

THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By: Dan Sippl, RSVA President

The Randolph Sheppard Act 1936 - 2011 75 Years of Excellence

As we reflect on the success of our 30th Annual Sagebrush Training Conference in Las Vegas, on the heels of the Super Bowl, we must now turn our attention to the annual Convention in Reno, Nevada, coming up soon in July 2011.

Sagebrush was truly a success this year. Thanks to so many of you for your participation. We kicked off the Conference with a celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the signing of the Randolph- Sheppard Act. In the past 75 years, our blindness community has served the public and public employees in true fashion as we would like to be treated, "with excellence".

Over those 75 years, we have managed newspaper stands, snack bars, cafeterias, and vending machines; and are preparing food for our troops in their dining halls all across the nation with great pride and excellence. Our 30th Annual Sagebrush Conference showed us many new ways and methods of using our ability to meet the needs of our fellow citizens, by grasping opportunities to change in meeting societal needs. Our sponsors, presenters, exhibitors and, most important, our members gave us the tools to meet and exceed everyone's expectations of RSVA and all blind vendors.

RSVA sponsors continued to step up to the plate with their financial and business expertise. PepsiCo brought in their experts and sponsored a wonderful outside speaker to show us the right way to make our customers happy to have blind vendors serve them.

The Wittern Group, led by Heidi Chico, showed us the way to improve our relationship with NAMA and the changeover to "cashless" transactions. She does this, while still tirelessly working with us to improve our services to the US Postal Service.

Rick Cantu, of Cantu Services, continues to provide the “BEAT” training in conjunction with Sagebrush Conference. This year he continues his support by providing additional financial support to our Durward McDaniel Legal Fund. We often need legal support in our efforts to maintain educational endeavors with various Federal and State Agencies on the merits and excellence of the Randolph-Sheppard Act for the blindness community, as we strive to lower the 70% unemployment rate for all blind and visually impaired individuals.

Please join us in Reno, Nevada, in July as we continue to celebrate 75 years of Randolph-Sheppard excellence to all of our civil servants. More importantly, these conferences always help us find more ways to work closely with our many partners in government, including other disability groups such as Ability One, the President’s Committee for Purchase, and private sectors such as National Vending and NAMA, which allow more blind and visually impaired to support their families with honor and excellence, and become viable citizens of their local communities.

A group of us attended the ACB Legislative Conference at the end of February, complete with “Hill Visits” to promote this year’s legislative agenda. Along with our “Hill Visits”, we educated our respective legislators on the importance of maintaining the Randolph-Sheppard priority for our nation’s highway Rest Areas. We were greeted with open arms and thanked for bringing our issues to their attention, and encouraged to stay in contact as these issues emerge. With that, it is so important that each and every one of us watch this issue in the near future and make the appropriate contact with our legislators.

While in Washington D.C., we had an opportunity to visit the office of the President’s Committee for Purchase to meet with several of their staff for a few hours. We discussed each other’s programs and how they impact the various disability groups, as well as other issues of a common interest. We are working on plans to make this a routine and continuous dialogue to find more common ground in which to expand each of our programs. We will also be working with the staff to give a presentation to the Committee.

In closing, I would like to thank all RSVA members and Board of Directors for volunteering all of their valuable time and hard earned money to make RSVA the best that it can be for all of us blind vendors.

SEE YOU IN RENO IN JULY!