

Three Chapters Team Up for Payroll Conference

The Greater Nashville, Payroll Professionals of Kentuckiana, and East Tennessee Payroll Association Chapters of the APA held their 12th Annual Kentucky/Tennessee Payroll Conference on September 15-17, 2004 at the Sheraton Hotel in downtown Nashville, TN.

More than 100 payroll professionals and 16 participating vendors from Alabama, Indiana, Kentucky, Georgia, and Tennessee signed up to network and hear the latest payroll updates from industry experts.

The 2004 meeting theme, "Be a Payroll Private Eye and Look for the Clues," kept attendees on their toes as they selected one workshop from each of the six tracks or "clues." Tracks included "Clue 1: The Mystery of a Demanding Payroll World"; "Clue 2: The Case of Excellent Performers"; "Clue 3: 'Who Dunit?';" "Clue 4: The Case of the Valuable Employees"; "Clue 5: The Case of Missing Paper Files"; and "Clue 6: The Mystery of Achieving the Ultimate Success."

Participants had a wide array of speakers to choose from, including representatives from the Internal Revenue Service; Social Security Administration; the Department of Labor's Wage & Hour Division; ADP, Inc.; MasterCard International; and APA National, among others.

APA Board of Advisors member Lisa Wachter, CPP and past Board of Advisors members Martin Armstrong, CPP and Imelda Yago-Koppes, CPP shared their valuable payroll and leadership expertise while presenting at their sessions. APA Director Vickie B. Majors, CPP educated attendees on "Protecting Your Identity" and "Customer Service." And APA Senior Director of Education and Training Jim Medlock, CPP presented on cafeteria plans/Section 125 and benefit plans during track four.

Kentucky/Tennessee Lead Conference Coordinator and Vice President of the Greater Nashville Chapter Bonetta Bond also gave an informative session on multi-state payroll.

Greater Nashville Chapter President and APA Regional Advisor Lisa Wachter, CPP, who is Senior Manager of Payroll at Dollar General Corporation, was impressed with the program lineup.

"This year's conference was informative, educational, and appropriate for both novice and seasoned payroll professionals," she said. "It wasn't just another lecture, but included material for practical application."

In addition to payroll education, attendees made time for fun. Vendors and sponsors contributed some 100 door prizes, including a set of gas fireplace logs, hotel stays, dinner at several Nashville-area restaurants, limo rides, and two sets of luggage.

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Above: Pictured are Lisa Wachter, CPP, Greater Nashville Chapter President; Barbara Rush, Payroll Professionals of Kentuckiana Chapter President; Jim Medlock, CPP, APA's Senior Director of Education and Training; Bonetta Bond, Greater Nashville Chapter Vice President and Kentucky/Tennessee Lead Conference Coordinator; Vickie Majors, CPP, APA Director and Greater Nashville Chapter Advisor; and Imelda Yago-Koppes, CPP, Greater Nashville Chapter Director of Education.



Above right: Keynote speaker Frank Keck wowed attendees by telling them to "Embrace Your Freakness."



Above: Mary McCubbins and Barbara Rush of the Payroll Professionals of Kentuckiana; Pat McCarron of the Social Security Administration; Vickie Majors, CPP of the Greater Nashville Chapter; and Jim Medlock, CPP of the APA share a few laughs at the murder mystery dinner.

Participants also had several opportunities on both days to visit exhibitors, which showcased the latest products and services related to the payroll industry.

To top off the final evening at the conference, attendees were entertained with a comical murder mystery dinner and live music at the local Miss Marple's Dinner Theatre.

Bond, who is also an Employment Tax Accountant at HCA, Inc., was extremely pleased with the meeting's success and was grateful to all involved. "I thought the camaraderie was phenomenal; everyone enjoyed being together and learning," she

said. "Everything was so well planned. Many people worked on this conference. They did good work, and it showed."

Payroll Professionals of Kentuckiana Chapter President Barbara Rush also shared her positive sentiments. "It was a wonderful experience and the networking was really tremendous. Our conference just keeps getting better. We keep outdoing ourselves every year!"

Note: To reach out to all three chapters, the conference location alternates between Nashville, TN and Louisville, KY each year.

How to Organize an Internet Study Group

BY RAEANN HOFKIN, CPP

Organizing an Internet study group (ISG) is similar to organizing a live study group within your chapter. In fact, if your chapter currently has a process in place to coordinate a live study group, converting it into an ISG is relatively easy.

Participating in an ISG is the simplest, cheapest, and most convenient way to earn recertification credit hours, especially since you never have to leave your home or office! Finding a Certified Payroll Professional (CPP) to facilitate/instruct an ISG is also less challenging, since the online format makes it convenient and easily accessible to a large pool of qualified facilitators.

Setting up your ISG online is a simple process. Dusty Dixon, Study Group Coordinator and Immediate Past Secretary of the North Mississippi Chapter, offers great tips for establishing an ISG through Yahoo.com (see related box outlining her tips).

Sharing Study Materials

Every study group operates differently, but all study groups have documents and materials they work with on a regular basis. When you're setting up your ISG, it's also a great time to obtain or share files used by other successful online study groups.

For example, quizzes, articles, and lesson plans can all be shared between chapters. Why reinvent the wheel when you can share files?

In addition, I recommend using APA's *The Payroll Source*® as the required textbook. More hints:

- Find other study groups in PAYTECH's "Chapter Network" column in the "News Express" section, or by using the APA Web site's Chapter Network section (www.americanpayroll.org/xsecure/chapters/cppstudy.html).

- You can also collect tax and regulatory information from different government Web sites and ask students to bring in relevant information with them to class. All this information can be easily distributed to the online group.
- File all your information and build on your materials year after year. However, it's important to keep whatever material you develop or choose to use updated.
- When you know that a file's information will change each year, note the year it has last been updated using parentheses (2005). Then, when you're updating your files, you can conduct a search for "2005" and the search tool will stop at each 2005-related item for updating.
- Keep your study group information organized. Save your lesson plans in Microsoft Word or Excel files. Keep separate files for various textbook chapters as well.

Group Facilitation

ISGs are easy to facilitate and usually require an hour or an hour-and-a-half per week, often lasting for 14-16 weeks. *Note:* Make sure you reserve the last two weeks for review periods.

To aid facilitation, post your files on the Web site a week before class. Instruct students to read the textbook chapter and complete the questions in the back of the chapter before they meet in the chat room for the lesson plan and discussion. And make sure to prepare lesson plans in advance. A hint:

- I recommend that you start each class with the lesson plan. If you have it in a Word document, you can copy and paste the lesson plan into the chat room as you go (line by line).

Everyone should meet in the chat room at a specified time at least once a week. After the lesson plan, ask if there are any questions. Then, review the questions in the back of the chapter. Type the question number and have the students

type the answer. *Note:* There is no need to type the entire question and answer.

Everyone in the study group should have a copy of *The Payroll Source*® and follow along. To purchase a copy of the book, visit www.payroll.org.

Challenges

Although ISGs are convenient and easier to facilitate than live study groups, they do have drawbacks. For instance, students need to be more committed to their studies.

In addition, it's also challenging to explain complex issues to students, and impossible to visually see if they understand the material. You'll have to assume that if no questions are asked online that everyone comprehends the material.

However, to avoid any misconceptions, constantly ask for questions. Make it clear that you want to be interrupted if anyone has questions, and that no question is insignificant or will be left unanswered. A hint:

- Explain to students that when you (the facilitator) are typing, everyone else should read your words. If they have a question, they are to type "Q" or "?" next to their names and wait for you to acknowledge the question. Then, if any students wish to answer, they are to type an "A" next to their names and wait to be acknowledged by you. This avoids the confusion that can occur when everyone types at the same time.

Other problems can develop because of computer system failures, storms, viruses, and firewall issues. To avoid some of these problems, make sure that students have your phone number. If you're not in the chat room, make sure that students know to call you to find out if class needs to be rescheduled. A hint:

- If possible, have two CPPs facilitate the study group. If one CPP becomes ill or has system problems, the other CPP can continue with the class.

Raeann Hofkin, CPP is President of the Southeastern Pennsylvania Chapter.

Chapter Updates?

If your local chapter has new officers, changes to chapter information, a new Web site address, or any other updates, please send your information to Gloria Aranda in the APA Chapter Relations Department at garanda@americanpayroll.org.

How to Establish an Internet Study Group Through Yahoo!

BY DUSTY DIXON

- Go to www.yahoo.com and click on "Groups" on the left-hand side.
- Under "Sign In" on the left-hand side, enter your Yahoo! e-mail address and password if you have one, or sign up for one if you don't have one before creating your Internet study group.
- Click on the words "Start a new Group!"
- Select a category for your group to be in (for payroll, "Business & Finance" works well).
- Select a group that best describes your group or your group's purpose from the narrowed-down list (for example, "Financial Professionals").
- Select a more specialized sub-category for the next list (for example, "Accountants").
- If you picked "Accountants," for example, click on the words "Place my group in Accountants."
- Create the name for your group and enter it here.
- Create an e-mail address for your group.
- Type a brief description of your group, then click on "Continue."
- Follow the directions on the next screen and click on "Continue."
- The next screen should say "Congratulations!" and give you your Web site home page, e-mail address, and instructions on how to invite people to your group as well as customize the site.
- All new members need to be approved before they have access to the Web site. You are also notified when someone leaves the study group.
- All postings need to be approved, which helps discourage solicitors.

Dusty Dixon is the Payroll Coordinator for Memphis Pathology Laboratory and is the Study Group Coordinator and Immediate Past Secretary for the North Mississippi Chapter.

2005 Statewide Conferences

Southern California Payroll Focus Day

Location: Hyatt Regency, Irvine, CA
Date: September 22, 2005
Contact: Kay M. Thompson, CPP, (619) 252-7637, e-mail kmthompson1@cox.net, or visit www.focusday.org

2005 Study Groups

Albuquerque Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Albuquerque, NM
Date: January–April 2005
Meeting Schedule: TBD
Contact: Barbara Sawyer, CPP, (505) 348-9365, or e-mail bsawyer@lrri.org

Central Illinois Chapter (CPP)

Location: Bloomington, IL
Date: January–April 2005
Meeting Schedule: TBD
Contact: Patricia Downen, CPP, (309) 828-5226 ext. 3248, or e-mail pattydownen@afninet.com

Central Iowa Chapter (CPP)

Location: Des Moines, IA
Date: January–April 2005
Meeting Schedule: TBD
Contact: Sara Stafford, CPP, (515) 313-4251, or e-mail sara.stafford@efcoforms.com

Chicago Chapter (CPP)

Location: Elk Grove Village, IL
Date: February 5–April 9, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Saturdays, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Contact: Patricia Bradberry, CPP, (630) 203-6318, or e-mail pbradberry@deloitte.com

Chicago Chapter (FPC)

Location: Elk Grove Village, IL
Date: March 5–April 2, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Saturdays, 8:30 a.m.-5:00 p.m.
Contact: Patricia Bradberry, CPP, (630) 203-6318, or e-mail pbradberry@deloitte.com

Denver Chapter Payroll Association (CPP/FPC)

Location: Lakewood, CO
Date: January 10–March 28, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Mondays, 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Contact: Cyndy Davidson, CPP, (303) 705-9296, or e-mail cdavidson@chefamerica.com

Denver Chapter Payroll Association (CPP/FPC)

Location: Westminster, CO
Date: January 11–March 29, 2005

Meeting Schedule: Tuesdays, 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.
Contact: Cyndy Davidson, CPP, (303) 705-9296, or e-mail cdavidson@chefamerica.com

Fort Worth Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Arlington, TX
Date: February 5–April 9, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Saturdays, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Contact: Sara Hawkins, FPC, (817) 462-9057, or e-mail sara.hawkins@nursefinders.com

Golden Isles Chapter of the APA (CPP)

Location: Brunswick, GA
Date: October 6, 2004–March 29, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Wednesdays, Noon-1:00 p.m.
Contact: Rhodora Tuten, CPP, (912) 265-8500, or e-mail tsi@teamworkservicesinc.com

Hampton Roads Chapter (CPP)

Location: Virginia Beach, VA
Date: January 13–March 31, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Thursdays, 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.
Contact: Joyce Thompson, CPP, (757) 366-4000, or e-mail jthompson@armadahoffler.com

Maine Association of Payroll Professionals (CPP/FPC)

Location: Lewiston, ME
Date: December 1, 2004–March 1, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.-8:00 p.m.
Contact: Barbara Stewart, CPP, (207) 225-5223, or e-mail bstewart@megalink.net

Miami Valley Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Dayton, OH
Date: March 10–May 13, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Thursdays, 5:45 p.m.-7:45 p.m.
Contact: Fran Sipos, CPP, (937) 221-3176, or e-mail fran.sipos@standardregister.com

Miami Valley Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Dayton, OH
Date: August 11–October 13, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Thursdays, 5:45 p.m.-7:45 p.m.
Contact: Fran Sipos, CPP, (937) 221-3176, or e-mail fran.sipos@standardregister.com

North Jersey Chapter (CPP)

Location: TBD
Date: January–April 2005
Meeting Schedule: TBD
Contact: Morris Levine, (201) 843-4000, or e-mail morrislevine@hotmail.com

North Mississippi Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/cppfpstudygroup> (online study group)
Date: January 10–May 15, 2005
Meeting Schedule: Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays at

7:00 p.m. and Thursdays at 7:30 p.m. (Central Time)
Contact: Dusty Dixon, (901) 405-8073, or e-mail
ddixon@mpl-llc.com

Northern Lights Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: <http://yahoo.com/groups/cppstudy> (online study group)

Date: November 21, 2004–March 27, 2005

Meeting Schedule: Sundays, 6:00 p.m. (Alaska Time)

Contact: Dee Nelson, FPC, CPP, (907) 745-8415, or e-mail
dee.nelson@shawgrp.com

Richmond Chapter (CPP)

Location: Richmond, VA

Date: February 7–April 18, 2005

Meeting Schedule: Mondays, 5:30 p.m.-7:30 p.m.

Contact: Betty Martin, CPP, (804) 262-7939, or e-mail
bhmartin@verizon.net

San Diego Chapter (CPP)

Location: San Diego, CA

Date: TBD

Meeting Schedule: TBD

Contact: Peggy Elmore, CPP, (858) 694-7506, or e-mail
peggy.elmore@l-3com.com

Susquehanna Valley Chapter (CPP)

Location: Camp Hill, PA

Date: June 15–August 24, 2005

Meeting Schedule: TBD

Contact: Heide Daugherty, CPP, (717) 763-2836, or e-mail
hdaugherty@hsh.org

Western Pennsylvania Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Warrendale, PA

Date: October 20, 2004–April 6, 2005

Meeting Schedule: Wednesdays, 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.

Contact: Doug Dawes, CPP, (724) 772-1723 ext. 1041, or e-mail
doug.dawes@ctrsystems.com

Wichita Chapter (CPP/FPC)

Location: Wichita, KS

Date: February–April 2005

Meeting Schedule: TBD

Contact: Dana Jirovec, CPP, (316) 691-4538, or e-mail
djirovec@cgfind.com

Chapter Leadership Seminars: A 'Must Do' for Chapter Officers

The 2005 Chapter Leadership Seminars for chapter presidents and officers have been scheduled. They are:

- Saturday, March 5, 2005
- Saturday, June 25, 2005
- Saturday, October 8, 2005

For registration information, contact the APA Chapter Relations Department at (210) 226-4600 or e-mail chapterrelations@americanpayroll.org.

There's Still Plenty of Time to Enter!

- Chapter Pictorial Contest
- Best Chapter Web Site Contest
- The Dream Theme Contest: Promoting Your Statewide & Regional Meeting (BRAND-NEW CONTEST!)

APA chapter contests are creative and fun, and are an excellent way for your chapter to receive recognition for its amazing accomplishments. Entries for all three contests should be received by the APA no later than **March 21, 2005**.

Winners will be recognized at the 23rd Annual Congress held from May 1-5, 2005 in San Diego, CA. For more information, visit "Chapter Network" at www.payroll.org to print an entry form for each contest.

Arizona Statewide Conference Celebrates



'Fiesta' Style

BY JEFF GEISLER, CPP

Excitement filled the air immediately before the start of the 2004 Arizona Statewide Payroll Conference, "Payroll Fiesta," held August 26-27, 2004 in Phoenix, AZ. Several ominous looking banditos (all four Arizona Chapter Presidents, the APA Regional Advisor, and the conference Chairperson) stormed the payroll office (the stage) demanding solutions to their payroll problems, ranging from too much tax being withheld from their paychecks to never having received a W-2 from the previous year.

The payroll processor on duty (fearlessly played by APA's Past President Irene Chapman, CPP) proceeded to inform the banditos that she was an "educated, dedicated, motivated" Certified Payroll Professional ready and able to answer all of their questions.

With a calming demeanor, Irene diffused the situation to everyone's satisfaction, and the conference was ready to begin!

Day One

Vicky Harrison, Chairperson of the 2004 Statewide Conference, took the stage, apologized for the chaotic "payroll banditos" interruption, and introduced Irene, our honored guest speaker.

Irene then took us on a journey titled "Career Development With a Payroll Twist," which followed her career as it stumbled into and ultimately blossomed with the payroll profession. Every stop along the journey, Irene told us about the new skills and abilities she acquired in that particular position.

In addition to all the personal and professional knowledge and skills she obtained, Irene stressed how her participation in both APA National and local chapters helped her to gain new knowledge and provide mentoring to other professionals.

Following a quick refreshment break, we headed off to one of three workshops. Lunch found us all together again. As we sat and ate our meals, we were entertained by two different dance groups, one from San Marcos Elementary School, and the other a part of the Si Se Puede Ballet Folklorico Dancers group. The dancers were in full costume and performed to music that reflected the "Fiesta" theme.

The afternoon was spent in two more workshops, along with a general session featuring a question and answer segment with the Arizona Department of Economic Security. During workshop breaks, participants found time to visit the Exhibit Hall, manned by both payroll vendors and state and national government agencies.

Day Two

After a brief welcome, Vicky introduced our featured morning speaker, Neil Dempster, who shared his philosophy, "If You're Not Living on the Edge ... You're Taking up Too Much Space." Neil's insights were both thought-provoking and enlightening.

Neil also led exercises with our enthusiastic participation, which helped hammer home his points (no pun intended, as he challenged us to use other objects besides a hammer to drive a nail into a board). We were also challenged to create new ways to complete a relatively simple task; to go past our assumptions and discover new, more efficient ways to successfully complete the exercise. We left the session with a greater sense of examining the processes and procedures that we all take for granted.

The rest of the day was consumed with various user workshops and another government question and answer general session. Somewhere in between the workshops, there was time to visit with vendors and even dance the "Macarena" to burn off those lunch calories!

Finally, what better way to wrap up the conference than with the infamous "must-be-present-to-win" prize drawings?

Overall, it was an informative and educational two days, arming participants with new perspectives, knowledge, and professional contacts to take back to their offices.

Jeff Geisler, CPP is Payroll Manager for PING, Inc. in Phoenix, AZ.

Costume Contest Planned for Congress

Did you ever want to dress up as your favorite TV character from the '60s or '70s? Here's your chance! The Congress Costume Contest is back and open to all attendees. Dress up in your favorite retro costume that resembles the TV characters and families we all grew up with.

Prizes will be awarded for the best costume for an individual cast member, a duo, a family, and cast of characters (group). There will also be a prize for best APA chapter dressed in costume.

Judging will take place in the Exhibit Hall prior to this year's Congress party, so make plans to change into your costume or wear it all day on Tuesday, May 3!