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MESSAGE FROM NJASBO PRESIDENT PHILIP H. NISONOFF, ED.D.

We landed the plane while learning how to fly it. That should describe how we managed to close out the 2019/2020 school year.

What a year it has been for us all: A devastating pandemic, physical closure of schools, economic uncertainty, political divisiveness, and issues of racial equality, among others. One of the shining lights through all of this chaos has been NJASBO and our membership. Our organization, built over many years by amazing, dedicated School Business Administrators since 1923, could not have been better positioned to respond and support our members during this time. We are so proud of the work this year and look forward to working alongside each of you as we enter what could be one of the most challenging school years in our careers. *continued on page 2*

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SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR: THOMAS ELDRIDGE

"He [Tom Eldridge] embodies a servant leadership style, which fosters an effective and positive district environment by working with the entire community. It is through his leadership of collaborative stakeholder teams that his staff feels supported and empowered. His dedication and efforts have cultivated a positive district climate that inspires students and staff."

– Ross Kasun, Ed.D., Superintendent,
Lawrence Township Public Schools

The NJASBO School Business Administrator of the Year is Lawrence Township Public Schools Business Administrator/Board Secretary Thomas Eldridge.



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Although we all missed being together at our June conference, NJASBO did its best under the circumstances to institute our first-ever virtual conference. Kudos to Sue Young and Loretta Hill for their hard work, creativity, and resourcefulness. The professional development opportunities were fantastic with well-prepared presenters. Although virtual professional development never will replace in-person experiences, the foray into online learning this spring will inform our decisions on platforms for the various educational programs NJASBO sponsors throughout the year.

Traditionally during the spring conference, the incoming president has an opportunity to meet with and formally address the membership. We will be keeping fingers crossed that this and many of our other traditions and rituals will occur in the fall during our planned mini-conference.

The executive committee is looking forward to continuing many of our initiatives and developing new goals for the upcoming year. Members should know we will continue to enhance our educational and professional development programs. Specific focus will be placed on the certification program curriculum and supporting our virtual professional development programs. We also will work toward improving our technology resources. The sudden move to virtual work environments certainly will push us to harness available technology, partner with fellow organizations, and innovate to improve our operation and provide modern, quality services to our members.

Another continuing goal will be strengthening our relationships with various organizations, state departments, and state government branches. A strong focus on this goal prior to COVID-19 proved invaluable to our association as NJASBO was well represented when state leaders looked for input from the field. Phone calls were answered and information was provided quickly, as a result of relationships established in Trenton. As a result, Sue and her team were able to provide timely information and guidance to our members. As one anonymous NJDOE official

declared, “I get all my information from NJASBO before I get it from Trenton!” Sue and Loretta have worked tirelessly this spring to keep us informed and get our voices heard. We look forward to supporting those efforts with greater resources this year.

The recent events across the country brought into focus racial discrimination and violence against black and brown communities. These events have inspired the NJASBO leadership team to work this year to examine our own institution and help us all do our part to create a just society. The first purpose of NJASBO is “to establish and promulgate the highest standards of ethics.”

Business Administrators are, by nature, planners and doers. However, the leadership of NJASBO recognizes that before we plan or do, we need to listen and learn. Listening and learning will be on our to-do list, and we will be asking for input from our members, specifically our members of color, as we will need your help in guiding NJASBO’s thoughtful, appropriate, and effective approach to this important issue.

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for the 2020/2021 school year. I will do my best to represent our members during this difficult period in our careers. This will be a challenging year for all of us, but NJASBO is up for that challenge. Of course, we will need your help and backing as we work to support the needs of our membership. We are calling on all of our BAs to be the best they can be, personally and professionally. We need you to be engaged, working together as a team, and willing to serve.

Finally, let us all keep learning. As Maya Angelou said, “I’ve learned that I still have a lot to learn.” In our profession, that’s a lesson we learn very early on! Stay safe this summer and get ready for a roller coaster year.

Philip H. Nisonoff, Ed.D. has been the Assistant Superintendent/School Business Administrator for the Emerson Board of Education since 1994, and can be reached at phnisonoff@emersonschools.org.

SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR: THOMAS ELDRIDGE

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Eldridge has been the Business Administrator/ Board Secretary for the Lawrence Township Board of Education since 2001. He began his career in school finance as the Business Administrator/ Board Secretary at the Frenchtown Board of Education in 1995, before joining the Gloucester Township Board of Education as the Assistant Business Administrator in 1997.

Eldridge said that as a Business Administrator, he is “guided by the philosophy that my role is to find ways to deploy resources to help make the educational mission happen and educational dreams come true.” Eldridge said he believes that “education’s purpose is to equip students with the knowledge and skills to find happiness in life.”

In recommending Eldridge for the award, Lawrence Township Public Schools Superintendent Ross Kasun, Ed.D., said in part, “It is clearly evident that his leadership ability, wisdom, integrity, skill set, and passion for excellence make him an ideal candidate for this outstanding award.”

For Eldridge, winning the award was a surprise. “My colleagues were very generous in their selection. I have always felt blessed to be in the company of people who share common values and a shared mission. My school district is committed to equipping each student with the skills necessary to find happiness in their lives,”

said Eldridge. “The members of NJASBO are caring educators focused on bringing resources and services to the classroom. I’m honored by their choice and grateful to be one of them.”

Former Lawrence Township Public Schools Superintendent Crystal M. Edwards, Ed.D., the current Superintendent of Lynchburg City Schools in Lynchburg, Virginia, worked with Eldridge for 12 years. Edwards said that although Eldridge exhibited talent in business management, capital improvement, and state regulatory compliance, “his gift was in developing relationships with staff and being a supportive champion of public education.” She further said Eldridge’s “care and compassion for children and his commitment to public service make him a worthy recipient of this award.”

Lawrence Township Public Schools Board of Education President Kevin Van Hise also noted Eldridge’s caring and compassion. In August 2019, the District discovered an outbreak of mold in several of its facilities. Van Hise said Eldridge coordinated emergency efforts and immediately brought contractors in to remediate the affected areas. He said Eldridge even “rolled up his sleeves and worked 12- to 18-hour days to personally clean out classrooms and ensure our schools were ready for our students to return on opening day.” Van Hise said throughout the process, Eldridge reached out to the staff so they knew they – and their classrooms – would be taken care of. He made sure “our students’ needs were completely addressed without them ever knowing about the issues,” said Van Hise. “That dedication, and the personal touches he brought to the problems, exhibits the personal dedication he has to our district.”

According to David Adam, the Principal of Lawrence High School, Eldridge has led four rounds of the district’s five-year strategic planning process, which put into place such improvements as 1:1 Chromebook grant for students in grades 6-12, a STEM Robotics program, a

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SCHOOL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATOR OF THE YEAR: THOMAS ELDRIDGE

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comprehensive literacy initiative for grades K-6, a district-wide Sustainable New Jersey certification, and the completion of two multi-purpose state-of-the-art artificial turf complexes. Adam explained that these initiatives were fully funded with the district's own financial resources or through grants thanks to Eldridge. He said these initiatives demonstrate Eldridge's "ability to have long-range vision, planning, and the fiduciary responsibility that provided no undue financial burden to our community."

In addition to being a member of NJASBO, Eldridge has provided professional development instruction in a Facilities class for the organization to rave reviews. One of the business administrators in the class said, "Tom was an amazing teacher for the module. Totally practical and went beyond the expected material covered to make sure the students gained the maximum and useful daily application that will be applied to the responsibilities as school personnel."

Lawrence Township Board of Education member Jo Ann Groeger also benefited from Eldridge's guidance. She said when she first joined the board, Eldridge was "helpful and patient" in helping her gain a better understanding of school budgeting. Groeger said she volunteers Eldridge for workshops at the county and state levels, where she said every time he has "wowed attendees because of his innate ability to determine the needs of his audience and tailor the program to address those specific needs."

A current member and past president of the Mercer County Association of School Business Officials (MCASBO), Eldridge often mentors new business administrators in districts throughout the county and state, through NJASBO. He also has provided information and guidance through articles he has written, including, "An Introduction to School Finance" for the New Jersey School Boards Association (NJSBA), Winter 2019, and "How to Read the Board Secretary's Reports," published in the May/June 2014 issue of *School Leader* magazine.

Eldridge often is a resource for other BAs, such as Patrick Pisano, Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Upper Freehold Regional School District. Pisano said Eldridge "has continually been the person I reach out to for any question...." He described Eldridge as a "highly talented and brilliant individual" and said he is constantly "striving to better himself, his district, and his colleagues and friends."

Shawn Mitchell, Assistant School Business Administrator/Comptroller for the Trenton Board of Education, also remarked on Eldridge's guidance. "You can count on him to provide sound advice and a blueprint for tackling any project or task, no matter how large or small," said Mitchell. "He gives you things to look out for to avoid pitfalls and ensure success."



Eldridge also has been a workshop and conference presenter for NJASBO, NJSBA, MCASBO, and the New Jersey Association of School Administrators. Additionally, he has been a presenter at the New Jersey Government Management Information Sciences Conference.

As the SBA of the Year, NJASBO is presenting a \$2,000 scholarship in Eldridge's name to Victoria Frink, who will be attending Mercer County Community College in the fall.

A resident of Bucks County, Pennsylvania, Eldridge is married and has two children. He has a master's degree from Rider University and an MBA from Pennsylvania State University.

DEMONSTRATING LONG-TERM, CONTINUOUS EXEMPLARY SERVICE

Members Receive Distinguished Service Awards

Each year, NJASBO selects two members from each of its three regions to receive the Distinguished Service Award for long-term, continuous, and exemplary service. The School Business Administrator of the Year is selected from among those DSA recipients; this year's recipient is Thomas Eldridge, Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Lawrence Township Public Schools (see page 1).

Each of the DSA recipients is invited to select a high school senior to receive a \$1,000 scholarship from NJASBO in the honoree's name.

Typically, the DSA recipients are honored on stage during the annual conference in June. Although NJASBO was unable to hold the annual conference in-person this year because of COVID-19 restrictions, we hope you will join us in honoring the recipients of the 2020 Distinguished Service Awards:

- William F. Albert, Jr., Northern Region
- Kelly Ippolito, Northern Region
- Thomas Eldridge, Central Region, SBA of the Year (see page 1)
- Vincent Gonnella, Central Region
- Lisa Giovanelli, Southern Region
- Thomas Grossi, Southern Region

William F. Albert, Jr., Northern Region



"Bill Albert's commitment to our profession and his colleagues make him an outstanding nomination for the Distinguished Service Award." - Joann Gilman Auricchio, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Morris Hills Regional District

William F. Albert, Jr., has been the School Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Hanover Park Regional High School District since January 2004. He previously spent two years in the same role for the Pequannock Board of Education. From 1999 to 2002, he was the Assistant Business

Administrator for the Roxbury Board of Education. Albert began his school finance career in 1997, as Senior Accountant for the Tenafly Board of Education.

Before joining Tenafly, Albert worked for the accounting firm J.H. Cohn & Company, LLP, where he performed corporate tax, personal tax, and accounting services. Albert comes from a family of educators – both parents are retired teachers – and his brother and sister also work in education. After beginning his career as a public accountant, numerous conversations with his father led him to education.

In nominating Albert, Morris County ASBO (MCASBO) President and Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the School District of the Chathams Peter Daquila said, "Bill has always been willing to help any of his fellow BAs and provide assistance to the county's executive committee. In my opinion, Bill is well deserving of the Distinguished Service Award."

"It was quite an honor to not only be recognized by my peers at the county level, but then to receive recognition at the state level. There are so many worthy candidates in the state," said Albert. "I have always felt that it was important to do the best job you can in all aspects of life. It is nice to know that others recognize your attempt to follow through on that belief."

Albert said he would sum up his philosophy as a Business Administrator this way: "I always try to follow the law, do what I believe is right, and think what would be best for the student."

Albert is a past President of the MCASBO; he also has served as Vice President and Secretary, was a member of the Nominating Committee from 2014 to 2018, and has been a member of the Scholarship Committee since 2014. Albert was the first President of MCASBO to incorporate QPA credit workshops as part of the county meetings.

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Members Receive Distinguished Service Awards *continued from page 5*

For NJASBO, Albert has been a moderator for the annual conference, a county trustee, and an alternate county trustee.

Florham Park Public Schools Business Administrator/Board Secretary John Csatlos, CPA, said Albert “meets all of the qualifications” for the DSA, and “in my humble opinion, exemplifies leadership, competency, dedication, and professionalism.” Csatlos also noted that Albert is a source of information and guidance for both experienced and new business administrators in the county.

Albert also is involved with the community. He has been a Little League and Summer League baseball coach, and both a boys’ and girls’ basketball coach in Mount Olive, where he also was the Girls Basketball Association’s Divisional Controller from 2014-2019. He was a volunteer with the Mount Olive Soccer Association and the Cub Scouts, and has been a member of the Sandshore Elementary School PTA. Albert was a parent volunteer and the 2018 National TSA Conference/World Championships team advisor for the Mount Olive Middle School Student Technology Association. He also has volunteered with the Mount Olive High School Robotics Team – two different teams – and with the Mount Olive High School Marine Advanced Technology Education Team – Team Loggerhead.

Joann Gilman Auricchio, Business Administrator/Board Secretary, Morris Hills Regional District, has known and worked with Albert for 10 years. “Bill’s technical knowledge of labor and facility issues surpass that of the average BA. As a result, he is frequently consulted on both topics from many of our peers. He always takes the time to answer questions that are posed to him.”

Albert has asked NJASBO to split the \$1,000 scholarship awarded in his name equally between two students. The first student is Frank Alfano, who graduated from Mount Olive High School and will attend Rochester Institute of Technology in the fall. Alfano will major in Interactive Media and

Game Development. The second student, Megan Perry, also a Mount Olive High School graduate, will attend Syracuse University in the fall, majoring in Public Relations.

Albert holds a bachelor's degree in Accounting from King's College with a minor in Business Administration and Economics. He also is a Qualified Purchasing Agent.

Albert lives in Mount Olive with his wife, Sandi – “the love of my life” – and two children, Bill and Samantha.

Kelly Ippolito, Northern Region



“Over the years, Ms. Ippolito has been a wonderful mentor to many of our new business administrators and has always been a great resource to all business administrators. My colleagues and I always value her opinion, ideas,

and guidance.” - Antoinette Kelly, CPA, President, Bergen County ASBO and Business Administrator, Ridgewood Public Schools

Kelly Ippolito’s first experience with school finance came in 1992, when she was a staff accountant/auditor at Lerch, Vinci & Higgins in Fair Lawn. During her two years at the firm, she performed audits for boards of education and municipalities. Ippolito interacted directly with school business administrators and had the opportunity to learn how school finance worked.

Since 2004, Ippolito has been the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the River Vale Public Schools. She previously worked for three years in the same position at Cresskill Public Schools. Ippolito spent five years, beginning in 1996, with the Teaneck Board of Education as first an accountant and then as the Assistant Business Administrator. In 1994, Ippolito joined

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the Tenafly Board of Education where she began as an accountant and ended up as a business operations consultant.

Additionally, Ippolito was the Treasurer of School Monies for the Glen Rock Board of Education from May 2008 to June 2016. She has held the same position for the Hillsdale Board of Education since 2013 and the New Milford Board of Education since February 2020.

In nominating Ippolito, Antoinette Kelly, CPA, President of Bergen County ASBO (BCASBO) and Business Administrator for Ridgewood Public Schools, noted her service to the county organization. “Ms. Ippolito has been an integral part of the Bergen County Association of School Business Officials,” said Kelly. “I have witnessed firsthand, her leadership skills, knowledge of our profession, and her compassion for those around her.” Ippolito was an officer/executive officer with BCASBO from 2007 through 2019; she held positions as Secretary, Treasurer, and Vice President, and was President in 2010-2011.

The former Superintendent of Schools for River Vale, Rory McCourt, who currently holds that position for the Ridgefield School District, also noted Ippolito’s skill as a leader. “Her longstanding commitment to NJASBO, coupled with her mentoring of many novice business administrators speaks to this, as do her skills as a board member, public speaking ability, communication skills, and insistence on making the right decisions to ensure equity for all stakeholders who she serves.”

Ippolito also is a member of ASBO International and has received its Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2004; Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2005; and Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2006. She also has received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association for the Fiscal Years ending June 30, 2004 – June 30, 2009.

Ippolito also is a member of the New Jersey School Boards Association.

Receiving the Distinguished Service Award from NJASBO was a surprise to Ippolito. “It’s humbling and an honor to have been selected by my peers for this award. In a million years, I would never have predicted this for myself. Truly unexpected.”

Currently, Ippolito is the President of the Northeast Bergen County School Board Insurance Group (NESBIG) and has been since 2015. She has been a Trustee since 2002, and previously held the positions of Vice President and Secretary. According to Debra Ginetto, NESBIG Executive Director and the President of the Burton Agency, Ippolito also volunteers her time to sit on every NESBIG committee “with full participation and leadership.”

McCourt said that during his time in the district, Ippolito “developed annual budgets reflective of her commitment to maintaining excellent and cutting-edge educational initiatives, while also being mindful of River Vale’s taxpayers.” He said she was able to develop budgets that stayed within the 2 percent tax levy cap while implementing several costly facilities projects, such as the complete renovation of three district media centers and the photography lab, installing new chiller systems in each district school, and renovating and installing 21st-century furniture in several classrooms.

McCourt also noted Ippolito’s service to the River Vale Educational Fund (RVEF), which works closely with the Board of Education to offset costs to the district by providing before- and after-care services for the district and several surrounding communities in a way that benefits everyone.

Ippolito has a bachelor’s degree in Accounting from Lycoming College, attended the Rutgers University Center for Government Services, holds a New Jersey Standard School Business Administrator License, and has a Registered Public Purchasing Official’s Program Certificate.

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Members Receive Distinguished Service Awards *continued from page 7*

As for her philosophy as a Business Administrator, Ippolito said, “Children come first, the rest you can figure out.”

Vincent Gonnella, Central Region



“Mr. Gonnella demonstrates a love for and commitment to his position, district, and the profession. He is the consummate professional, taking pride in his work and going way beyond the requirements of the job.”

– Marilyn E. Birnbaum, Ed.D.,
Superintendent of Schools,
Retired, North Plainfield,

Cranford, and Kenilworth Boards of Education

Vincent Gonnella has been the Business Administrator/Board Secretary for the Kenilworth Board of Education for the past 30 years.

Gregg F. David, President of the Kenilworth BOE, said Gonnella has “proven himself to be knowledgeable, hard-working, dedicated, trustworthy, and always willing to go beyond the normal duties of his role as Business Administrator.”

“Receiving this award is truly an honor, especially having personally known most of the past recipients and what true professionals they are. To be in their company is an honor,” said Gonnella.

“I work hand-in-glove with Vincent on a daily basis and can attest, firsthand, to his dedicated service, his stellar work ethic, and his deep knowledge of school finance,” said Kyle Arlington, Superintendent of Schools for Kenilworth. “He is truly deserving of [NJASBO’s] Distinguished Service Award.”

During his long tenure with Kenilworth, Gonnella was deeply involved in the “groundbreaking” deregionalization effort surrounding the Union County Regional High School District, which led to the creation of a pre-K through 12 school district.

According to Union County ASBO (UCASBO) President Dana Sullivan, Gonnella is actively involved in the district’s strategic planning initiatives and was chiefly responsible for making Kenilworth one of the pioneering leaders of the New Jersey School Choice Program. According to BOE member Nancy Zimmerman, the participation in the School Choice Program has provided revenue that has enabled the district “to provide programs and courses of study for our students that would not have been affordable within our budget otherwise.”

Former Kenilworth Superintendent Dr. Scott Taylor, currently Superintendent for Highland Park Public Schools, said to improve Kenilworth’s facilities, Gonnella used a small team of maintenance workers who provided carpentry, electric, and plumbing services that “led to the construction of important new spaces” in the schools.

Gonnella has gone beyond the duties associated with his office to serve as program manager for the school district and community’s local cable television station. He has participated in the filming, editing, and production process, moving the station from a “bulletin board display” to a communications vehicle that regularly highlights school programs and services.

Additionally, Gonnella became the district’s certified School Safety and Security Specialist, not only updating the Crisis Management Plan and manual to enhance security procedures, but providing architectural and personnel enhancements as well. According to Taylor, Gonnella created what is referred to as a “door slider” that has been replicated in other school systems in New Jersey. The slider serves as a classroom door window enclosure that includes, on the interior, easy-to-read lockdown instructions so room occupants can follow procedures quickly, without having to refer to the crisis manual.

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Members Receive Distinguished Service Awards *continued from page 8*

Gonnella has been the Treasurer for UCASBO since 2002. He also has held the positions of Secretary, Vice President, and President for the organization. For NJASBO, Gonnella has been a member of the Board of Trustees, and served on various committees, including Bylaws/Policy, Budget, Specifications/Purchasing, and Business Efficiency. He is an NJASBO mentor and has been an informal mentor for colleagues in the UCASBO. He also is a member of ASBO International. He is a recipient of the NJASBO Meritorious Service Award for 2007-2008.

Gonnella is a member of the New Jersey Schools Insurance Group (NJSIG) ERIC West Sub-fund, where he has served as liaison to NJSIG, Vice President, and President. He also sat on the Safety Grant Committee for several years. He also has been a member of Union County Shared Services.

Often referred to as the “voice of reason,” Gonnella is highly sought after for his advice. Business Administrator/Board Secretary for New Providence School District James Testa said, “Whenever I have a question, the first person I call is Vince. He truly understands not only the business aspects, but also looks at how a decision will affect the entire organization.”

No matter the undertaking, Gonnella lives up to his philosophy as a Business Administrator: “Consistency in all things.”

Gonnella is a Trustee/Secretary for the Alpha Rho Alumni Association, Committee Chairperson for Troop 2 of the Boy Scouts of America, and has been a member of Orange/West Orange Chapter of UNICO, an Italian American service organization since 1987.

Gonnella holds certifications as a New Jersey School Business Administrator, School Safety Specialist, and Qualified Purchasing Agent. He holds a bachelor’s degree in Economics with a concentration in accounting and finance from Rutgers College, Rutgers University. He also has completed graduate courses toward a master’s

degree in School Business Administration at Kean College of New Jersey.

A resident of West Orange, Gonnella said he has two “fantastic” children, son Anthony, an Eagle Scout, who is working in warehouse management, and his daughter Gabrielle, who currently is a freshman at TCNJ majoring in Mechanical Engineering.

NJASBO will be presenting a \$1,000 scholarship in Gonnella’s name to Toriana Sandull, who is graduating from the Exercise, Physiology and Related Sciences Program at Union County Vo-Tech School. She will be attending the University of Rhode Island in the fall to study neuroscience.

Lisa Giovanelli, Southern Region



“A universal comment I always hear from other administrators in Burlington County as well as the support staff at RV is that not only is Lisa a pleasure to work with and for, but that she truly is a good person. She always wants to do what is right for her

district, the students, and the taxpayers that she represents and her other county constituents.”

– Alan Walker, Educational Accounts Manager, Atlantic Tomorrows Office

Lisa Giovanelli started her career in private industry as an accountant for Holman and Frenia, where she received her first exposure to the world of school business.

In 1998, she joined her alma mater, the Northern Burlington County Regional School District, as a payroll and benefits clerk. In 1999, she became the Assistant Business Administrator at the former Lower Camden County Regional High School District, one of two districts in the state that deregionalized. Beginning in 2000, she spent two years in the same position for Hopewell Valley Regional School District, and then joined the

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Mansfield Township School District as Business Administrator/Board Secretary, where she spent 10 years. In 2012, she moved to Rancocas Valley Regional School District, where she continues to serve as Business Administrator/Board Secretary.

At Rancocas Valley, Giovanelli has been involved in numerous facilities renovations, including a state-of-the-art sports stadium, and the renovation of educational space to create an alternative program: Rancocas Valley Personalized Readiness and Education Program (RV PREP). She also helped the district pass a \$21.7 million bond referendum in September 2019.

Giovanelli was excited to receive the DSA. "I am extremely honored to be recognized by my colleagues for this award," she said. "I don't need an award to see what effect I have on students, but it is nice, because so much of what we do is behind the scenes, and much of the time it can feel like a thankless job."

She said that over the years, her philosophy as a BA has changed. "Early in my career, I worried about following every rule, regulation, and trying to make everyone happy," explained Giovanelli. "At this point in my career, I have learned not to sweat the small stuff, you can't make everyone happy, and as long as you aren't hurting anyone, make the best decision you can with the information given to you."

Giovanelli is a member of Burlington County ASBO, where she was President from 2012-2014; she also has held the positions of First Vice President, Second Vice President, and Secretary. Evon DiGangi, President of the Burlington County ASBO, wrote in her nomination of Giovanelli, "I would like to reiterate that Lisa is an invaluable member to the Burlington County Association of School Business Officials. She is selfless in her service and trusted by her peers." DiGangi said that in her "willingness to promote the profession, Giovanelli has mentored multiple individuals and is considered very knowledgeable in the profession by others in the county."

Alan Walker, Educational Accounts Manager, Atlantic Tomorrows Office, said of Giovanelli, "She lives by the highest standards of ethics and efficiency, and collaborates well with other school districts and entities that affect public education. Extremely well respected among her peers, Lisa is considered not just by Burlington County School Business Administrators, but also by many other BAs from around the state, as one of the 'go-to' people in the profession."

An active member of NJASBO since 1999, Giovanelli has served on the Conference Committee for more than a decade. She also has been a member of the Budget Committee. Giovanelli has been a frequent presenter at NJASBO professional development seminars, including co-presenting on homelessness issues, and also participated in Business Administrator Forums.

Additionally, Giovanelli serves on the Board of Trustees for the Schools Health Insurance Fund (SHIF), where she also is a member of the Wellness & Claims Committee. She was instrumental in advocating that school districts separate from the health insurance fund with the municipalities, because they had more members receiving services and, therefore, more control over the fund. The SHIF has more than 30 member districts and serves more than 10,475 individuals. Giovanelli also is a member of the Burlington and Camden County Educational Insurance Consortium Sub-fund.

Burlington Township Schools Business Administrator/Board Secretary Nicolas Bice believes Giovanelli has contributed to the success of his own career. "I attribute much of my career success to Lisa. Through her support and encouragement, I went from working in a small PK-8 district with a \$10 million budget to now working in a large PK-12 district with a \$71 million budget. She is involved, and she has encouraged me to get involved in other roles associated with the profession."

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Giovanelli received her master's degree in Educational Leadership/School Business Administration from Rider University. She has a bachelor's degree in Accounting from Rutgers University.

NJASBO will award a \$1,000 scholarship in Giovanelli's name to Maya Primas, who will attend La Salle University in the fall. Giovanelli said Primas is a kind, motivated, and compassionate student.

Giovanelli lives in Columbus with her son, her cat Rocket, and a variety of other pets.

Thomas Grossi, Southern Region



"Tom is always looking for a way to make lemonade from lemons. Service is Thomas Grossi's middle name." – John J. Keenan, Superintendent of Schools, Greater Egg Harbor Regional High School District

As often is the case with SBAs, Thomas Grossi

began his career working for accounting firms, primarily in the field of municipal and school audits. He said that after working in that area for nine years in Atlantic and Cape May counties, he grew tired of auditing and fixing the same mistakes year after year, so he decided to "switch over to the other side." Grossi said that after contemplating a career as either a municipal CFO or an SBA, "I went the school route and have never regretted it."

In total, Grossi has been the Business Administrator/Board Secretary at the Greater Egg Harbor Regional High School District (GEHRHSD) for 17 years – just not in succession. He actually spent the first 11 years of his school finance career at GEHRHSD, beginning in 1999. In 2010, Grossi joined the Ocean City Board of Education, and then the Dennis Township Board of Education in 2013. He returned to GEHRHSD in 2014.

Grossi said he was "sincerely honored and surprised" when he learned he was receiving a Distinguished Service Award. "I was touched that my colleagues, my office staff, and my Superintendent thought I deserved this honor and did all the hard work on my application. I could not have done it without all their help over the years."

In that letter of recommendation, John J. Keenan, Superintendent of Schools, GEHRHSD, said there were two aspects of Grossi's talents he wanted to highlight. The first is that Grossi is unflappable, and the second is that he is a true educator. "He is calm, patient, and consistent in his approach to his duties," explained Keenan. He also said whenever there is a new idea that "requires more work, time, and attention, Tom is first in line to say, 'How can I help?'"

"Although he does not have a teaching certificate, he sees things as a teacher and building administrator. Tom wants what is best for our overall district and program and works to find a way to make it happen," Keenan said. "If he has to say no due to budget constraints, he will work with our staff to develop a plan to make it happen in the near future." He also noted that Grossi has a "key understanding of the challenges we all face in our schools and classrooms every day."

Grossi said his "philosophy" as a Business Administrator is based on honesty. "People will respect you, if you are just honest with them," explained Grossi. "It might not be what they want to hear, but you can work through the issues from there."

Keenan also wanted to mention Grossi's "outstanding audits with no recommendations, his successful stewardship in building a new high school, and passing several bonds for school improvements." He also noted that Grossi runs the district's Education Foundation.

GEHRHSD Board of Education President Carol Houck said Grossi, "goes above and beyond his job description in all of the hard work he does

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DEMONSTRATING LONG-TERM, CONTINUOUS EXEMPLARY SERVICE

Members Receive Distinguished Service Awards *continued from page 11*

for our GEHRHSD Education Foundation.”
Houck noted that the primary fundraiser for the Foundation is the annual Golf Tournament, which

Grossi not only organizes but also secures sponsors and brings in players. She said the Golf

Tournament enables the Foundation to offer grants to the district’s three high schools to benefit students.

Grossi joined NJASBO in 1999 and served as a Trustee in 2002-2004. He has been a member of the Annual Conference Committee since 2001. He has been a member of the Atlantic County ASBO since 2014 and currently is the Scholarship Committee Chairperson; he previously was a member between 1999 and 2010, when he served as Vice President and President. Grossi also was a member of the Cape May County ASBO from 2010 until 2014, where he was the Scholarship Committee Chairperson in 2014.

Additionally, Grossi has been active in the Atlantic and Cape May Counties Association of School Business Officials Joint Insurance Fund (ACCASBO JIF) from 1999 to 2010 and 2014 to the present. He has held the positions of Secretary, Vice Chairperson, and Chairperson. He also has been a member of the Claims Committee and Chaired the Finance and Safety Committees. Grossi has been the Chairperson of the School Pool for Excess Liability Limits Joint Insurance Fund since 2018.

Craig Wilkie, Deputy Executive Director, ACCASBO JIF, said Grossi “keeps all things in perspective and goes above and beyond by taking on additional responsibilities which makes the district better, the JIF better, and all who work with him better.” Wilkie went on to say, “His [Grossi] selfless commitment to the education of our students is one of the reasons why the district and the JIFs are so successful.”

Grossi also has sat on the Rowan University Education Institute School Business Officials Planning Committee.

“His selfless commitment to the education of our students is one of the reasons why the district and the JIFs are so successful.”

Jonathan Houdart, President of the Atlantic County ASBO and Business Administrator/Board Secretary for Brigantine

Public Schools, said perhaps Grossi’s greatest accomplishment was the establishment of a transportation consortium in Atlantic County in 1999. The consortium, which is run from the GEHRHSD, provides transportation services for approximately 20 districts in the county; it serves as the entire transportation department for 12 of those districts. “The consortium has been a huge success in saving districts time and money for over 20 years, thanks to the leadership of Mr. Grossi,” said Houdart.

NJASBO will award a \$1,000 scholarship in Grossi’s name to Angel Casanova from Oakcrest High School in Hamilton Township. Oakcrest is one of the three high schools in the GEHRHSD. Casanova will be attending the University of Delaware in the fall, where he will major in mechanical engineering.

Grossi has a bachelor’s degree from Villanova University and a master’s in School Business Administration from Rowan University.

He was born and raised in Milmay in Cumberland County, and now lives in Dennis Township in Cape May County with his wife, Tara, and their two children, Nathan and Natalie.

ASSOCIATE BUSINESS MEMBER PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Celebrating Pitt Bull Secure Technologies and Paul Cannizzaro



When a parade of cars comes down your street, led by the local police with sirens blaring, it really can get your attention! Just ask Paul Cannizzaro, Chief Operating Officer of Pitt Bull Secure Technologies, Inc. (PBST) – he knows all about it! NJASBO worked in cahoots with Cannizzaro’s wife to pull-off a surprise drive-by celebration to mark PBST’s designation as the Associate Business Member Partner of the Year.

Carrying balloons and throwing confetti, a contingent of ABM and NJASBO officers watched as NJASBO Executive Director Susan Young and ABM New Member Chair Noelle Baglivo presented Cannizzaro with a plaque.

Cannizzaro’s wife organized a small "gathering" of family and neighbors to come to the house and watch the "drive-by" celebration to make it even more festive. Dana Pawlak, ABM Executive Committee Secretary said Cannizzaro was “joyously surprised, and you could see the pride and enthusiasm his neighbors and family had for his accomplishment.”

Burlington Township Schools Superintendent Mary Ann Bell and School Business Administrator Nicholas Bice nominated Cannizzaro for the award. The nomination was supported by Edgewater Park Township School District School Business Administrator Nancy Lane.

“It is a great honor to be NJASBO’s Associate Business Member Partner of the Year,” said Cannizzaro. “I would like to thank Mary Ann Bell, Nick Bice, and Nancy Lane for nominating me for this award!”

Cannizzaro noted that he has enjoyed the opportunity over the last 10 years to collaborate with the Associate Business Members and the School Business Administrators. “Every member of the ABM has shared a common vision to always provide the community and schools with quality service,” said Cannizzaro. “When my family started Pitt Bull Secure Technologies, our goal was always to go above and beyond for our clients. I am proud of my family and my employees for all they do for the schools and our communities we work in.”

PBST provides managed information technology support and service to businesses, government agencies, and school districts throughout the northeast region of the United States.

In nominating Cannizzaro and PBST, Bice noted that Cannizzaro and PBST are “true partners” to school business officials, and certainly to Burlington Township. “They are always available, even on weekends, over breaks, in the evenings, and when the district is facing dark times,” wrote

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ASSOCIATE BUSINESS MEMBER PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Celebrating Pitt Bull Secure Technologies and Paul Cannizzaro *continued from page 13*

Bice. PBST has been working with Burlington Township Schools since 2010, when budget cuts forced the district to outsource technology.

Bice said that PBST worked with Burlington Township Schools to implement the anti-bullying software platform HIBster to document – and curtail – harassment, intimidation, and bullying. He said the software is widely used by thousands of schools across the state and country to address incidents. “Paul and his team at Pitt Bull needed to work to understand how the district was approaching the need to investigate, and accurately document, these events,” Bice said.

Bice noted that PBST and Cannizzaro were an integral part of the district’s implementation of its original five-year safety and security project. The state and the New Jersey School Boards Association have recognized Project Guardian as a best practice in school security. “Paul and Pitt Bull worked alongside the district in developing a plan that integrates the technological aspects and practical aspects of security,” explained Bice. “Paul became a champion for ‘walking the walk’ in understanding security.”

As other districts in the area began to experience budget or staffing issues, Cannizzaro worked with School Business Administrators to develop a shared services agreement, Bice said. The arrangement enabled other districts to obtain first-class technology support and management at cost-effective rates, according to Bice. He said PBST stands out among other vendors because Cannizzaro understands that the “overall support from the technology partner of the district must be to establish relationships. Paul and Pitt Bull take time to understand the users’ needs and how it connects to helping students. They do not shy away from spending hours inside classrooms, labs, or other settings to ensure they are providing what is needed, and not just changing mice or counting hours.”

Edgewater Park’s Lane agrees. “Pitt Bull has been working with the Edgewater Park Township School

District for several years. In that time, they have become the backbone of the district’s ability to function in its best technological capacity,” said Lane. “Their work ethic is like no other; when you need them, they are here to help regardless of the day or time. They are more than a partner; they are part of the district’s family.”

The COVID-19 pandemic had Burlington Township relying on PBST once again. Bice said the district’s technology support was deliberately designed to include a 1:1 within the classroom, and each classroom had a device for each child in the room. He said the district had decided not to provide devices to take home. However, when the pandemic forced the closure of the school buildings, Bice said Cannizzaro and PBST managed to track and distribute more than 700 devices in just a matter of days. “He and his team have provided support to staff, administration, students, and families,” said Bice.

Bice said that Cannizzaro and members of PBST also participate on a number of committees for the district, including the Faith Based Partners Roundtable, the Emergency Preparedness Task Force, and Team Guardian, the internal response and process improvement team.



HONORABLE MENTION – ABM PARTNER OF THE YEAR

Genesis Educational Services and Richard Heitmueller



Genesis Educational Services of Jamesburg, New Jersey, has been selected for Honorable Mention as the Associate Business Member Partner of the Year.

Stafford Township School District Business Administrator Lourdes LaGuardia made the

nomination for Genesis and Richard Heitmueller, Conversion-Implementation Specialist.

“I am grateful for the nomination of Genesis Educational Services for ABM Partner of the Year,” said Heitmueller. “Over the last 45 years I have worked with many wonderful BAs, administrators, and office staff. The people, relationships and friendships are what I will always cherish.”

The Genesis Student Information and Administration Software System is used by more than 270 school districts to manage student, personnel, and financial management records.

LaGuardia said Heitmueller was a “pioneer” in developing computer applications for school districts in the state. LaGuardia noted that as the Director of the Asbury Park Computer Center – an enterprise division of the Asbury Park Board of Education – Heitmueller was at the forefront of creating programs to transition from paper recordkeeping to the computerized applications of today.

According to LaGuardia, Heitmueller developed numerous relationships at the state level and had many conversations on behalf of school districts about reporting responsibilities. She said that he educated himself on evolving technology and would in turn, provide that information to school district employees.

LaGuardia said Heitmueller would “spend hours

walking people through everything over the telephone on how to achieve the results they were aiming for, and if the systems he worked with did not have it as part of the program, he diligently worked behind the scenes to ensure that the application was updated.” She noted he always would say, “surely if there is one demand for program additions, others will also benefit.”

She added that his vast experience in marketing, sales, software design, and consumer needs landed him at Genesis as part of its development team. “His contributions in expanding the software offerings and new program development is apparent as they grow into financial software implementations,” said LaGuardia.

“Over the years, more than I can recall, I have picked up the telephone and with all the frustrations that come with not being able to get what I needed to be done – it could be paying a person incorrectly or not being able to tie into projections – he would say ‘slow down, start over again, let’s see how we can fix the problem,’” said LaGuardia.

She said she nominated Heitmueller “because he has had a distinguished career as a standout in school district technology management, operations, and development.” LaGuardia also noted that Heitmueller is retiring at the end of this school year. “I often think of our thankless job, but recognize that without the support and dedication of our associate members, we could not proclaim our own individual successes.”

Heitmueller said he saw a quote in a program at the NJASBO conference a few years ago that stuck with him: “In education, there are only two types of employees, those who teach and those who facilitate teaching.” Heitmueller said he is “proud that I was able to help to facilitate the education of students in New Jersey.”

THE FIRST EVER NJASBO VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

NJASBO recently made history by presenting its very first VIRTUAL annual conference!

A big **THANK YOU** goes out to all the presenters at the first (and hopefully last) Virtual Conference. Within weeks of cancelling the in-person conference, NJASBO had 10 groups agree to present virtually. They developed interesting and informative topics including those on the Federal CARES Act Leave, Cyber Threats, Health Insurance Legislation, the Sunshine Law and many others.

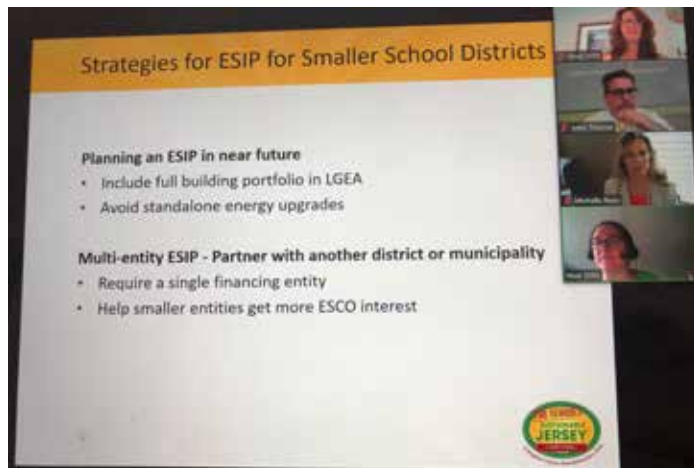
The sessions offered 10 CPE credits, 8 QPA credits and 2 CEFM credits, to those members who registered for the Conference.

The Conference App – Pathable – enabled everyone who registered to go to one place to watch the session live or recorded, and to access PowerPoint presentations and any other attachments right from the App.

The members who registered and paid for the virtual conference also will automatically be registered, free-of-charge, for the mini-conference that will be held in Atlantic City on October 18 through October 20, if the social distancing and health and safety guidelines permit. Members will receive further information regarding the mini-conference once it becomes apparent if the event will be held.

Members enjoy the personal interaction with colleagues usually available at the conference, but of course these are unprecedented times. Hopefully you enjoyed the virtual conference and look forward to the possibility of an in-person event in October.

Stay well and have a wonderful summer!



LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENT ACTION UPDATE

By Susan Young

While this pandemic seems to drag on indefinitely, the pace with which the “rules” have been changing is unprecedented. Admittedly, I drive our editorial staff crazy by waiting until the last possible moment to submit this column, but while striving to provide the most current information, there is a lagging fear that legislation (state or federal), executive orders, or DOE broadcasts will be signed, proclaimed, or announced between the time this is written and published days later. This is the reason that our [legislative summary](#), provides the caution to consult the official sources for any possible updates to issues in which you may be interested.

On a Federal level, ASBO International continues to work with the School Superintendents Association (AASA) regarding several issues such as the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) allocation methodology, where \$1.3 billion more was allocated to non-public schools due to a diversion from the Title 1 allocation methodology. AASA continues to advocate for Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) flexibility, strict Maintenance of Effort parameters so states cannot divert state funding from schools, and liability provisions related to school reopening, labor disputes, etc.

- When questioned whether the \$600/week additional unemployment benefits might be extended to December 31, the current feeling is that the decision may be tied to future unemployment figures relative to the election.

While recent weeks have seen little state legislation signed into law by our Governor, NJASBO has been heavily involved in multiple committees addressing school reopening issues. Various members, Executive Committee officers, Loretta Hill, and I participated in and contributed to the Senate Education Recovery Task Force, Department of Education working groups & steering committees, and Leadership for Excellence in Education (LEE) Group discussions. Thank you to everyone who has contributed their

valuable expertise to facilitate solutions to our current situation.

The Thursday prior to the publication of *KeyPost*, we anticipated receiving the highly sought-after School Reopening Plan issued by the Department of Education. We are anticipating as well, a report to be generated by Senator Ruiz’s committee in the near future. As mentioned in the joint letter issued by the members of the LEE Group and shared via a [Key Alert on June 17](#), our organizations have stressed the need for immediate direction and communicated our recommended priorities. The frenzy of enacted state legislation has slowed a bit, however there are still a number of bills being introduced, passed by one house or the other, or awaiting action by the Governor.

- **A4132 - commonly known as Benefits Provided to Workers** - is the most interesting, as it has been awaiting the Governor’s signature since May 14. This bill adds a small bit of language regarding contractor payments and, just as important, would create a job-sharing program. Governor Murphy has declined to sign it as of this date.
- The second bill awaiting signature pertains to a **Bridge Year Program** for 2021 and 2022 graduates.

The other bills that **have NOT** been passed by both houses, or have only been introduced, are described fully in the document linked in the first paragraph. They relate to the NJ COVID-19 Emergency Bond Act, Coronavirus Relief Bonds, Electronic Construction Procurement, Student Athlete Physical Exams, NJQSAC postponements, Textbook selections, **Use of Capital Reserve Funds**, a Co-curricular emergency grant program, and funding to address the digital divide.

- Last but not least, although **S2273 (Health Benefits bill)** passed in the Senate on March 19 and is being heavily promoted by the NJEA, it

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LEGISLATIVE AND GOVERNMENT ACTION UPDATE *continued from page 17*

has not yet been introduced in the Assembly. We will continue to monitor these and others as they arise.

The old adage that there is nothing as constant as change seems a fitting synopsis for both the legislative climate and district operations in which we find ourselves today.

Postscript: True to form, several significant actions occurred within 24 hours of drafting this article on Thursday. The long-awaited school reopening plan, “The Road Back”, was issued

Friday, June 26. It provides anticipated minimum standards and additional considerations to guide districts in developing their school reopening plans, which must be shared with parents, staff etc., within 30 days. Additionally, several significant bills were placed on the Assembly agenda for June 29. They are **S2273/A20, the health benefits bill, S2303/A4140 the subcontracting bill and A4006 which suspends QSAC reviews for one year.** All of these bills can be found on this [website](#).

CONGRATULATIONS AND BEST WISHES TO OUR RETIRING MEMBERS

The school year ends, students graduate or move up to the next education milestone, and some of the NJASBO members retire. Although we will miss you and your many contributions to our organization and our profession, we wish you all the best for a long, healthy, restful and fun retirement!

Bergen County

Pamela Baxley
Pascack Valley Regional High School District

Cape May County

Martha Jamison
Wildwood City School District

Camden County

Diana Schiraldi (8/1/20)
Eastern Regional High School

Somerset County

Don Sternberg
North Plainfield School District

