

**Volume 1 Issue 5****October, 2017**

Good Habits: It's how we Thrive

"Quality is not an act, it is a habit." - Aristotle

There are good habits and there are bad habits. Over time, habits become behavior, and a group of behaviors eventually form a culture. So in essence, quality is relative to the culture of an organization such as Elections.

Election steam is slowly gaining momentum. Soon our business will be out in the streets (outside of voter outreaches). But that's what we're used to, isn't it? This is indeed no surprise, for we've been planning for this since Post-Election Maintenance. That's why we test every unit; it's the beginning stages to making sure they're ready for the next Election.

Those are good habits to have.

Of course, with the good always comes the bad, and by bad I mean the naysayers; those who resort to skullduggery to throw that wrench into the wheel. They come in all shapes, sizes and avenues. But that's what keeps us focused, and the results always speak for themselves. Little do they know that they are attempting to setup roadblocks and detours on a map that has already been written and drawn up with precision.

The proof lies within the outcome. Satisfied voters who gracefully receive our "I Voted" stickers, campaigners who set up 100 ft. outside our polling places, the "Unofficial" results, the concession and victory speeches by the candidates, all substantiates our claim of efficiency. So of course we'll always have a spectator here, a kibitzer there, but tunnel vision leaves us oblivious.

Good habits.

The core of what we do involves maintaining those good habits. It's that attention to detail; processing every application, charging every unit, is just as important as checking in a voter and them casting their ballot. There's no time and place for sinecures. We each have a job to do and it's vital. If we had more outsiders watching us as we go through the process, we would be received with more praise than we would know what to do with. But as they say, "such is life."

Of course I'm not telling you anything you don't already know, but it's always good to hear.

To good habits.

*Shawn Larson
Baltimore City*

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Maryland Early Voting...Pass or Fail?

In 2007, the Maryland General Assembly approved a constitutional amendment granting their membership the authority to enact new legislation that would allow for annual statewide voting to take place before the traditional Election Day(s). At best, this controversial decision immediately divided the traditionalists, whose mantra was, "If it ain't broke, don't fix it!"...and the progressives, who sensed an opportunity to expand the voting process "for all people!" At worst, it was feared that the state bureaucracy was birthing a new, cost heavy, and unnecessary boondoggle...defined by Google Dictionary as: "work or activity that is wasteful or pointless but gives the appearance of having value." Clearly, the battle lines were drawn!

In November 2008, following much heated debate, a season of change was endorsed by Maryland voters who approved the constitutional amendment that would enable early voting to become a reality. By 2009, the amendment was enacted and the state mandated requirements for early voting were established: the number of early voting centers required for each county would be based on the, then current number of each county's registered voters. Counties with fewer than 125,000 registered voters would have one early voting center, while counties with more than 125,000 but fewer than 300,000 registered voters would have three. Counties with more than 300,000 registered voters but fewer than 450,000 registered voters would have five, and counties with more than 450,000 registered voters would have eight early voting centers. Subsequently, the first early voting centers were placed into operation in time for the 2010 Primary Election. The days designated for early voting would begin on the second Friday before Election Day running for seven days through the following Thursday, before the election. The hours would be from 10:00 AM to 8:00 PM, with reduced hours on Sundays.

It was decided in 2013, to expand the number of early voting centers, the number of early voting days, and the early voting center hours to the levels that were in place for the 2014 and 2016 elections. A more current measure of Maryland Early Voting's on-going success, and most certainly a doff of the cap to the early voter turnout experienced during the 2016 General Election, has clearly been identified as additional early voting sites are once again being added statewide for the 2018 Gubernatorial Election.

A group of respondents, comprised of both LBE Directors and Deputy Directors, recently participated in the completion of an impartial survey designed to provide substantive data that reflects their office's early voting experiences, both positive and negative. At this writing, the jury is still out; however, the trends being identified appear to be mostly positive. They reveal a process, that although it may have been flawed initially with poll workers and LBE's alike struggling to find their footing, the successes of the 2016 election indicate a endeavor that is on the grow!

All indicators point to Early Voting being a successful endeavor...a win/win for everyone involved! The numbers say it is so...but has it been? In upcoming editions, we hope to take a deeper, more objective look at the early voting process. We will drill down to examine all the numbers...focusing on both the good and the "not so good" aspects of the entire early voting process. In any case, the result has been a cultural shift in Maryland voter's "business as usual"!

Craig Booth

Baltimore County



Neighbors & Partners: Dorchester County: So Big, Yet So Small

With over 540 square miles,* Dorchester County is the largest county on the Eastern Shore, and the 4th largest county in Maryland. If you've traveled route 50 to get to Ocean City, you have been here before. Once you cross the bridge of the Choptank River you are in Dorchester County. Those white sails you see as you come across the bridge belong to the Dorchester Visitor's Center in Cambridge.

The Cambridge downtown area hosts several local restaurants, little shops, and is home to the Dorchester Center for the Arts (or the Art Center, as the locals call it). The Art Center holds classes and workshops, art exhibits, open mic nights and offers a large Performance Hall on the 2nd floor for events. The Art Center's Performance Hall is the proposed Early Voting site for Dorchester County. Early Voting used to be held right at the County Office building where the election office is located. Although it is a little less convenient being located off-site, it's less than a mile away, and the new location has a lot to offer.

Even though Dorchester is the largest county on the Eastern Shore, with less than 22,000 active registered voters, it's also one of the smallest counties in Maryland. There are 21 polling places



Patriotism on Elliott Island.

and 39 precincts in Dorchester County. Some of the polling places are very remote, but the one in Elliott Island takes the cake. It is the furthest polling place from the office, taking roughly an hour to traverse. This is also Dorchester's smallest precinct, boasting less than 40 active registered voters.

At the opposite end of the spectrum is one of the polling places in Cambridge. It is the largest precinct in Dorchester, with over 3,000 active registered voters. In total, there are four polling places in Cambridge, all within two or three miles of each other. Almost half of the active registered voters reside in Cambridge.

*Jessica Noranbrock,
Dorchester County*

* <https://www.indexmundi.com/facts/united-states/quick-facts/maryland/land-area>

The Wicomico Daredevil

Rosalyn Evans fell out of an airplane recently. And she wouldn't mind doing it again. Logical question – why? “I always wanted to. It was a milestone birthday. [No, I didn't ask] And it was on my bucket list”. Three excellent, logical reasons. We're talking skydiving, by the way. Rosalyn works in the Wicomico office as an Election Supervisor.

Sure, things

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Great view from above Ocean City for Rosalyn.

Wicomico Daredevil Cont'd

can get a bit exciting in an LBE, but not like freefalling from 18,000 feet up and accelerating to 120 mph for two solid minutes.

The adventure began by taking a single-engine Cessna up over three miles (oxygen required). Once you jump, an oxygen mask is no longer needed as you quickly reach breathable air. Although the first few minutes can get quite chilly. Then the parachute blossoms. I had always thought that the sudden jolt of being yanked up would leave your stomach some 50 feet below the rest of you – Rosalyn says no. “It was fun, not scary”. The rest of the journey, 10 minutes or so, was just calmly floating down, with Ocean City and the shore laid out below. And Rosalyn assured me that she “stuck the landing”.

Next up for Rosalyn? Hang-gliding. Yes, we have daredevils working in the LBEs. Thank goodness for that.

*Ben Frey
Somerset County*



Last selfie before pulling the cord.

As always, **Connect 24** is open to articles and suggestions for topics. What's happening in your office, in your county or city, in your department? What special project are you working on?

Let us know so we can let everybody know. Contact Ben Frey at ben.frey@maryland.gov.

Keeping in Touch

In Dorchester County, we just sent out our 4th edition of our *Judges' Gazette*. The *Gazette* is a quarterly newsletter sent out to our judges designed to “keep them in the loop.”

The newsletter is normally only one page, front and back, and touches on different topics that effect elections, and particularly, election judges. Whether it be a municipal election coming up, new legislation, or the unfortunate passing of an election judge, we're trying to keep our judges informed.

The first edition was sent to all of our judges by mail, but the last three (3) editions have been sent *mostly* by email. This cut down dramatically on

the amount of postage being used. Some LBE's make having an email address a requirement for election judges, Dorchester does not. So, inevitably, some of our newsletters have to be mailed the old fashion way.

Why take the time to do this? I can understand the bigger counties asking this question. But, why not? Find a newsletter template in *Microsoft Word* and fill in the text boxes with things you feel your election judges should know. Changes in legislation is a good place to start. It's also a good reminder of when the next election is being held, and a convenient way to recruit new judges who are friends and family of current election judges.

I have already had some judges tell me they like

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Keeping in Touch Cont'd

this newsletter, and even thank me for sending it out. And, once I started sending most of them by email, I received even more rave reviews for saving a few trees.

In the end, I'm hoping that when training starts, and I mention some of the new legislation, like 16-year-old judges, or candidate signs going up earlier than usual the day before early voting, it won't be a total shock for at least a couple of my judges. I'm hoping to maybe even hear in the audience, "oh yeah, I read that in the newsletter!"

Hey, a girl can dream, right?

*Jessica Noranbrock
Dorchester County*



The Header for Dorchester County's Newsletter

New Hires!



***Baltimore City Board of Elections is continuing its pace of stacking talent by hiring six new employees!
Pictured above (From L to R) Jasmine Barnette, Brittney Johnson and Darien Foster.
(More hires on Page 9).***

The Utah Association of County Clerks & Auditors: Ricky Hatch

We are not alone. Believe it or not, there are other MAEOs out there, with different names. At the last MAEO conference, we met the Clerk/Auditor of Weber County Utah, and the president of the Utah Association of County Clerks and Auditors – Ricky Hatch. He spoke with me at length about his association. Here's what I learned.

The UACCA is actually an affiliate group of the Utah Association of Counties, with all 29 Utah counties represented and about 50 members. As I spoke with Ricky, I kept comparing his association with MAEO. One difference is in the executive setup – The UACCA has a President, Vice President and Secretary/Treasurer, all with one year terms. There is no Board. The Clerk/Auditors Association also provides two members to the UAC Board.

According to the UACCA Bylaws, its number one purpose is networking and camaraderie amongst the members, and the sharing of best practices and ideas on improving the work its members do. The association also emphasizes its legislative agenda and promotes its members priorities in the Utah State Legislature.

In a practical sense, much of the UACCA's work and priorities lay in the legislative realm. Similar to MAEO, Utah's association is a conduit to the state legislature, acting in an advisory role to guide and influence election-related legislation. The most active committees are the County Clerk Legislative Sub-Committee (which Ricky has chaired for the past three years) and the Auditor Legislative Sub-Committee.

Ricky felt that the effectiveness of these committees has evolved over the past four years. Where in the past the UACCA would respond to a



Ricky Hatch, President of UACCA

piece of legislation that they felt was a bad idea by just saying "it's a bad idea," now they are in a more proactive mode, where the committees will encourage legislators to look for better solutions. The association will also write and sponsor their own bills that advance their members' priorities. Ricky says, "The success rate on those is 90%. They almost always pass". The result has been a demonstrably more effective association in legislative matters.

Specifically, the Legislative Sub-Committee has created a simple spreadsheet tool for tracking bills, the legislative committees they're assigned to, and the appropriate UACCA members that need to be in the loop for any given bill. These members then reach out to their legislators and express their support or opposition to the bill – this carries a great deal of weight and can greatly influence the eventual fate of the bill.

The association meets three times a year – the big event is the annual three-day UAC conference, held in St. George in southern Utah at the end of November. Not a great time for the County Clerks in election years, but they're just one cog in the larger Association so they make time to attend. Two-thirds of the conference are actually separate

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Ricky Hatch Interview Cont'd

events run by the various affiliate groups (Clerks/Auditors, County Treasurers, Sheriffs Association, etc.).

The second gathering is a spring Management Conference that features more general sessions and fewer breakouts for the various audiences attending.

The third event is the Summer Workshop, which rotates locations throughout the state. This one has its share of learning and discussion, but there is more of an emphasis on fun and relaxation – touring local sites or river rafting. Ricky says “It really helps. It’s shocking how helpful it is when you have fun together, because then, when things get tough, and you start having disagreements or you really need to work well together, you have that friendship foundation.”

Ricky was asked to compare and contrast the UACCA and MAEO, based on his short time participating in our conference. He pointed to the time in-between UACCA’s conferences. UACCA maintains “constant communication amongst our members. Our members are constantly asking

questions, tossing around ideas.” Much of this is accomplished through their listserv setup, as well as by phone and email. There is also an ongoing alert’ system, so if a clerk or auditor gets local news coverage for their good work, Ricky will send out an email blast drawing attention to the member’s recognition.

On the MAEO side, Ricky is quite impressed with the attendance and outside speakers at our conference. He also noted that we are “more organized and structured as far as different committees” and that MAEO is “more decentralized” where we don’t rely on “just one or two people to run everything.”

We ended our conversation by speculating on the possibilities of some type of forum or ongoing dialogue bringing together voices and minds of other peer organizations, other state election associations. To the two of us, it sounds like a grand idea.

Ben Frey

Somerset County

Election Races/Pig Races: Gail Hatfield’s Other Crew

Gail Hatfield works with animals.

No no no, not the Calvert County election office. Real animals – pigs and ducks. Gail races them. In talking with her about this side of her life, you get the sense that no matter how hard it is or how much time and effort it takes, she loves it. She loves the pleasure it gives the kids (and adults) who watch these races. “It’s all about the kids,” she says.

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Gail Hatfield presenting a gift to a young fan.

Pig Races Cont'd

And that when she retires from the 'racing life' next year, she'll miss it a great deal.

Calvert County's Election Director has taken time away from the office for 14 years to bring her piglets and Indian Runner ducks to county fairs and festivals around Maryland. After so many years, and so many races, she has the routine and patter down. Gail knows how to whip up the excitement, get the crowd involved and make sure everybody leaves with a smile.

And the piglets leave with an Oreo cookie. That's what gets them running. Gail trains them for a week, with a cookie as the reward. Once they get the hang of it, the mini-porkers never forget. They know there's always a crumbled Oreo waiting for them at the end. The ducks, on the other hand, are natural runners. Indian Runner ducks are quite tall and stand erect – they don't waddle, they run naturally. Gail trained the first generation by creating a commotion behind them and they learned to take off on cue. Now, the momma ducks train the offspring year after year. Easy.

To connect the watchers with the racers, Gail divides the crowd into groups, each to follow one of the entrants, then chooses a "cheerleader" from each group to shout the LOUDEST. The cheerleader for the winner gets a Frisbee, the others (there are no losers) get red, white and blue necklaces. Gail doesn't have favorites, but she does admit to rooting for the underdog (underpig? underduck?).

Election years – there's some complex choreography involved. When the fairs overlap with election work, Gail typically spends the better part of the day in the office, does her own racing to the event grounds (sometimes two or three counties



Fierce competition in pig racing. (Duck racing pictured below.)

away), conducts the races in the evening, then heads back to the office for some late-night catch-up sessions. It ain't easy.

You have a few more chances this year to root for your barnyard buddies. The Southern Barnyard Runners will be at the Calvert County Fair (9/27-10/1), The Annual Pigtown Festival in southwest Baltimore (10/14) and the Spider Hall Farm in Calvert County (10/21-10/22).

Next year, Gail is dropping the schedule to just 3 events, and then she and the crew will retire. After that, the only competitions Gail will have to worry about will be the human kind.

Here's a fun video showing what it's all about.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QeoGNa4oS9c>

*Ben Frey
Somerset County*



More New Hires!



*The remaining six from Baltimore City will be working out of the warehouse.
Pictured above (From L to R) Kirk Baskerville, Sean Pumphrey and Eric McKnight.*

Portal Reminder/MAEO Member Suggestion Box

The MAEO website (<http://maeo.net/>) has a password-protected Members Portal. If you haven't accessed it yet, please contact Amy Sullivan – (410) 809-6008, Stephanie Taylor – (410) 218-6305 and Hassan Aslam – (410) 222-0449 for the password.

In the portal, you'll find the **MAEO Member Input Form**. This is where to submit your ideas and questions for the MAEO Board and the various committees. What should MAEO be working on? Why can't MAEO have ----? What's the best way for MAEO to ----? Fill in the form, ask the question, set who it should go to.

We will respond. Amy, Stephanie or Hassan can also make sure that the Input Smartsheet (the Suggestion Box) is shared with you so you keep up with the suggestions.

New Additions to the Newsletter Staff

Connect 24 is growing (behind the scenes, at least). Two more people have raised their hands to be a part of our team – Jessica Noranbrock (Dorchester County) and Craig Booth (Baltimore County). Both of these folks have been long-time elocutionists but only recently became state employees (so technically, they are both New Hires).

Jess has been climbing the ladder since 2004 – Election Day Support, L&A teams, County Tech for Wicomico County in 2014, as well as for the Salisbury Municipal election in 2015. She became a contract employee in Wicomico at the end of 2015, working as a Nursing Home Absentee Program Coordinator. Last year, Jess moved over to Dorchester County as an Election Clerk and was hired officially by the state in July, working with judges, polling places and supplies. Her background is actually education, with Associate's Degrees in Secondary Education and Special Education. Now she's helping to educate Election Judges. And Jess' election work is part of a family affair – Her husband of 19 years, Paul Noranbrock, is the election tech and equipment guy in Queen Anne's County.

And then there's Craig Booth. Craig has traveled a long, winding path on his way to the Judges Department of Baltimore County. He started out in Canton (and other parts of) Ohio, relocated to Baltimore in 1994, has worked with computers, copiers, alarm sales, and the grocery business. He semi-retired and drove school buses for the better part of a decade. And for the past 20 years in Baltimore, Craig has served as most flavors of Election Judge, all the way up to Chief Judge, both Early Voting and Election Day. But then Craig is just following in his mother's footsteps – she was a lifelong Election Judge in Ohio. And now his daughter has become a third-generation Election Judge. Craig started as a county employee at the Baltimore County LBE in October 2016. He has leveraged his decades of experience to train more judges and assists in handling the voting equipment as well. He became a state employee just this past April.

So this will mean that we have five people working on the newsletter – Shawn, Anthony, Jessica, Craig and myself. That's five minds working towards improving *Connect 24* every issue, expanding our coverage and interests, reaching out to the entire MAEO membership. A vigorous and heartfelt welcome to Jess and Craig!

Ben Frey
Somerset County

Contributors:

Articles – Shawn Larson – Baltimore City · Craig Booth – Baltimore County ·
Jessica Noranbrock – Dorchester County · Ben Frey – Somerset County

Photos – Lisa Stanley – Baltimore City · Shawn Larson – Baltimore City · Gail Hatfield – Calvert County ·
Jessica Noranbrock – Dorchester County · Rosalyn Evans – Wicomico County

Assistance – Ricky Hatch – Weber County, UT · David Garreis – Anne Arundel County ·
Gail Hatfield – Calvert County · Rosalyn Evans – Wicomico County

Connect 24 layout and design – Shawn Larson – Baltimore City