by Michelle Leach

The Human Resource Association of the Midlands is celebrating 70 years. The organization that was formed by nine members, evolved from a local chapter of the American Society of Personnel Administration, funded by 28 charter members.

“With both organizations celebrating this significant milestone, it shows how the local human resource community has been a strong supporter of the HR profession locally and nationally,” said HRAM 2018 Board President Mike Bojanski.

The SHRM affiliate reportedly provides educational, developmental and interactive forums among metro member-professionals in human capital management.

“To be a part of an established, credible and premier HR networking organization like HRAM is an honor,” said Virginia Kiviranta, a past-president involved with the chapter since 2001. “The organization is continually being recognized for achievements on an annual basis.”

As a Past-President (and 20-year member), Bridget Myler underscored dedicated volunteers, and the volume of events and programming that have contributed to HRAM’s continued success.

“The board is always forward-looking and adapts well to the ever-changing needs,” she said. “They listen to their membership and provide multiple options depending on your specialty.”

A former Volunteer of the Year, Bruce Stec recalled HRAM’s significant rebranding and strategic shift during his tenure as board president.

“We retooled the board a little bit and it got us refocused on where we needed to go,” he said. “We tried really hard to assure … that the practitioners within this market are getting what they need.”

HRAM President Mike Bojanski.

A member since the mid-1980s, Past President Laurie Pieper set a goal early in her presidency to increase opportunities for members to engage in HRAM programs and activities, and to appropriately recognize the investment of one’s time and energies.

“I can recall at each monthly program asking those who had served HRAM in any capacity over the last several weeks to stand,” she said. “By December, the number of folks standing nearly doubled.”

In Pieper’s early days, the organization was managed with a part-time, home-based coordinator and a few committed volunteers.

“Today, we are proud to have an outstanding team including a full-time executive director who provides strong leadership and vision for the organization, and a full-time marketing and communications manager who juggles programming coordination and events,” Pieper said, referring to Sarah Schulz and Erin Crouch respectively. “In addition, we are in the process of bringing on a part-time administrative support person to assist with day-to-day operations.”

Over the past 70 years, Bojanski said organizations have realized the importance HR professionals play in their success — elevating from “personnel administrators” responsible for following rules and pushing paper, to a more strategic role — dealing with complex legislation, benefits, talent management and engagement.

Bojanski noted HRAM is one of the 18 largest SHRM chapters in the U.S., outpacing membership numbers in much more populated metro areas such as Chicago and Kansas City.

“We have a community of HR professionals who are very committed to ensuring...”

Continued on next page.
HRAM members see the value of volunteering in the professional setting

by Lee Nelson

To get involved with volunteer work in the community, you just have to start, said Kelli Lieurance, employment lawyer at Baird Holm LLP.

“By starting small, you get a better feel for the organization or cause. It may turn out that it is not a passion of yours, which is fine,” said Lieurance, past president of the Human Resource Association of the Midlands. “But had you jumped in and volunteered for a big role, you would be miserable and even more, not effective in that role.”

She emphasized that volunteers get to be part of something outside their job, family or other obligations that is bigger than them. It should be a choice, rather than an obligation, she said.

HRAM is celebrating 70 years of volunteer service by its HR professionals. Its own organization is run by two staff members, but has many volunteers including a volunteer board and committee members, Lieurance said.

“The business world is constantly changing, and human resources is on the forefront of that change,” she said.

HRAM awarded the 2017 Volunteer of the Year honor to Linda Mack, owner of Mack Consulting and Terry Rogers-Womack of First Data.

“Together, we co-chaired the HRAM Diversity Committee for three years. Now, Terry is a member of the HRAM Board, and I am the state diversity director for the Society of Human Resource Management State Council,” Mack said.

For Mack, volunteering is just part of who she is. She grew up in a small town and watched her parents step up to volunteer at church or help others in need.

Volunteers are rewarded with a sense of purpose and accomplishment,” she said. “The organization receives so much more than the labor hours. It gains an advocate.

From left, Linda Mack, owner of Mack Consulting and Terry Rogers-Womack, Sr., recruiter at First Data Corp., 2018 HRAM Volunteers of the Year. (Courtesy of HRAM)

by Sara Janak

In most professions, industry association memberships play a valuable role in career development. These groups can bolster professional credibility, offer networking opportunities and provide educational resources to help members maintain industry certifications.

For human resource professionals in Nebraska, there are seven Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)-affiliated groups throughout the state. The Human Resource Association of the Midlands is the largest local chapter with more than 1,000 members.

Being active at the local level can help individuals get the most out of memberships.

To really maximize the benefits of membership to these national associations, individuals should also get involved in the local and state chapters/councils. At HRAM we have 50 percent of our membership who are also members of SHRM national,” HRAM President Mike Bojanski said. “Local involvement is really where you can maximize the ability to create a network of peers who can help when you need help.”

HRAM, which serves HR professionals in Omaha and Council Bluffs, is the largest SHRM-affiliated group in the state.

“One thing that makes HRAM very special is there are only 18 chapters that are affiliated with SHRM that have over 1,000 members, and HRAM is one of those chapters,” said Nancy Conway, SHRM field services director. In total, there are 575 SHRM-affiliated chapters across the United States.


Most members obtain some sort of certification.

“These certifications indicate a commitment to the profession and an understanding of the body of knowledge related to these professions,” Bojanski said.

There are two certification designations available through SHRM, Conway said. Individuals can take exams to get from timely content that keeps them up-to-date and receptive to different ideas, people and situations.”

Volunteering fosters those qualities. This helps in diversity and inclusion initiatives,” Fosco said.

HR professionals join industry groups for networking, development opportunities

by Kiviranta, who highlighted community partnerships with the likes of The Women’s Fund as among her tenure’s biggest accomplishments, acknowledged strong office staff membership, tireless volunteers, and “cutting-edge” programming.

Who wouldn’t want to be a part of an organization that can offer so much?” she said.

Mike Bojanski, HRAM president, said HRAM has many members who do not wait to be asked. They want to volunteer.

“Members understand the importance of volunteering not only with HRAM but with many other nonprofits in the community,” he said. “Everyone has multiple commitments at work and home and are concerned about time commitment when volunteering. At HRAM, we understand this and want our members to volunteer as much or at little time as their schedules permit.”

Providing opportunities for members to be involved increases overall engagement with HRAM, he said.

“Volunteering for a committee allows them to develop leadership skills, which will help advance in their career,” he said.

“Strong membership numbers allow us to provide quality programming, which increases participation in programming and engagement, and you can see the link between all of these.”

Bojanski is convinced his volunteerism with HRAM provided him the opportunity to become an adjunct faculty member at Methodist College.

“This was the springboard for me to other adjunct faculty gigs at University of Nebraska at Omaha and Creighton University,” he said.

From left, Linda Mack, owner of Mack Consulting and Terry Rogers-Womack, Sr., recruiter at First Data Corp., 2018 HRAM Volunteers of the Year. (Courtesy of HRAM)

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Developement opportunities

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by Dwain Hebda

Given the diverse workload most HR professionals face on a day-in, day-out basis, continuing education is a key element in their success. The Human Resource Association of the Midlands’ robust program of educational speakers and events helps support this effort by providing a wide range of topical and actionable subject matter.

Joe Gerstandt, an expert on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, has presented on these topics as part of HRAM’s educational programming. He said the learning opportunities fill a need for expertise and resources that are often hard to find.

A look at ‘Domestic/Sexual Violence and the Workplace: An Employee Toolkit’

by Gabby Christensen

The Human Resource Association of the Midlands and the Women’s Fund of Omaha have teamed up to give access to education on sex trafficking and domestic and workplace violence. A comprehensive guide on domestic violence, sexual violence, sex/ labor trafficking and sexual harassment was developed because of the significant amount of overlap between these issues.

“The Women’s Fund of Omaha is a presenter that shares something mind-blowing for many of us. We all had our eyes opened to the reality of sex trafficking and its scope in our communities,” Malik said.

“With the guide and other examples presented on these topics as part of HRAM’s educational programs, we have succeeded in fulfilling our goal of making that information available to their members,” he said.

Presenters also point to HRAM’s willingness to schedule content that isn’t entirely technical HR information but is nonetheless vital to the health and prosperity of a company.

Dr. Kim Hoogeveen, founder of MindSet, readily admits his company doesn’t deal in HR-specific topics, but its expertise in leadership development has been featured in HRAM’s slate of programs.

“Increasingly, what companies are facing, the big challenge, is how do we attract, build and retain great talent. That’s our niche, the leadership side of that,” he said. “What has been so great about HRAM is, first of all, they took the time to really vet MindSet before they decided to work with us.

“They let us do what we needed to do to present it as excellently as we know how. They don’t micromanage me as a presenter or MindSet as a partner; they really say we expect you to do this well but that’s what you do, so we’re not going to micromanage you. I love that.”

HRAM’s commitment to the MindSet course, the next installment of which will present in October, also reinforces the value of face-to-face education. Blake Hoogeveen, co-owner of MindSet, said.

Members learned more about the subject from a symposium.

In 2017 HRAM hosted Anna Brewer from the Women’s Fund of Omaha to present at our April Diversity Symposium,” Schulz said. “Anna presented on sex trafficking in the Heartland and many of HRAM’s board members including myself, were shaken after her presentation.

“The information she presented was mind-blowing for many of us. We all had the idea that sex trafficking happened in dark alleys after midnight, not during the day on the corner of 144th and West Center. We collectively left the event knowing we had to do more to combat sex trafficking and violence in the workplace,” Schulz said.

“The toolkit is available for all area human resource professionals and employees online at www.OmahaWomensFund.org or www.hram.org.

by Meghan Malik

The event is slated for Sept. 11 from 11 a.m. to 2:45 p.m. at the Champion’s Run Country Club in Omaha.
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- Professional Development Opportunities
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