

Outlook

A tri-annual publication of the Diablo Managers Association. DMA is a charter of ACSA.

DMA profiles: Sue Chambers, Dorothy Epps and Wayne Harris

As part of a continuing series, *Outlook* is profiling Mt. Diablo Unified administrators and classified personnel who are members of DMA. This issue features discussions with *Sue Chambers*, *Dorothy Epps* and *Wayne Harris*. The questions we asked were: What are your primary job responsibilities? What are the biggest challenges? And what is something people might not guess is true about you?

Sue Chambers, Director of Student Services

Sue taught high school in Chicago before coming to California and taking a job with Pittsburg Unified, where she taught physical education, special education, math and science. She also served as a counselor with Pittsburg before joining Mt. Diablo's Sequoia Middle School staff 12 years ago as a Student Services Coordinator. Since then, she has served as an administrator in Student Services and worked in Curriculum. She was Assistant Director of Student Services from 2005 until she assumed her current post in October 2006.

The Department of Student Services provides a variety of services, from maintaining accurate student records to providing student support health services. Student Services accurately maintains



Sue Chambers

and disseminates student records, oversees all aspects of student attendance procedures and accounting, implements and processes all intra-district and inter-district student transfers, and oversees all facets of student conduct and discipline. We assist in the administration of intervention services through the Safe and Drug-Free Schools (SDFS) Task Force, a collaboration with community agencies, police and probation departments, and the Tobacco Use Prevention Education (TUPE) program. We provide in-service training for administrators and staff in attendance accounting procedures, safe school planning, expulsion and suspension procedures, and Section 504 student oversight.

Our number one challenge is to help schools provide a safe school environment for all students and to offer intervention support so all students can learn, and staff can teach, in a safe and caring environment. This requires collaboration and coordination with a range of agencies, staff and administrators, so that we can maintain processes and procedures to achieve our goals. Last year, all school sites up-

dated their Comprehensive School Safety Plans to ensure that processes and procedures are in place to maintain a climate conducive to learning and to handle any major school or community crises.

One of our intervention programs, Building Effective Schools Together (BEST) is helping school sites develop an infrastructure to focus on positive behavior. The program helps promote positive behavior and a positive school climate so that all students can feel supported and can learn.

Having worked as a co-administrator in this department, I'm aware of the range of tasks required for this job. It is a very broad-based position that needs to maintain a collaborative model with all the different aspects of the district—from finance to crisis awareness. For example, our current work with our attendance auditor is very important because a good portion of our revenue is determined by our average daily attendance (ADA). Maintaining accurate attendance accounting, and keeping people trained to do this as they come into the district, is both very important and a challenge for us.

So many facets of our work continue to change—special education legislation, health services requirements and Education Codes are in continual change. Developing new and better programs to implement the various changes is both challenging and rewarding.

Something people might be surprised to hear? I went skydiving on 40th birthday—I loved it. I could really get hooked on it!

Dorothy Epps, Director of Personnel

Dorothy retired early from AT&T, where she started as an operator and worked more than 28 years in the business office, the call center and as a supervisor. Following early retirement, she worked for AAA as a call center supervisor, for Oakland Unified as a human resources analyst and coordinator, and for Antioch Unified as a personnel analyst. She joined Mt. Diablo Unified in June 2006.

My major responsibilities on the classified side of the organization include employee recruitment and retention, issues related to discipline and negotiations. We provide training and get involved in everything that relates to individuals in the work environment. When employees come with concerns in certain areas, we may talk about leaves of absence and/or provide referrals to employee assistance. If we can't assist someone, we

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DMA member profiles *(continued from page 1)*

find out who can help, and make sure the individual gets the direction and referral needed.

Our whole purpose for being here, no matter who we are, is for the good of the children. Sometimes when you're dealing with personal issues, you can lose sight of that. Our job is to bring people back to that focus.

Our staff includes my assistant, *Annette Campanella*, *Yvonne Slattengren*, who processes personnel paperwork and handles employee orientation; *Sue Anderson*, who does recruitment and testing; and *Nancy Cummins*, our

Dorothy Epps personnel analyst. We do direct recruiting and handle the transfer process for the five units composing the district's classified personnel—Local One Maintenance and Operations (M & O); California School Employees Association (CSEA); Local One Clerical, Secretarial & Technical (CST); our Supervisory Unit; and those classified managers who are part of DMA.

We have our shortage areas that we're recruiting for, and that's a big challenge for us. We just have to keep knocking at the door, and this is usually for positions in special education and school bus drivers. We have been fairly successful in filling our open clerical positions. While there are people out there looking for positions, part of the issue is the money. We are not as competitive as the private sector, and people with unique skills can go to private companies and make more money. It's one of the areas that we have to overcome.

Since I just started in Mt. Diablo in June 2006, I'm still learning my way. I'm happy that things are starting to come together around training for the classified personnel. We had a good meeting with the office managers in January, and we've put some training in place around customer service and customer satisfaction skills. We're also moving forward with paraprofessional and bus driver training. We'll do some type of training with all our classified employees. This is something people have wanted, and that kind of went away with the budget cuts.

We're working closely with Payroll to resolve some procedural issues around our Integrated Financial Accounting Software, our personnel/payroll system. We're making real strides in our ability to process people in a timely manner and make sure they get paid appropriately.

People may not know that I played the cello for many years, and that I am a lover of music. I love *all* kinds of music. I have a musical soul!

Wayne Harris, Transportation Services Coordinator

Wayne started his working life in a Canadian nonprofit business, where, among other skills, he learned to speak French and drive a bus. He later held supervisory positions at Laidlaw Transit for San Jose Unified and San Francisco Unified. He worked at Hayward Unified and at New Haven Unified prior to joining Mt. Diablo in June 2006.

My first goal in this job is not to mess up anything that has been working well. I'm still getting used to the size of this district, which is much larger than Hayward Unified. There are many routes and personalities to get to know, and the area has some specific challenges. During these first few months, I hope to begin to get a sense of our service responsibilities so that I will be able to contribute ideas toward improving how we serve the district.

The departments I manage are the Bus Garage—eight mechanics, a fueler and purchasing agent—plus the drivers on the Dispatch side of the operation. The garage runs a day shift and a swing shift because we have so many buses. Our mechanics also do the fleet maintenance for the trucks, vans and all the equipment needed to maintain the district's facilities. Our two lead mechanics have played a big role in helping me figure out my job and how I can create the best work environment.

There are some great people in the Bus Garage, some of whom have been with the district for a long time. There has also been some turnover; in my short tenure, I have done some hiring, which I hope will add to the professionalism and competency of the department.

The other part of my job includes the drivers, the dispatchers and the trainers.

There are over 90 drivers, some of whom I am lucky to have three very competent supervisors in the Dispatch office: *Jeanne Rau*, *Connie Prasky* and *Susan Simpson*. They're "in the trenches" with the buses. They've organized the routes and trained the drivers, and they do a great job of facilitating a very large driver group.

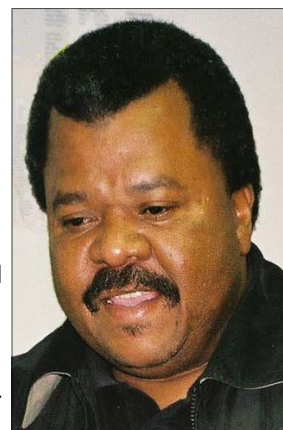
The school bus driver has a very challenging job. We sometimes compare it to a teacher who is trying to maintain a class with his or her back constantly to the students. This is a vibrant metropolitan area, with all the trials and tribulations that come with that in terms of traffic and congestion. The drivers do a wonderful job of safely and efficiently providing transportation for our students. I try to remind them that they are absolutely the alpha and omega of a student's day. They can start a student off on the right foot with a positive greeting in the morning, and they are the last connection that a student has with the district each day. There are few district employees that your regular public sees, but everybody sees the yellow school bus and the crossing guard. I want our drivers to be proud of their role, and to represent the district and the department in the best way possible.

The hardest thing about what I do is dealing with personnel problems, at-risk employees and employees who are facing challenges. It's a heavy mandate to try to help someone realize their capabilities, and I want them to succeed. I'm very aware of doing the right thing, trying to do what's right for the employees and the district and the department.

What else about me? I'm a storyteller. I write and perform. I've written three solo plays and performed in San Francisco and other cities. ■



Dorothy Epps

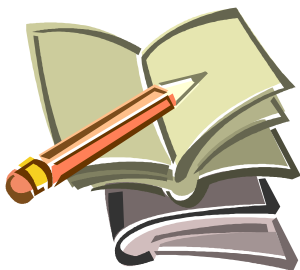


Wayne Harris

A message from DMA President Bob Dodson

Some things accomplished... it's full speed ahead in 2007

It's hard to believe that this school year is already halfway complete. During the first half, the Diablo Managers Association organized its Board, representatives and committee members. Our \$36,350 budget was created and approved. We hosted the



Fall Social and ever-popular Winter Celebration. The Mentor Project and the One-Minute-Mentor program are in effect.

For the first time, DMA members will be honored at the Association of California School Administrators (ACSA) annual Leadership Summit on *April 20-21* at the

Napa Valley Marriott Hotel and Spa. The two-day event features major national speakers, fireside chats, doctoral programs, professional development, breakout sessions on current topics, visiting with good friends and superb food. For registration or conference information, call *Tess Thomas* at 925-570-5198 or *Bob Giannini* at 925-216-9430, or visit www.acsaregion6.org.

Congratulations to DMA/ACSA members **Gary McHenry**, **Rose Lock**, **Laurie Clark** and **Melinda Hall**, who will receive awards at the ACSA summit (see article on this page). These exemplary leaders are but a sampling of the many talented, dedicated, hardworking and outstanding leaders within MDUSD. In receiving these awards, they will be representing all of us in Mt. Diablo.

DMA members are eligible to receive a one-time reimbursement of up to \$500 once every three years for participation in a professional development course, program or conference (including the Leadership Summit!). This year's reimbursement application window is *May 16-31*. Please contact **Donna Marshall**, DMA Staff Development Chair, with any questions.

We have heard from many of you that competitive salaries and maintaining medical benefits have a high priority within our association. This message is continually being conveyed to Superintendent McHenry when we meet and confer with him. Our Salary/Benefits Committee will meet soon to examine compensation within Mt. Diablo, compared to surrounding school districts. While this can be a drawn-out and complex task, you can trust that your DMA leadership is working hard to represent you in these discussions and this process.

Save the date! Our annual end-of-the-year Awards Luncheon will take place on *Wednesday, June 20*, at 2 p.m. at the Contra Costa Country Club. More information will follow. I look forward to seeing you at this event, and to working with you between now and then.

Have a great second half! ■

DMA Executive Board slate forming!

The DMA Nominating Committee is looking for candidates to form a slate for the 2007-2008 DMA Executive Board.

Positions include President Elect (a three-year term, including President Elect, President and Past President), two Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer. If you are interested in running for any of these positions, please contact **Bob Dodson** by *April 6* at ext. 4328.

Board Representatives are elected by constituent groups. If you are interested in serving as a representative, please let your current rep know, or contact Bob.

DMA committees and chairpersons this year include:

- **Awards**—**Diana De Mott** and **Liz Kim**: Plan End-of-Year recognition program
- **Bylaws/MOU**—**Al Glover**: Solicit member feedback and update DMA Bylaws and Statement of Purpose/Memorandum of Understanding
- **Communications/newsletter**—**Hellena Postrk**: Oversee publication of the *Outlook* newsletter and other publications
- **Membership**—**Denise Larkins**: Recruit and welcome new members
- **Mentor Project**—**Jeanne Rau**: Oversee the Mentor Project and the One-Minute-Mentor directory
- **Salary/Benefits**—**Rose Lock**: Make recommendations regarding salary and benefits
- **Staff Development**—**Donna Marshall** and **Linda Hutcherson**: Oversee professional development activities and review applications for the Professional Scholarship Program
- **Student Scholarships**—**Linda Hutcherson**: Review applications and select student scholarship winners
- **Sunshine/Hospitality**—**Linda Hutcherson**: Send get-well and condolence cards to DMA members

"STARt" thinking about your "STAR" colleagues!

It's not too soon to begin thinking about nominating one of your colleagues for the prestigious awards given at DMA's End-of-the-Year Luncheon, on *Wednesday, June 20*, at the Contra Costa Country Club in Pleasant Hill. Award categories include *Rising Star*, *Have a Heart*, *Most Involved* and *Lifetime*.

Please send in your nominations soon, as numerous entries will need to be reviewed. Simply send in the name of your nominee with a brief statement as to why he or she deserves the award in any of the categories listed above.

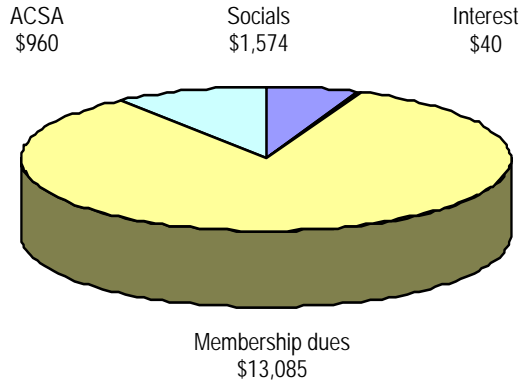
You may submit your nominations to Awards Committee members **Donna Marshall** at Bel Air Elementary, **Liz Kim** at Rio Vista Elementary or **Diana De Mott** at Mountain View Elementary.

ACSA nominations news: After careful review and consideration, the DMA Nomination Committee has sent these DMA representatives' names to ACSA for the annual awards program. Nominees are **Gary McHenry**, Central Office Administrator; **Rose Lock**, Elementary Principal; **Laurie Clark**, Co-Administrator and **Melinda Hall**, Special Education Administrator. Region VI will select the winners, who will be presented at the Leadership Summit on *April 20-21*. ■

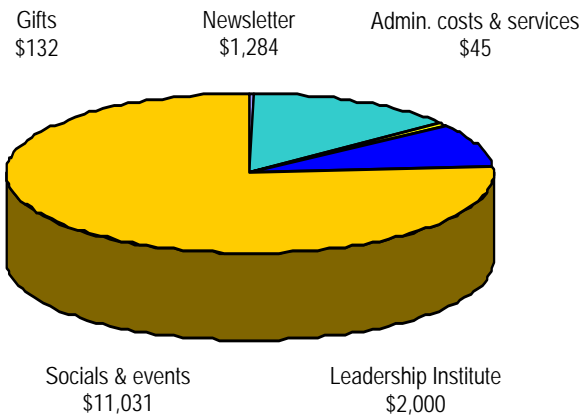
DMA 2006-2007 financial report

Beginning balance (as of July 1, 2006)	\$18,595
Current balance (as of January 2, 2007)	\$25,327

2006-2007 Income \$15,659



2006-2007 Actual Expenditures \$14,492



Welcome, new DMA members!

Debra Bauer—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Nancy Baum—Vice Principal, Walnut Acres Elementary
April Bush—Student Services Coordinator, Glenbrook Middle School
Hermes Cervantes—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Christie Wilhite Chu—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Nancy Cummins—Personnel Analyst, Personnel Services
Colleen Dowd—Program Specialist, Curriculum & Instruction
Deborah Frank—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Barnaby Gloger—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Lynsie Murillo—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Marcie McDaniels—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Margaret Norris—Assistant Director, Student Services/Special Education
Lorien Quirk—Education Consultant/Behavior Management Specialist, Special Education
Veronica Picazo Ramirez—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide
Teresa Sidrian—Director of Budgeting & Accounting, Fiscal Services
Judy Stevens—Accounting Supervisor, Fiscal Services
Sarah Wiebe—Student Services Coordinator, District-wide

Comments, news & notes ...

DMA student scholarships deadline ... The application deadline for this year's DMA Student Scholarships program is *Friday, March 30*, at 4 p.m. Rules and an application form are posted at the DMA Web site, www.diablogmanagers.org/com-scholarship.html. The Scholarship Committee will review all applications and notify all candidates. So that more students can be recognized, past recipients are not eligible for scholarships. Last year, three students were awarded scholarships.

Professional development application ... DMA supports members' professional growth by offering the opportunity to apply for an individual one-time member reimbursement (between *May 16 and 31*) of up to \$500 for participation in professional growth activities. Forms are posted at www.diablogmanagers.org/pgm-professional.html. Contact *Linda Hutcherson* or *Donna Marshall* with any questions.

DMA Executive Board and Representatives

President Bob Dodson, Pleasant Hill Elementary, 4328
President-Elect Karen Sakata, Ayers Elementary, 4300
Past President Rose Lock, Walnut Acres Elementary, 4346
Vice Presidents Linda Hutcherson, Mt. Diablo Elementary, 4320;
Nadine Rosenzweig, Valley View Middle, 5000
Secretary Denise Larkins, Personnel, 4136
Treasurer Al Glover, Education Services, 4003
REPRESENTATIVES:
Adult Education Susie Passeggi, Loma Vista, 4380 #2742
Alternative Education Bernie Yeghoian, Nueva Vista, 925-689-1487
Central Services Jeanne Rau, Transportation, 3710
Confidentials Vonda Boucher, Elementary Education, 4016

District Office Willow Creek Evie Groch, Curriculum & Instruction, 4035
Elementary Principals Jennifer Sachs, Woodside, 4350; Cindy Matteoni, Sequoia, 4330
Elementary Vice Principals Donna Marshall, Bel Air, 4334
High School Martha Riley, Northgate, 3500
Middle School Hellena Postrk, Sequoia Middle, 5600
Special Education Melinda Hall, 4045
Retirees Meridyth Noble, 510-530-2410; Judy Schoen, 925-935-7255

Your representative's role is to represent you on the DMA Board and to provide feedback to you as a DMA member about board decisions and issues. If you have questions or feedback to offer, please contact your representative. To comment on items in this newsletter, contact Hellena Postrk at ext. 5600, postrkh@mdusd.k12.ca.us. Thank you!