, North Carolina, reported no present problems for their roadside rest vendors. Roy Harmon reported on four attempted closures in California with the end of the fiscal budget as well. He also attended the BEA Fly-In and visited with the Senate Majority, Senate Minority, House Majority and Minority, and had a productive meeting with the Director of U.S. Highway Policy for the U.S. Department of Transportation, on behalf of all RSVA Roadside Rest Area vendors.

The Arizona Report

Allen Curry, Chair of the Arizona Vendors Policy Committee, gave an extensive report about the Arizona BEP program, along with John Palacios, Program Manager, for Arizona. They presently have 32 operators with 44 locations and 13 full-time staff members. Arizona's roadside rests, up until this past year, were a prime contributor to their set-aside (the majority of which were contracted out).

Arizona is in the process of reopening some of their rest areas which were closed due to lack of funding and placing vendors in some more of their rest areas.

Arizona vendors pay a 20% set-aside fee, but included in that is a \$9,000 per year health insurance payback payment which is sent to each vendor. Vendors are paid \$1,500-2,000 quarterly for their retirement plan which they invest as they see fit. Vendors are responsible for providing their own liability insurance to set state standards, although the first three months of their liability and workman's comp expenses are covered.

An interesting facet is how Arizona vendors deal with their inventory. Each location has a "*responsible level of inventory*" which must remain with the location and is actually owned by the SLA, not the vendor. A "*responsible level of inventory*" is considered 2.5 weeks of sales receipts. When you leave a facility, you are required to leave that value of inventory with the location. The State agency makes a determination of value needed for going in and out of the location. At no point in time, does the vendor own this portion of inventory.

Opportunities in Arizona will be increasing. Their State Policy Committee filed arbitration for a prison and won. The Arizona Department of Corrections must comply with their *Mini-Randolph-Sheppard Act*. They presently have about 7 prison vendors and expect to take over 5-8 more. They also recently won arbitration over a vending route for USPS facilities and they are now in the process of adding their postal facilities to vending routes in populated areas; remote area USPS facilities will be contracted out for commissions.

Arizona is placing the same style vending machines in their prisons and postal facilities. They are using National Cold Food machines, National 181 Snack Machines, as well as glass fronted Bev Max and regular soda machines. They have established a set (same) pricing policy for all of the prison locations and on tracking these sales have realized a 20-40% increase in sales. They state the prison attitude is overwhelmingly positive because all of the pricing is unified in the prisons. Their Department of Corrections (ADC) does not allow bill validators in their machines, only coins, and they are presently getting ready to place debit-credit card systems into all of the prisons which they believe will increase sales as well, as the ADC currently only allows \$20.00 in coins per visitor per visit.

Arizona has a new training class beginning in October. They are presently surveying all priority state and federal locations, as they anticipate their funding level to return to its previous 4.5 million annually, and they are anticipating growing exponentially. Arizona is utilizing "Active Participation" with the BEP and State Vendors Policy Committee.

The Arizona BEP is presently in the process of working with RSA to update their Rules and Regulations to the Administrative Code.

The RSA Report

Suzanne Mitchell, VR Specialist for RSA in Washington, D.C., gave the RSA Report. She initially discussed the recent RSA National Training Conference held this past June. This conference was a combined effort by NCSAB, RSA, RSVA, NABM, BEA, NFB and ACB. There had not been an RSA sponsored conference in 10 years, so this conference was considered to be extremely important for RSA and the Department of Education. There were actually 15 federal agencies in attendance as well, which speaks to the effect our new RSA Commissioner, Lynnae Ruttledge, has in endorsing Randolph-Sheppard throughout our nation.

Suzanne reported that the USPS has revised their EL602, which finally now reflects the Randolph-Sheppard program. She also reported she is in close contact with Shay Assad in the Inspector General's Department of Defense office, concerning the attacks by NISH and NIB over the Randolph-Sheppard priority and the placement of dining facilities on the new RFP's coming out. She stated, "It's a new day, but collaboration is a good beginning".

She stated that they have been implementing the new Presidential Initiatives. The GSA response has been regionally good and bad and it will be up to us to see our priorities are carried through. She stated that the Randolph-Sheppard Act provides for predominantly food services and that we will need to continue to protect and preserve that issue. She felt that RSA reached out to more SLA's than ever at the conference and she felt it was extremely important for Committee Chairs and SLA's to receive the same message, and that it is RSA's plan to resurrect the guidelines on Active Participation since some of the SLA's have forgotten it is in the Act.

Ms. Mitchell announced that RSA has hired a replacement for Ray Hopkins. His name is Dan Fry and he began on July 19th. Some of the 2009 RSA 15 data is as follows: \$750,000,000 (750 million) in gross sales; 2,400 plus vendors who are responsible for hiring 9,400 employees. Randolph-Sheppard vendors created over 12,000 jobs in 2009 and one third of those jobs involved disabled. The average income for a Randolph-Sheppard vendor in 2008 was \$50,543.00.

RSA is looking for greater collaboration with the SLA's. They are concerned with resource monitoring within the statutes. They will again be revising the RSA 15 which will raise the median income levels, due to changes in allowable expenses.

RSA believes many SLA challenges involve procurement and maintenance and repair contracts. Suzanne recommended that the SLA's and State Policy Committees seek an exemption from their state legislatures to speed up procurement like Louisiana did in 1998 with an amendment that encourages "speed of procurement", which is absolutely necessary and vital for Randolph-Sheppard vendors to work within their business environments. Suzanne stated RSA recommends SLA's review their maintenance and repair contracts as well, as there could be excessive unnecessary costs versus replacement costs.

US Treasury Initiative on Accessible Currency

The Department of Treasury Staff provided a "hands on" experience for attendees to examine new prototypes of currency currently being considered for printing, as a result of ACB winning an extensive lawsuit for providing currency for the blind to be able to use and identify as well as sighted individuals.

Everything offered is considered in a preliminary stage and they are considering options still at this time. The distinct purple color on the \$5.00 bill notes will probably continue, although for many blind people that is not important. The new \$100.00 bill has large numbers on the back side and they were seeking our opinions on that bill as well. On considering a change in the size of currency, they reported that there have been 50 different suggestions and they must take all suggestions into consideration before determining a final conclusion.

A major concern for them throughout their presentation, was that the Federal Reserve has giant machines which process all notes and whatever they design must be able to pass through the Federal Reserve processing machines, as these will not be able to separate new notes from older notes. The staff passed out several prototypes for attendees to examine and give their opinions on, including notes with bumps, notes with cut off corners, and notes with Roman numerals. It will be interesting to see what is actually designed and accepted by the American public and the blind community.

Bob Humphreys Answers Questions

Bob Humphreys, Esq., author of the 1974 Randolph-Sheppard Act Amendments, and well respected Randolph-Sheppard attorney, gave a presentation on recent Federal arbitrations. The report was very interesting and proved that Federal arbitrations can protect the vendors.

Bob then read a joint letter to Senator Inouye, Appropriations Chair for the Senate, prepared by Warren Toyama (RSVA), Stan Young (NFB) and Virgil Stinnett (NFB).

This was a huge joint accomplishment on behalf of RSVA and NFB, showing that Randolph-Sheppard vendors can jointly work together with common goals. Senator Inouye is considered a champion of R-S causes, and it was important to point out to Senator Inouye our needs, as well as the needs of RSA, including threats and concerns for attacks on the Randolph-Sheppard program and the need for RSA to have more personnel in Washington, D.C. This includes 5 professional positions, as well as 5 office positions, which would greatly benefit all State programs and blind vendors operating throughout our nation.

RSVA Elections

RSVA Nominations and Elections were held for RSVA Officer and Board of Director positions currently available by term.

RSVA elected a new President, Dan Sippl, from Eau Claire, Wisconsin. Dan has been an RSVA member for several years and has been on the Board of Directors as well. He has served as RSVA National Accounts Chair and has been paramount in the success of growing sponsors and exhibitors for the Sagebrush Conferences. He has also played a very important role in establishing a new National Frito-Lay-Pepsi rebate program for RSVA members. Dan, of course, is always available to RSVA members and invites inquiries. Please refer to his contact information on the inside of the back cover of the Vendorscope. ***WELCOME ABOARD PRESIDENT DAN!***

Donnie Anderson, Illinois, was elected back to the RSVA Board. Donnie was a previous Board member from 1998-2004, 2nd Vice-President from 2000-2004. RSVA Vendor of the Year in 2000, and Editor of **The Vendorscope** from 2000-2004. Donnie has served RSVA in capacities too numerous to mention over the years.

John Burt, Louisiana, was newly elected to the RSVA Board. He is serving on the Louisiana State Committee, as well as Treasurer of the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of Louisiana (RSVL). Four awards attained by John are the *Louisiana Vendor of the Year - 2000*, *Guy Dicharry Advocacy Award - 2004*, *Service and Dedication Award - 2006*, and *Elected Committee Member of the Year - 2007*.

David Alstatt, Sr., Oklahoma, was newly elected to the RSVA Board as well. David has been a member of RSVA for 30 plus years, served on the Oklahoma Elected Committee for two terms, was the affiliate President for two terms and has always believed in standing up for the rights of R-S vendors nationwide.

Randy Hauth, Oregon, was also newly elected to the RSVA Board. Randy has been Chairperson of the Oregon Elected Committee of Blind Vendors for the past 8 years. He has been a member of RSVA for several years and has been president of the Oregon RSVA Affiliate.

WELCOME TO THE RSVA BOARD - DONNIE, JOHN, Randy, AND DAVID!

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RSVA 2010 ANNUAL AWARDS

By: David Hanlon, Ways and Means Chair

Each year at its Annual Convention, RSVA presents awards to a few select people for their dedication to the preservation and growth of the Randolph-Sheppard program throughout the United States. The 2010 Award winners were honored at the Annual RSVA Luncheon in Phoenix. This year, three awards were presented: (1) The RSVA “**Vendor of the Year**”, (2) the “**Don Cameron Advocacy Award**”, and (3) the “**Jennings Randolph Service Award**”.

The RSVA “**Vendor of the Year**” Award was presented to Mr. Randy Hauth, a newly elected RSVA Board Member, from the beautiful State of Oregon. Randy has been a BEP vendor in Oregon for nearly 24 years. He has operated several different types of facilities in his career, including snack bars, cafeterias, espresso carts, and vending routes. Presently, Randy is operating a full-line vending route in downtown Portland and the surrounding area. Randy services some of the locations and also partners with a private vending company for other locations. Randy has been Chairperson of the *Elected Committee of Blind Vendors* in Oregon for the past 8 years, and works diligently to promote Oregon’s Business Enterprise Program to help its licensed blind vendors earn an appropriate income. He is presently working to help establish a retirement plan for Oregon vendors.

On the personal side, Randy is a father of 3, as well as a grandfather of 3. Randy has a wonderful longtime girlfriend, Linda, and they recently purchased a floating home that sits on the beautiful Columbia River. Randy reports that he and Linda are presently remodeling the house (and doing the work themselves). Of interest also is that Randy earned a black belt in Wu Ying Dao back in 1984, and even instructed for a time. ***Congratulations Randy on your “Vendor of the Year” award!***

Roy Harmon, current Chair of the *California Vendors Policy Committee* and *RSVA Roadside Rest Area / Oasis Project Chair*, was awarded the prestigious “**Don Cameron Advocacy Award**”. Roy was the first California vendor ever awarded this Award, which is presented to a blind vendor for exceptional service in the areas of communication and legislation, as well as seeking to improve the goals of Randolph-Sheppard vendors by promoting blind awareness in their community, state and nationwide. Roy has devoted much time over the past 20 years on both the state and national levels, communicating Randolph-Sheppard issues to his State legislators and Congressional leaders.

He has continually and aggressively approached committees, organizations, and congressional leaders to inform them about the Randolph-Sheppard program and to fight against attacks on the Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America. As *Roadside Rest Area/Oasis Project Chair*, Roy has worked diligently to establish working relationships with the U.S. Department of Transportation and is mindful of the Kennely Amendment priority for Randolph-Sheppard vendors everywhere. Finally, Roy also received the RSVA “**Vendor of the Year**” award in 2008.

On the personal side, Roy has been married for 35 plus years, and has two adult children. He originally hails from St. Louis, Missouri and enjoys sharing his secret love of the St. Louis Cardinal Baseball team with anyone who will listen. ***Congratulations Roy for your many years of exceptional service to Randolph-Sheppard vendors everywhere in this nation!***

The “**Jennings Randolph Service Award**” is presented to someone outside of the Randolph-Sheppard Program who has given his or her time and energy to Randolph-Sheppard Vendors of America and for his or her service to blind vendors, but is not an active vendor.

This year, the “**Jennings Randolph Service Award**” was presented to the American Council of the Blind (ACB) for its constant dedication of support on Randolph-Sheppard issues. ACB has continually been involved in Randolph-Sheppard issues and activities. Its president, Mitch Pomerantz, has provided ACB participation at the RSVA Sagebrush Conferences, often inviting RSVA members to get involved on national issues along with the ACB.

ACB has been a major supporter of the Blind Entrepreneurs’ Alliance since its establishment over five years ago. Not only has ACB been a substantial financial supporter of the BEA, but ACB has actively pursued congressional and RSA action on behalf of Randolph-Sheppard issues with the BEA.

A standing ovation occurred as Ms. Melanie Brunson, Executive Director, of ACB accepted the “**Jennings Randolph Service Award**”.

Ms. Brunson thanked the RSVA leadership and attendees for presenting this award to ACB. She reiterated that RSVA is an affiliate of ACB and ACB will always support RSVA issues. ACB recently won the federal court case for establishing identifiable currency for the blind and which will be of prime interest for Randolph-Sheppard vendors in the near future. ACB will continue to support Randolph-Sheppard issues as they arise as well.

Congratulations American Council of the Blind on receiving the “Jennings Randolph Service Award”!