



Connect 24



Communicate

Participate

Collaborate

Volume 1 Issue 3

Conference Edition

June, 2017

Maryland is not a large state, but its corners are stretched out a bit. The middle part is dense, the edges more sparse. We cover a lot of landscapes and a fair amount of distance. More diverse, maybe, than many states.

So what is the value of bringing our diverse community of election workers to a hotel in Ocean City for two and a half days? Well, you may as well ask 'what is the value of communicating'. In fact, we communicate all year, through ever more avenues and apps and media and platforms. We meet in informal groups and in committees. We speak one-on-one.

But when we meet at a MAEO Conference, we are with the entire spectrum of election personnel. Board members mingle with Data Application Specialists, Directors interact with warehouse staff. More importantly, we speak with folks from across the entire state. From jurisdictions huge, big, medium, small, and tiny. This is the one time a year that we can count on meeting up with those who are otherwise just voices or words on a screen.

The general sessions, the breakouts, the in-between and after-hour times are opportunities to renew our friendships, and to make new ones. As we recount our own past-year experienc-

es, our election war-stories, something we learned may occur that will have value for others. We can share our knowledge year-round, but there is something about being face-to-face that triggers an impulse to communicate and exchange, to put our experiences into the context of our own 'lessons learned'.

Ever since I became actively involved with MAEO, early in my tenure with Maryland elections, I have anticipated and valued the experience of getting to know election folk from all around the state. I certainly hope to find relevant sessions to sit in on. I hope that the topics will build on what I already know and will expand my understanding of the tasks completed and the tasks ahead. I'm even prepared to learn something completely new.

But it's the people that offer the greatest value to me at a MAEO Conference. To interact with my peers always lays out the possibility for new connections, new partnering, new collaborations. So, I'm here to learn and to become just a bit more adept at my job. But I'm also here to mingle, to laugh, to table-hop. I'm at the conference "to confer, converse, and otherwise hobnob with my brother (and sister) wizards."

Ben Frey, Somerset County

Inside This Issue

- What's in a Name?2
- Conference Reminders3
- Neighbors & Partners4
- Business as Usual5
- Let's Connect!6
- New Committee6
- New Hires6
- Better Every Issue7

Click links to view notes from prior MAEO Board meetings:

[MAEO Board Meeting minutes from 3-28-17](#)

[MAEO Board Meeting minutes from 5-8-17](#)

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What's in a Name?

Congratulations! It took a couple of issues but we finally have an official newsletter name. **Connect 24**

Congratulations to Chrissy Sharpless, Election Supervisor from Garrett County for winning the naming contest and coming up with a clever and appropriate title; appropriate given we have 24 jurisdictions. Furthermore, within those jurisdictions lies the purpose of joining together to achieve a common goal: to improve the Election and registration in the State of Maryland; to improve the operation of the offices of the Boards of Elections throughout the State; to recommend desirable new legislation affecting voting and registration to the State Board of Elections; and to encourage fellowship and exchange ideas.

When asked on how she came up with the name, Chrissy says, "I wanted something that summarized the goal of the newsletter. I think it is a wonderful idea to keep all the members up-to-date on important issues, and I wanted to come up with a title that reflected that goal." In coming up with a name, she looked at words such as 'fusion,' 'connect,' 'united.' "As silly as it sounds," she says, "I looked at words [and] the game 'Connect 4' came to mind, and hence Connect 24 was born.

"I came up with several titles, but Connect 24 was at the top of my list. Being in 'no man's land' (Garrett County), we aren't always able to attend meetings and gatherings, and I loved the idea of a newsletter to keep us informed. I think it represents what the MAEO

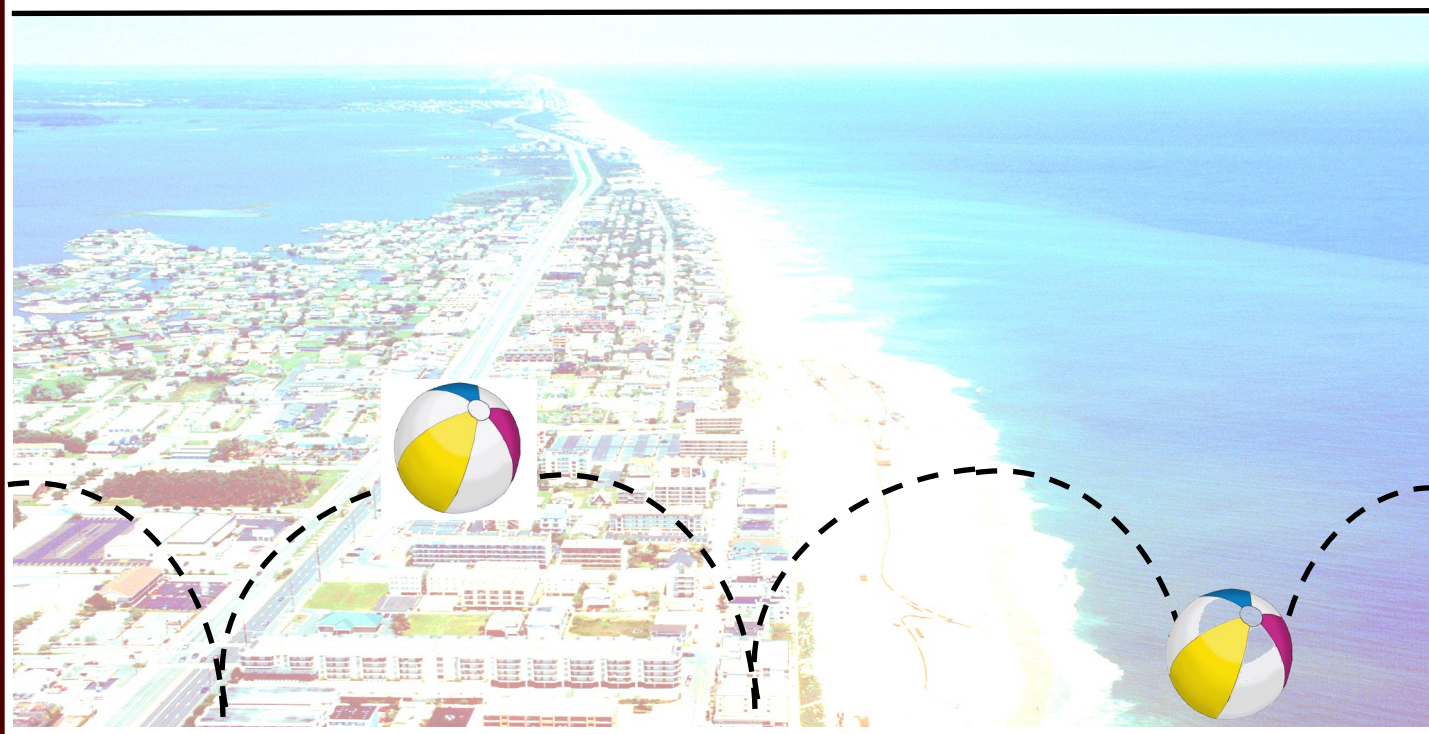
board was looking for; a way to unify all 24 counties."

Chrissy has submitted theme ideas for MAEO in the past. In 2014 she won for naming the theme **"Expanding our Horizons, Embracing Change."** "I enjoy the challenge of coming up with ideas for these types of contests," says Sharpless.

Timing is everything, and the naming of the newsletter comes at a time where all 24 LBEs will be collaborating in an attempt to achieve those aforementioned goals at our annual MAEO conference in Ocean City.

It's time to get connected and stay connected; all 24 of us.

Shawn Larson, Baltimore City



Reminders for the MAEO Conference—Please Read

- ◆ General Information, Agenda, Menu, and Silent Auction information can be found on MAEO's website (MAEO.net).
- ◆ Make sure you wear your badge at all times.
- ◆ You must present vouchers for breakfast buffet.
- ◆ The point of contact for the Clarion Hotel is Dale Livingston - delivingston@harfordcountymd.gov – 410-809-6002 (office). If there are any questions or problems that have to do with rooms, Dale needs to be notified of them first. This will alleviate any confusion and miscommunication for MAEO as well as the Clarion representatives.
- ◆ If anyone has any dietary needs, please contact Dale Livingston (Harford) or Chrissy Jones (Queen Anne's) as soon as possible.
- ◆ Registration is in Conference Room 5 on the 2nd floor of the conference center Tuesday from 3-5pm, Wednesday from 7:30-9am, and Thursday from 7:30-9am.
- ◆ Bring a light jacket or sweater to be comfortable if the rooms are cooler.
- ◆ If you are planning on attending the MDVOTERS Committee breakout session, and have a laptop, tablet or smartphone (or access to one), please bring it along as you will be able to interact with the presentation.
- ◆ Wednesday night's Pig Roast includes live music as well as a photo booth.
- ◆ Be sure to bring a chair, blanket or something to sit on as well as any snacks and drinks you would want for the bonfire and movie on the beach event Thursday night. They will NOT be supplied by the hotel.
- ◆ Please bring cash or check if you plan on bidding on any of the silent auction items. There is an ATM in the hotel. Proceeds from the silent auction will benefit the Educational Grant Fund.
- ◆ Each county is asked to bring at least 1 silent auction item, and 1 centerpiece.
- ◆ There is a centerpiece competition and your centerpiece will serve as a door prize. Be creative. A prize will be given for best centerpiece as voted on by the MAEO board.
- ◆ For the silent auction, please have a description of contents and estimated value.
- ◆ The rooms are tax exempt. The first person from each county to arrive at the hotel, who may be bringing a check or other type of payment for the rooms should make sure they have their list of names and confirmation numbers that their payment will be covering. It will make the checking-in process much easier and quicker.
- ◆ We have 11 confirmed vendors attending so make sure to stop by and visit their booths to thank them for supporting our conference.
- ◆ There is an election to vote on a proposed amendment to MAEO Bylaws on June 6, 2017. The amendment grants full voting rights to SBE staff. The deadline to request an Absentee ballot has passed. Please bring your ballot to the conference or mail it in the supplied envelope to the MAEO Election Committee in the Baltimore County election office .

Neighbors & Partners: Cecil County

Greetings from Debbie, Lora, Jessica, and Terry from Cecil County!

We are very excited to be co-hosting this year's MAEO Conference with Harford County, and we would like to thank everyone who has been collaborating and working hard to make this conference one for the record books. This has been an amazing team effort and we expect a very successful and entertaining MAEO Conference.

Cecil County sits at the northeast corner of Maryland, bordering Pennsylvania and Delaware; it offers the beauty of the countryside and the accessibility of being right on I-95. If you are looking to have a little adventure on the weekend, Cecil County could be the place to go. Make your way to Elkton and enjoy the equestrian beauty and family entertainment at the annual Fair Hill Races, or enjoy the charm of downtown Northeast with its historic shops, restaurants, museums, and miles of scenic waterfront.

As an office, we proudly embrace our role in the conservancy of convenience, uniformity, accessibility, impartiality, and precision surrounding the election processes; "Do what's right, work as a team and get results." With an estimated population of 102,603 and 64,233 active voters, some may say that we are a pretty small county, but we all know that every county has their own set of obstacles during an election. During this past election, we experienced a record breaking number of voters, causing early voting lines to be extremely long. Despite the large numbers of people, we received great feedback from our county officials and the media about how we managed lines and kept the wait times under 20 minutes. We were very fortunate to have a wonderful team of techs and office staff - having all hands on deck to make sure that



Cecil County's main office in Elkton.

the election went as smoothly as possible. Oh, and a big shout out to SBE and Russell Hicks (best regional manager ever) for all of the support and guidance they provided.

Additionally, we are very excited to introduce Terry Daniels as the newest addition to our election team! He served in the United States Marine Corps for 4 years, and an additional 4 years in the United States Navy. Some of his hobbies include: building computers, fishing and designing/playing video games. He described that one of his finest attributes is that he stays calm under pressure. Terry has already proven to be a very valuable and pleasant asset to our office, and we look forward to what lies ahead.

(More information on Terry Daniels in the "New Hires" feature on page 6).

We hope that everyone has a wonderful "quiet time" before the next election, and we will see you all at MAEO!

Jessica Fleming, Cecil County



The Fair Hill Races in Elkton, MD.

2017 MAEO Conference: Business as Usual

The MAEO Conference for 2017 is underway. For many of us it's a time to reflect back on events passed, and begin preparation on how we go about preparing for the future. For the Clarion, it's business as usual.

Renee Seiden, the Director of Sales, has been working at the Clarion for 21 years. She started off as a Sales Manager before being promoted to Director. Some of her other yearly conferences include other state-wide offices such as the Maryland Office of the Public Defender, the Maryland States Attorneys Association, the Maryland State Bar Association and the Maryland Government Finance Officers Association.

In all, the Clarion can host anywhere between 25 to 30 conferences a month. That comes to roughly 300 conferences a year! But according to Renee, whenever MAEO comes to town, it's one of

her largest groups. The last time the Clarion hosted MAEO's conference was in 2011 where we ended up booking over 600 room nights; reserving rooms in both the hotel and the condos. While we may not reach those numbers in 2017, we're still considered a bulky group.

But that's the way Renee likes it. Having one large group means she only has one meeting planner to work with. Sometimes the Clarion could be hosting up to five conferences where she'll be meeting the five different planners, organizing five different agendas and five different meals selections; all in a day's work for Renee and her staff.

It's no easy task by any stretch, but Renee and all the hard working staff at the Clarion makes it look easy. It may be business as usual for the Clarion, but they do an excellent job making us feel as

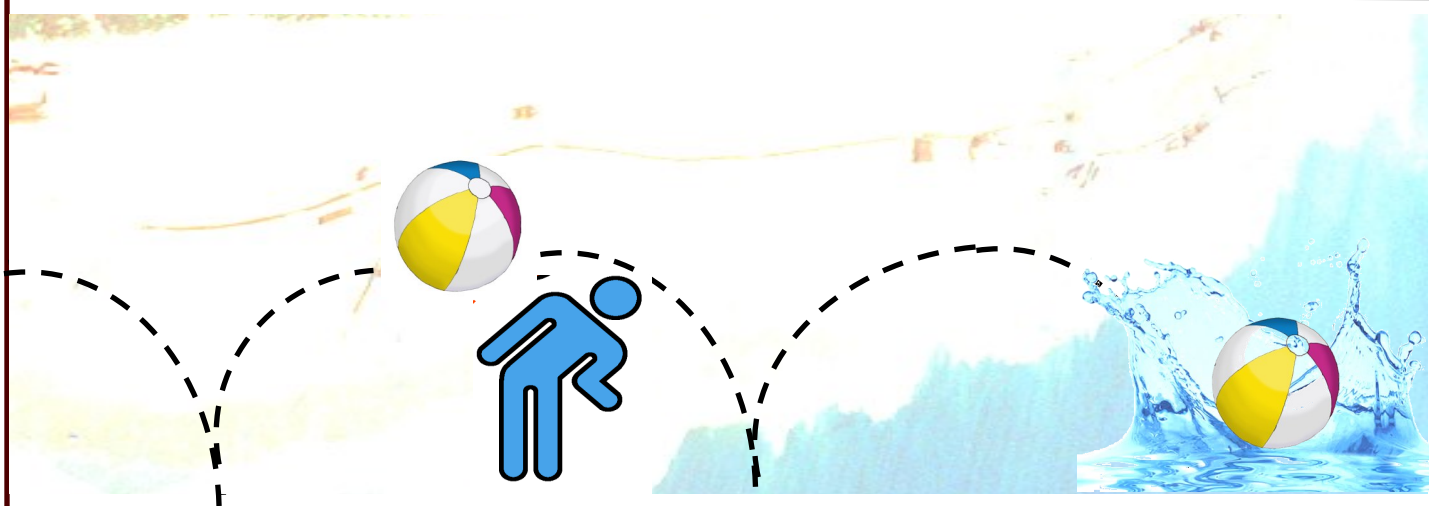


Renee Seiden pictured with General Manager Mark Elman.

though we're their one and only priority.

So on behalf of MAEO, we would like to say thank you to Renee and her entire staff for all the hard work they put in to making our conferences run smoothly.

Shawn Larson, Baltimore City



Let's All Connect!!

The MAEO Conference hasn't even begun and the Newsletter is already anticipating the *next* issue. The **Post-Conference** edition. Everyone has the opportunity to contribute something from the conference for inclusion – your photos, your thoughts and impressions, your photos, your reviews of breakout sessions, your photos, your amusing anecdotes. And your photos. Submit your words and pictures to Ben Frey – ben.frey@maryland.gov – by June 30. And let's focus on the positive – what was good better best about this conference. Thanks!

Ben Frey, Somerset County

New Committee!!

A MAEO Special Committee has been created to review the processing of absentee ballots in Maryland. Their goal is to investigate ways of improving this process, specifically exploring the possibility of pre-processing these ballots on or before election day. MAEO Vice-President Alysoun McLaughlin, chair of this committee, held an organizational meeting on April 12 and a second meeting on May 18. The group hopes to present their findings to the MAEO board in the near future. Stay tuned for more information!

Anthony Gutierrez, Wicomico County

New LBE Hires!!!



Please welcome Cecil Co's new hire Terry Daniels. His official title is 'Data Application Specialist I.' Previously, he worked at the Baltimore City Office of Child Support Enforcement as a Beneficiary Specialist, and also enjoyed teaching children with dyslexia, as a volunteer.



In Baltimore City, there was recently six new hires! From left to right (Back Row) Kenneth Moore, Kevin Norrington; (Front Row L to R) Darlene Lovelace, Phyllis Morgan and Karen Benecewicz. They hold the fort down at the downtown office. I know, it says six but only five are pictured. Number six is Jeremy Garnes (on next page) who works out of the warehouse.

'New Hires Continued on Next Page.'

New Hires cont'd



Jeremy Garnes is part of the crew working out of the warehouse in Baltimore City. He started off as a County Tech for the 2016 Presidential Election and impressed enough to be hired on as a State employee.

*If you have any newly hired employees you would like to be featured in the next issue, contact Shawn Larson at shawn.larson@maryland.gov

Connect 24—Better Every Issue

Three issues into our experiment and the newly named Connect 24, the MAEO newsletter, continues to evolve. The discussion continues after each edition – what are we doing right, what are we doing wrong? And what can we do better?

We are mighty proud to be putting out the newsletter. It is filling a need that had not been met – facilitating broader communication between the MAEO Board and the larger MAEO community. It is giving a voice to any member that chooses to speak up. Allowing us to discover a little bit about each jurisdiction, each office. Informing us about the work of the MAEO committees. Giving a space to pass along best practices or ‘tips and tricks’, that could make our jobs a bit more productive. And soliciting feedback from every MAEO member as to ‘what else should we be doing?’

Not having any precedent for a MAEO newsletter, we are left to rely

on our own ambitions, our own priorities and our own imagination. All we can do is, to borrow a phrase from the past, “do what feels right”. Anthony, Shawn and I meet a week or two after every issue to start planning the next one. We review what may be coming up in the LBEs, what the Board is working on, hot topics of interest to MAEO. Then we start reaching out to gather contributors. This part can sometimes be smooth, sometimes not. People respond or don’t respond, we go with what we have. The three of us write the bulk of what goes in, and we hope that it is enlightening and entertaining. A month or so later, we all see the result.

So, I circle back to the question at the top – What can we do better? The motto at the top of Connect 24 says, “Communicate Participate Collaborate”. Connecting is also a part of that process. We ask for your input and your contributions. Think about what you can share from your

work and your office. Educate and inform us. Give us your opinion, your knowledge, your experiences. Connect with us and we’ll connect right back to you.

Now then, we’re looking to grow the Connect 24 team. Not just one-time writers but one or two individuals who’ll work with us from start to finish on each issue. You’ll be part of the brainstorming, planning and writing activities. Creative impulses are highly valued. As is an avid interest in the many aspects of elections in Maryland and elsewhere. The general process is laid out above. If you want to get a clearer idea of what goes on, contact Ben Frey at the conference (at the Somerset County table), by email or by phone.

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410-651-5913

Ben Frey, Somerset County