

NEW

December 12, 2008

Directions



Andre Van Vugt photos

Administrative staff attending the ministry's first annual Conference for Administrative Professionals keep the conference's Knowledge Café busy. Here, Suzanne Julien and Brian Evoy, both from MOHLTC's Kingston offices, are shown browsing among the resources and information offered at the café. Find out more about the conference's Knowledge Café on page 4 of this issue.

Conference for ministry's administrative professionals highlights opportunities in the transition to stewardship

The recent conference for administrative professionals provided MOHLTC admin staff with learning and development opportunities in support of both the transition to stewardship and the ministry's new administrative model.

"Today is an extraordinary day for the ministry — for the first time we're bringing together administrative professionals from across all divisions to network, learn and to mutually acknowledge the unique roles and responsibilities of this essential group of staff," said Dawn Ogram, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate and Direct Services, during her opening remarks to the first Annual Conference for MOHLTC Administrative Professionals.

Held at Queen's Park on Dec. 1, the inaugural conference was organized by a team of volunteers from The Learning Connection, a ministry committee with members drawn from both administrative staff and the Transition Change Management Team. The conference will be held yearly to offer learning and

development opportunities that are customized to meet the ongoing skill-development needs of administrative professionals.

Debbie Fischer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transition, told the conference that administrative professionals are essential to the success of the ministry's transition to stewardship. She said that just as the ministry took the time to ensure the right people and processes were in place to successfully complete the transition to stewardship, it has similarly taken time and care to design the new administrative model.

"Today is a positive step towards the formal implementation of the new administrative model. It's an opportunity for all of you to network and

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Conference sessions

The keynote speaker at the first Annual Conference for MOHLTC Administrative Professionals was Grace Cirocco, who is known for her dynamic presentations which deftly combine instruction on practical strategies for career success with inspirational messages to rejuvenate the spirit. (See story on Cirocco's presentation on page 3.)

Following the keynote address, conference attendees had a choice of attending learning and development sessions covering a range of skills and competencies tailored to the needs of administrative professionals. Sessions offered were:

- Win Win as an Admin (Ann Max)
- Seven Steps for Career Success (Grace Cirocco)
- Communicating, Negotiating and Prioritizing (Dorothy Kudla)
- Get Sharp: Decision Making and Critical Thinking Skills for Administrative Professionals (Randy Park)
- Dream, Discover, Design, Deliver (Susanne Lyle)

The conference closing plenary, Unity Through Diversity, was hosted by Doug Sole. Sole uses the power of drumming and rhythmic energy, as well as inspirational and effective communications skills, to enable people to share core values and develop avenues of mutual support. ■

Did you miss the ministry's first conference for administrative professionals? Visit the [Administrative Professionals Conference](#) pages, in the Learning and Development section of INFOweb, for copies of conference materials.

NEW *Directions*



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to learn about our future of collaboration, project work and building exemplary teams of administrative professionals," Fischer said.

Under the new administrative model, administrative staff will be assigned to a specific division as their primary responsibility, and will report to a manager of administration who will oversee and coordinate each division's administrative support workload.

At times, administrative staff could be assigned temporarily to project teams or groups working across units, branches and other divisions within their portfolio. These assignments will be made based on need and staff capacity. This flexibility will make the ministry a more agile, responsive and collaborative organization.

"The enormous benefit of this to administrative professionals is that your horizons will open up like never before," said Deputy Minister Ron Sapsford to the audience. "Working cross functionally will let you make new contacts, face new challenges and stimulate your professional growth."

Sapsford said that building active partnerships across ministry divisions on health care issues is vitally important to successful stewardship. "Administrative professionals will play a crucial role in building those partnerships and moving stewardship forward," he said.

When assigned to project teams, administrative staff will participate in establishing project boundaries through the development of project charters, and in identifying and accomplishing project goals. Project teams will take ownership of their decisions, have considerable independence conducting their work and be responsible for sorting out which parts of their work support the ministry's stewardship role and which parts should be discontinued or done differently.

"As administrative professionals, when you are members of project teams you'll be able to derive great satisfaction from seeing these projects through and witnessing the concrete results of your efforts," said Sapsford.

Sapsford explained that with stewardship, the ministry is moving "toward a modern, empowering way of working where we collaborate in partnerships across the ministry and strive together to achieve the best possible results for our team, our ministry and for those the ministry serves."

He acknowledged there may be some growing pains as the ministry works to complete the transition to stewardship. "But I encourage you to approach the new model with an open mind. Look at the possibilities and opportunities. Ask questions, build networks, collaborate and take advantage of the prospects to learn and develop." ■



Fountain of information available at conference's Knowledge Café

During the conference, MOHLTC administrative professionals could visit the Knowledge Café to connect with colleagues and browse through resources available within the ministry and the OPS. The cafe featured booths, personnel and presentations from the: Eastern Human Resources Interministerial Council; Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness (including an Ergonomics Online Tutorial); Association of Administrative Assistants; and the International Association of Administrative Professionals. From MOHLTC were: Directory of Networks (DoN), The Exchange (featuring the online collaborative tools ALI, DEBI, JAC and MIKE), Gateway to Learning (Infoweb's refreshed Learning and Development section) and the Stewardship for Everyone program. ■



Shown above at the Knowledge Café, part of the first Annual Conference for MOHLTC Administrative Professionals, are (from left) Michael Bat, Margherita Iacovone and David Lewis. The three are from the Centre for Employee Health, Safety and Wellness, operated by the Ministry of Government Services, which had a booth at the conference.

Passion, enthusiasm and the incredible power of our *imagination*s

Motivational speaker stresses that a positive mental attitude is key to achieving the goals we set for ourselves

Grace Cirocco, keynote speaker at the recent first Annual Conference for MOHLTC Administrative Professionals, got to the point of her address quickly.

"Today, we're going to talk about attitude. We are going to talk about change. And we're going to talk about you," said the inspirational Cirocco, early in her presentation to MOHLTC administrative staff.

Cirocco's session was called Re-energize Your Attitude: Moving Forward. As a motivational speaker she works with organizations to rejuvenate and inspire their employees. Cirocco's energizing presentations help people manage life's challenges and find happiness in both their personal and professional lives.

Cirocco said it's an ongoing struggle for many people to achieve a balance between the demands of working life and the demands of personal life. She said that while there will always be challenges and setbacks on both fronts, "it's not the cards you're dealt with, it's your attitude in how you deal with them. That's what makes such an important difference in our lives. And that's what my talk today is about — the interest we need to start taking in our own lives to help us make choices that support excellence, personal effectiveness and wellness."

Aware that MOHLTC is going through a transition to stewardship, Cirocco provided a list of objectives and activities to help people acquire the strength and resilience needed to succeed in times of change.

To help yourself manage change, Cirocco recommends:

- Be open to learning and growing
- Develop the people skills required to work with others in cross-functional teams
- Be open to working in collaborative partnerships
- Learn to manage your time effectively.



Grace Cirocco, the conference's keynote speaker, is a motivational expert who provides people with practical techniques for overcoming obstacles and achieving their professional and personal goals.

"The world today is no longer vertical, it's horizontal and that means it's team work all the time and you have to have those people skills — collaboration, flexibility, communication — to be able to work with other people."

It takes self confidence in yourself to improve and master the communications and personal leadership skills a changing professional environment often requires, Cirocco said. And yet, one of the questions people ask her the most often is can she help them achieve greater self-confidence.

To improve self-confidence, Cirocco recommends taking specific steps which, in turn, will help build a bridge to a greater level of self-confidence. Tips she suggests: trust your instincts; develop your skills through classes and seminars; develop networks and foster professional associations; have mentors you can learn from.

"Remember that if you believe you can do it, you can achieve it,"

Cirocco said. "If that self-confidence is there, if you have an attitude of believing in your self-worth, you will take action and follow through on your priorities. And that's the process of building the bridges in your life that will enable you to not only succeed but soar as a human being."

Julie Coronios, scheduling and briefing coordinator, Assistant Deputy Minister's Office, Corporate and Direct Services, said Cirocco's passion and enthusiasm were contagious.

"I learned a lot from her presentation. In light of the new admin model and the ministry's stewardship journey, the portions of her talk that most affected me were 'believing in oneself,' 'think possibilities' and the 'power of appreciation.' These areas are important both in my work and personal life," Coronios said. "She (Cirocco) made me, and I'm sure many others that morning, feel we are important and integral members of the ministry team." ■

Critical thinking is of critical importance

In his seminars on critical-thinking skills, Randy Park teaches that people see the world through a set of filters that influence the way they think and make decisions.

“Our filters are composed of things like our education, our experiences, our beliefs and our biases,” said Park, while giving a learning session during the recent Annual Conference for MOHLTC Administrative Professionals. “All these things influence the way we filter information as it comes into us. They also influence the way we logically process information and return it in the form of solutions.”

During his session entitled Get Sharp: Decision-Making and Critical-Thinking Skills for Administrative Professionals, Park presented tools he’s developed to help people understand their thinking process and recognize both their thinking strengths and faults. His seminars are also designed to help people improve their decision-making and problem-solving skills.

“Our filters are a large part of our expertise. After all, an expert is someone who can look at a situation, quickly filter out irrelevant information while grasping the most important information, and then come to a conclusion or course of action,” Park said.

Park believes it’s important to learn how to listen to someone you may not agree with and make an effort to at least consider their information on a subject. People may have different points of view, but that doesn’t necessarily mean one is right and the other is wrong.

“It often means they are both looking at the same situation and seeing different things. And the value is that there is a diversity of information and opinions that can enhance the collaboration process and



W.D. Lighthall photo

Randy Park makes a point to ministry administrative professionals attending his seminar on developing critical thinking skills.

improve the results. It also helps avoid bringing tunnel vision to a project or task,” said Park, adding that tunnel vision is something that comes from the filter of our past experiences and how we’ve typically responded to them.

Park outlined for his audience three key steps to improving critical-thinking skills. First, when receiving information, he recommends taking a moment to check if there is anything in a given situation that you might be blocking out? Or, is there more information that would be helpful to have in your decision-making process?

The second step is to ensure you take the time to think something through logically and avoid making hasty conclusions. The

third step is to consider if the conclusion or course of action you’ve reached is going to get the results you want?

“So those are the three key steps at the core of critical thinking — understanding what’s in the filter you use to make decisions. Knowing how that affects the decisions you make and then asking yourself: ‘Is this action going to get you where you want to go, either in the short or longer term?’ ” Park said.

Charles Jones, an administrative coordinator in the Emergency Management Unit of Public Health, said what he took from Park’s session was the realization that everybody has their own point of view and it can be advantageous to put yourself in their shoes and try to understand why other people think the way they do.

“If you can do that, you’re going to be better equipped at dealing with other people. You’re going to be more successful at negotiating, compromising and coming to an understanding where both sides win,” Jones said. ■

People may have different points of view, but that doesn’t necessarily mean one is right and the other is wrong.

Embedding

a stewardship culture will move the ministry forward

As the ministry's transition enters its last year, much work is being done at all levels to embed a stewardship culture within the organization, said Debbie Fischer, Assistant Deputy Minister, Transition.

"When you change what you do and how you work together, you start to change culture. We've been doing it all along," Fischer explained.

Workplace culture can be viewed as a set of shared beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviours that define an organization. A range of initiatives have been introduced to shift the ministry to a stewardship culture, Fischer explained.

These initiatives include:

- The Stewardship in Action Leadership program aimed at senior managers, including the Action Learning Programs, which gave managers the opportunity to work in cross-functional teams
- The Stewardship Awareness and Stewardship for Everyone programs targeting staff at all levels
- Learning and development opportunities, including the FYI Series and stewardship competency tools and workshops
- Learning and collaboration tools and supports, like Tools for Teams available on the Learning and Development website and the Directory of Networks, which links cross-functional teams.

Fischer has recommended that as each division reaches the implementation phase of their transition they form a committee or designate an individual to help to guide and focus on cultural change within the division.

"All these initiatives, tools and developments have collectively been about shifting us into a stewardship culture," Fischer said.

She pointed out that the impetus for a cultural shift comes at every level of the ministry, including at the division, branch, unit, team, and individual level. "I think the most important thing is for people to own it at all levels and to live it. Everybody has to be a leader in this, that's the notion of being a steward."

Fischer has recommended that as each division reaches the implementation phase of their transition they form a committee or designate an individual to help to guide and focus on cultural change within the division. Fischer said she has been impressed by the energy and focus both the Health System Strategy (HSS) and Health System Information Management and Investment (HSIMI) divisions have brought to encourage and embed cultural change within their areas. HSS and HSIMI were the first divisions to go through transition and have been involved in various aspects of the implementation phase for about a year.

"They have worked at understanding their role as a division and how they contribute to the whole. They have energized people around moving forward positively," Fischer said

HSS works to foster cultural change

Sheree Davis, director of the Health System Strategy Branch in HSS and cultural lead of the division, said staff at all levels of the division have been very focused in fostering a change in culture. "The starting point was for us to articulate our shared beliefs and values. Evidenced-based innovation and collaboration were determined to be important values to foster within our division," Davis said.

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Embedding

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HSS held a number of forums and workshops centred on changing culture. Adalsteinn Brown, Assistant Deputy Minister, HSS, held breakfast conversations with various groups of staff members. A leadership training coach was brought into the division to work closely with and support managers and senior policy staff members within the division.

“This is a discovery journey. I think it is really working. People are starting to think more horizontally than vertically,” said Iryna Bonya, a policy analyst in the Corporate and Legislative Policy Unit of HSS. “The initiatives in the division are helping the concept of stewardship to grow better roots.”

Bonya was part of a staff committee that organized a recent divisional forum for HSS. She said it is important that staff at different levels of the division are getting involved in the various initiatives aimed at embedding a stewardship culture. “There is a sense of ownership that is being created. When you feel responsible for something happening in the division, it’s different from a manager just handing you something,” Bonya said.

HSS launched a survey on the division’s readiness for cultural change, which has canvassed staff on two occasions and it is about to be repeated again. The findings of the HSS survey in spring 2008 indicated HSS staff understood what the division used to do versus what it should be doing, felt the environment supported an exchange of knowledge and continuous learning and staff enjoyed the collaboration with colleagues and partners. Davis said HSS has invested the time, energy and resources on the cultural piece because the division understands its importance. “We recognized that the division’s culture and the way it aligns with the new stewardship role would be key in achieving the ministry’s goals.”

HSIMI staff help shape values

In HSIMI, Assistant Deputy Minister John McKinley encouraged cultural change within the division through a range of initiatives. The

division has held quarterly retreats where the entire staff has participated in developing a strategic framework including a vision, set of values, strategies to move the division toward its vision, and a scorecard to keep HSIMI on track. Like HSS the division developed a set of common values. HSIMI sets up Change Management Team of 22 individuals was established, representing all parts of HSIMI. This team led the development of divisional values. The work of the team included identifying behaviours that make these values come alive in the division — behaviors that support the strategies to move forward and are reflected in the day-to-day work of HSIMI. “Staff from across the division have been involved in this process and have been working on many levels to monitor and facilitate the culture change process,” said Wiesia Kubicka, team lead, financial policies and procedures, HSIMI, who is a member of the division’s Change Management Team which led the development of HSIMI’s values.

Kubicka said the process has been very unifying for the division, which grew out of two former divisions. “There are a lot of people and there is a lot of diversity in this division. This process has allowed us to meet colleagues from across HSIMI and gave us an opportunity to collaborate. This approach really supports the cross-functional way we are now working.”

Kubicka said she has found it very rewarding to be on the team and contributing to help shape the values of the division. “Since working in the OPS, this is the first opportunity I have had to inform the development of organizational values. Helping to shape the organization you are a part of is very satisfying both on a personal and a professional level.”

“Going forward, we need to acknowledge and reinforce stewardship behaviours,” Fischer said. “This will be important to continue to foster and develop our new culture.” ■