

## GAA ASSUMES NEW LEADERSHIP UNDER LORENZO A. BLOUNT

The Government Administrators Association employed Lorenzo A. Blount as the Association Executive effective January 1, 2016. Blount succeeds Lawrence N. Verbiest, who retired after twenty-three years in that capacity. GAA was fortunate to have Blount work with the various Association Chapters as a labor consultant since April 2015. He was pivotal in finalizing several bargaining agreements during these difficult times.

Blount, a practicing attorney, brings extensive experience in both law and executive administration. He retired from Wayne County in 2009, after having worked for the City of Detroit for many years in Personnel and Labor Relations. Blount served as the Director of the Roads Division of the Department of Public Services, as well as Acting Director of the Department of Public Services. Most significantly, he was the Chief Labor Relations Negotiator for Wayne County earlier in his career, an experience advantageous in his new role as Association Executive.

GAA welcomes Lorenzo A. Blount, and we are looking forward to a long and productive working relationship.

## LAWRENCE N. VERBIEST, RETIRES AFTER 23 YEARS

Association Executive Lawrence N. Verbiest retired January 1, 2016, after twenty-three years of service to GAA. During these twenty-three years, Verbiest has provided the Association with steadfast and unwavering leadership. As a veteran of Wayne County, Verbiest's institutional knowledge is irreplaceable.

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## SPECIAL GAA MEMBER OF THE YEAR 2015



*Lawrence N. Verbiest, Cassandra McDonald, Amy Miller-Vandawaker, Candace Robinson, and Lorenzo Blount*

Each year an award is given to a Government Administrators Association member for job dedication, employment recognition, notable accomplishments and significant contributions to the Association or community. This year the GAA Awards Committee felt that no single member totally exemplified these attributes to be recognized as the sole GAA Member of the Year. However, the Committee did recognize the tremendous dedication, effort, and sacrifice made by certain members, whose names were submitted for special recognition on behalf of the Government Administrators Association, namely the GAA Chapter bargaining teams.

The Association would like to recognize these members, not for the outcome of the particular collective bargaining agreements, but for the long hours spent in negotiations often extending to late evenings and weekends at the expense of other obligations. The Consent Agreement with the County and the Probate and Circuit Courts set the agenda for negotiations. County bargaining teams were put in a position of damage control as opposed to engaging in true collective bargaining. Unlike past negotiations, the County was not seeking an equitable solution for its financial deficit, but utilized a Consent Agreement granted by the State to force its labor agenda.

Understandably, serving on the bargaining team in 2015 has been a thankless endeavor. The "deck has been stacked against" public employees in the State of Michigan for the past several years. This has been especially true in Wayne County. However, GAA acknowledges these volunteers for stepping up and fighting for employee rights at the bargaining table. These contracts were achieved through the "sweat and tears" of the bargaining team members. The Association appreciates the hard work and dedicated effort of its bargaining teams, and honors the following members with the Special GAA Member of the Year Award for 2015:

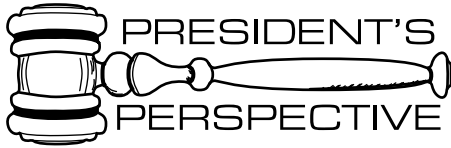
### General Fund/ Professional Engineers Chapters

**Cassandra McDonald**, General Fund Chapter President  
**Amy Miller-Vandawaker**, Professional Engineers Chapter President  
**Candace Robinson**, Executive Board Member

### Wayne County Professional Nurse Chapter

**Elizabeth Patterson**, Chapter President  
**Joann Wall**, 1st Vice-President  
**Mildred Neal**, 2nd Vice-President

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## PRESIDENT'S PERSPECTIVE



New Year Greetings to each of you,

As most of you should know, Larry Verbiest our Association Executive retired from GAA after 23 years of service. His contributions were too countless to restate.

He has made an indelible mark on GAA personnel, Executive Board, members, and people he has worked with over the years, including a lasting impression on me. He was a teacher, a consummate negotiator, always striving to maintain a balance that would make GAA a non-adversarial yet formidable bargaining unit with our several employers in Wayne County. Larry, "The Beast," which I liked to call him, shaped the organization and cultivated an outstanding reputation for GAA. His stories, his wit, and his energy will be missed, but we bid him an enjoyable and long overdue retirement; good luck Larry! I can only hope for the wherewithal and energy of a man who has given the greatest portion of his life to the service of others. I thank him, and GAA collectively appreciates the remarkable endurance of Lawrence N. Verbiest.

With the transition from Larry, I could not be more pleased to have on board effective January 1st, Mr. Lorenzo Blount, formerly Director of Wayne County Roads Division, an attorney and experienced negotiator as our new Association Executive. I would have never thought we could have found such a jewel. Lorenzo was home grown right from amongst us, and has an established rapport with all the major players in the circle of "union life." Blount's balance is extraordinary, his knowledge about negotiations and labor law are matchless. We have truly been extremely fortunate to add him to our team.

We will utilize Lorenzo's skills and knowledge to assist us in every capacity as we continue to build GAA and reshape our focus, committing ourselves to the voice of the membership. Lorenzo has been working with Larry for a little over six months, also, participating in last year's negotiations with General Fund, Engineers, and Nurses contracts, as well as contracts for both the 36th District Court and 3rd Judicial Court. He has engaged with all of the GAA Chapters at Executive Board and President's meetings as well as brought his opinion and vision of a

## FROM YOUR CHAPTER PRESIDENT

### Engineering Professionals Chapter

It is hard to believe that another year has passed. The bargaining team spent a great deal of time this past year attempting to negotiate a successor contract with Wayne County. After a few bargaining sessions, the Evans Administration decided to seek assistance from the State of Michigan in the form of a Consent Agreement rather than to negotiate in good faith with employee unions. We fought hard to mitigate what we could, but the implementation of the Consent Agreement gave the County a huge hammer leaving us with little wiggle room. The County does appear to be on better financial ground now. The Evans' Administration said they would remember employee sacrifices and would restore some benefits as the financial condition of the County improved. Time will tell if this Administration is true to their word...

Big changes are in store for the Association. Larry Verbiest has retired as GAA Association Executive. He will be greatly missed, but I am sure that we can call on his knowledge and expertise when needed. I wish Larry the best in his retirement. Welcome Lorenzo Blount, who assumed the role of Association Executive January 1, 2016. Lorenzo has some huge shoes to fill. Lorenzo first came on board as a consultant to help with negotiations last spring; in this capacity, he has been an invaluable asset to the Association. I look forward to working with Lorenzo in the upcoming year.

Congratulations to Philip Kurikesu on his recent retirement! I also hope that everyone had the opportunity to rest, relax, and recharge during the time we were fortunate to have off during the holidays.

Amy Miller-Vandawaker, Chapter President

### Wayne County Airport Authority Chapter

To all of my GAA Wayne County Airport Authority peers, thank you so much for your vote of confidence. I look forward to serving as your President. I assure you I am committed and will do my best to serve you with respect and integrity.

I would like to send a special thanks to Jim Osborn for his many years of service as our Airport Authority Chapter President. Jim, your hard work, dedication and commitment has been greatly appreciated. Congratulations to our newly elected Vice-President, Christine Lindenmuth, and Secretary, Dianna Spencer. Thank you ladies for your commitment.

We were successful in negotiations, and our new Collective Bargaining Agreement, effective October 1, 2015, has been ratified by the membership and executed by the Authority. The Airport Authority Chapter recognizes and appreciates the hard work and dedicated effort of the Bargaining Team. If you have not yet taken the time to read our new CBA, please do so. Should you have questions or concerns regarding the new Agreement, please do not hesitate to contact me. I wish you all good health, happiness and success throughout the year.

Karen Offerman, Chapter President

### Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority Chapter

As we are entering this New Year, I know that you are feeling pretty special, knowing that you have been an integral part of the many achievements of the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority during this past year. We have been actively involved, and in many cases leading the charge, in the delivery of needed services to improve the lives of some of our most vulnerable citizens: persons with serious mental illness, children with emotional disabilities, persons with substance use disorders and individuals with developmental disabilities. We remain committed to making the DWMHA a consumer and community-focused, data driven, and evidenced based organization.

With the ratification of the Personal Time Off (PTO) Agreement between the Authority and the Association, we now have a fully executed Collective Bargaining Agreement. Members who have carried over leave time are expected to receive their payout by April 15, 2016. The GAA DWMHA Chapter will

November 2015. At this meeting Correct Care made a presentation advocating to be the provider of Jail/Juvenile Health services at Wayne County. It is our understanding that another company, Corizion Correctional was supposed to make a similar presentation, but has withdrawn from the process. We will keep our eyes and ears open remaining aware of what is going on in the Department. We ask that you do the same.

Lastly, Chapter elections were held in November 2015 for the positions of Chapter President, held by Elizabeth Patterson; Second Vice-President, held by Mildred Neal; and two Directors at Large; one position held by Todd Spreitzer and the other vacant. Suzanne Meriedeth was nominated for the vacant Director at Large position at the Health Department. All incumbent officers were nominated for their respective positions and were subsequently elected by acclimation as all positions were unopposed. Congratulations to all 2016 WCPNC Officers!

Elizabeth Patterson, Chapter President

## Probate Court Chapter

Probate Court congratulates Area Representative Cynthia Camilleri on her retirement after 35 years. We also thank Cynthia for her 15 years of service as a GAA Area Representative. The Chapter looks forward to the same dedicated and proficient service to the membership from recently appointed Area Representative Bridget Stewart.

The Probate Court Chapter is facing many of the same problems with the implementation of the new CBA as the rest of Wayne County. As a Wayne County funded Court, Probate was forced to make identical health care and retirement concessions as County employees. Members are struggling to meet the health care high deductible and coinsurance while at the same time paying their 25% premium share; however, the Court did not insist upon the non-economic changes the County imposed upon its employees under Consent Agreement negotiations.

As employees who were part of the so called "shared sacrifice" in solving Wayne County's financial problems, we look forward to returning to the bargaining table in the future to participate in the "shared rewards" resulting from these sacrifices.

## CHAPTER ELECTIONS

Election of officers for several GAA Chapters were held in late Fall of 2015. Holding elections were the General Fund, Nurses, Airport Authority and Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority Chapters. All terms of office commence January 1, 2016 and end December 31, 2017.

### GENERAL FUND CHAPTER

#### Election Date: November 19, 2015

Valid Ballots	61
Voided Ballots	1
Ballots Filed Late	0
Total Ballots Cast	62

#### President:

Cassandra McDonald	31*
Mark Plackowski	29
Total Votes	60

#### Chapter Representatives (Six to be Elected):

Barbara Brown	8
Joseph Budzinski	16
Karen Hall	13
Gretta Johnson-Washington	36*
Felicia Mack	35*
Candace Robinson	36*
Cedric Robinson	52*
Jackie Szafranski	41*
Donald Thompson	25*
Angela Weeks	13
Total Votes	395

#### Vice-President:

Alonzo McCann (Elected by Acclimation)

#### Secretary:

Michelle Varran (Elected by Acclimation)

\*Elected

### WAYNE COUNTY PROFESSIONAL NURSES CHAPTER

An election for officers was averted as single nominations were made for all offices; all nominees were elected by acclimation. Elizabeth Patterson and Mildred Neal, were re-elected President and 2nd Vice-President respectively. Suzanne Meriedeth and Todd Spreitzer were elected Directors at Large at the Health Department.

### WAYNE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY CHAPTER

#### Election Date: November 18, 2015

Valid Ballots	15
Voided Ballots	0
Ballots Filed Late	0
Total Ballots Cast	15

#### President

Veronica Caston-Frost	7
Karen Offerman*	8
Total	15

## WHAT'S NEWS

Charles J. Bonza III, General Fund Chapter  
 Lenear M. Cain, General Fund Chapter  
 Jean Chaplain-Swaker, General Fund Chapter  
 Nadine Y. Cunningham, WCPNC  
 Linda D. Davis, General Fund Chapter  
 Mary A. DeJohn, General Fund Chapter  
 Michael Dendrinis, 3rd Circuit Court Chapter  
 William B. Farmer, General Fund Chapter  
 Karen L. Fields, General Fund Chapter  
 Marilyn K. Gerwolls, 3rd Circuit Court Chapter  
 Leah Howe, WCPNC  
 Stanley M. Hunter, General Fund Chapter  
 Gloria M. Hunter, General Fund Chapter  
 Barbara A. Jackson, 3rd Circuit Court Chapter  
 Philip Kurikesu, Professional Engineers Chapter  
 Mayer E. Landsman, General Fund Chapter  
 Susan Liska, General Fund Chapter  
 Vera Marflak, Airport Authority Chapter  
 Deborah A. Mathis, General Fund Chapter  
 Bernadette Moulton, General Fund Chapter  
 Darlene M. Nero, General Fund Chapter  
 Ansell F. Noel, General Fund Chapter  
 Theresa H. Oden, General Fund Chapter  
 Alta Pasha, General Fund Chapter  
 Mimi Sullivan Phillips, General Fund Chapter  
 Theresa F. Powers, General Fund Chapter  
 Carolyn Rhymes, 3rd Circuit Court Chapter  
 Joyce D. Sartor, General Fund Chapter  
 Patrice Strong, 36th District Court Chapter  
 Josephine Taylor-Johnson, General Fund Chapter  
 Zelda A. Thomas, General Fund Chapter  
 Dean C. Tuomari, General Fund Chapter  
 Nancy J. Vargo, WCPNC  
 Pamela L. Wagner, General Fund Chapter  
 Jacqueline M. Whinihan, General Fund Chapter  
 Rita E. Williams, General Fund Chapter

#### CONGRATULATIONS:

Francine Farmer, General Fund Chapter Member, on her appointment to the University of Michigan School of Social Work Alumni Board of Governors.

#### SPEEDY RECOVERY TO:

Kathryn DeSmet, 3rd Circuit Court Chapter  
 Jacquelyn Summerlin, DWMHA Chapter

#### CONDOLENCES TO:

The family of former Wayne County Commissioner Kay Beard, who passed away in February.

The family of Darlene Broaden, DWMHA Chapter member, who passed away in October.

Churchill Long, whose sister passed away.  
 Shannon Outley-Jordan, whose father-in-law passed away in January.

Raenelle Plowden, whose grandmother passed away in February.

Jacquelyn Summerlin, whose father passed away.

The family of WCPNC retiree Mary Verbanac.

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## President's Perspective

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new GAA to the table. Whereas we continue to maintain ourselves as a management bargaining unit, it is important to recognize the need to urge our employers toward consistency and fairness. We are moving toward this mark to serve our membership in the best possible manner.

While Lorenzo takes the helm in as the Chief Negotiator during these challenging times, he does not do it alone. We continue to have the historical and valuable knowledge of Patricia Peña, who has been the right arm of the Verbiest administration and has been a major part of this important transition. As the Deputy Association Executive, Patricia brings intuitive abilities as well as a keen documentation. She is meticulous in capturing and retaining organized documentation of negotiations. Patricia is also hands-on in every aspect of operations of the GAA office. This team is undoubtedly a dynamic duo.

Together with this team, the Association Officers, and the GAA Executive Board, I extend myself to relentless service. We are determined to set forth our sails to champion through these rough times and to organize to become fluid and more responsive to the needs of our members. It is incumbent now on you as members to stand ready to serve and to forge a dedication toward solidarity. As we cannot be moved by what we see and feel but rather on the higher mark that is to be steadfast. I am committed to change, and I have the commitment of each of the current sitting GAA Chapter Presidents to listen to the membership and to share issues and concerns that are important to our members.

At this time, I want to extend special thanks to your Chapter Presidents and those officers that faithfully and tirelessly work toward the collective best of the organization. I also want to thank each of you for your continued support and dedication toward the advancement of GAA. It is you the member who makes our organization powerful: Your commitment, your voice, and your dues all work congruently to shape us the Association helping the union grow, maintain and thrive. I /We cannot do this without you so be strong and hold on...we are forging our way!

Be blessed this year until we can meet again.

*Respectfully in your service,*

Margaret Keyes-Howard, President  
The President may be reached at [keyesbelieves1@gmail.com](mailto:keyesbelieves1@gmail.com) or at 313.333.1248

## From the Association Executive

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problems, as we continue planning and preparing to protect your rights. We ask you to be vigilant and to notify us immediately whenever you become aware of a management action that may adversely affect our membership. It is truly a time for solidarity, and collective action, as we face the impending darkness before us.

I hope, in the future to be able to bring you a more positive message in these articles. But, I could not sugar coat the future which my recent interaction with some of our employers has brought me to anticipate.

Finally, in the face of everything I encourage you to remain professional in the conduct of your daily duties as is the tradition of the Government Administrators Association.

Lorenzo A. Blount, Association Executive

## Special GAA Member of the Year

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### 3RD JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT CHAPTER

**Priscilla Wells**, Chapter President  
**Vikki Kapanowski**, Chapter Secretary  
**Niles Reed**, Chapter Member

### 36TH DISTRICT COURT CHAPTER

**Denise Gray**, Chapter President  
**Chanel Daniels**, Chapter Vice-President

### DETROIT WAYNE MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY CHAPTER

**Stephen Ogundipe**, Chapter President  
**Robert Gilreath**

### WAYNE COUNTY AIRPORT AUTHORITY

**Jim Osborn**, Chapter President  
**Veronica Caston-Frost**, Vice-President

### 2016 GAA MEMBER OF THE YEAR

It is not too early to start thinking of making a nomination for the 2016 GAA Member of the Year. The Association would like to present this award to a member who has made truly significant and exceptional contributions to his community, the workplace or the Association. Should you know a member who fits this description, contact the GAA office for a nomination form.

## Verbiest Retires

*Continued from page 1*

Verbiest negotiated over forty plus collective bargaining agreements with six different employers including the Wayne County Airport Authority, the Detroit Wayne Mental Health Authority, the County of Wayne, the Thirty-Sixth District Court, the Third Judicial Circuit of Michigan and the Wayne County Probate Court.

Verbiest developed a network of effective communication with elected officials and Administrators of the County, the Courts, and the various Authorities which allowed the Association to adhere to its philosophy of "providing truly effective representation by working cooperatively with these employers so the public will realize better, cost efficient service." The Association wishes Verbiest all the best as he begins his retirement.

## 2015 GAA Elections

*Continued from page 5*

**Vice-President:** Christine Lindenmuth  
(Elected by Acclimation)

**Secretary:** Diane Spencer  
(Elected by Acclimation)

### DETROIT WAYNE MENTAL HEALTH AUTHORITY CHAPTER

Elections were also scheduled this past November for the GAA DWMHA Chapter. Nominations were made at a Chapter membership meeting November 18, 2015, for Stephen Ogundipe, Chapter President; Niecy Jones, April Siebert and Esther Twitty, Chapter Vice-President; and Niecy Jones for Secretary. Subsequently, Niecy Jones and Esther Twitty declined the nomination for Chapter Vice-President. All officers were elected by acclimation: Stephen Ogundipe, President; April Siebert, Vice-President; and Niecy Jones, Secretary.

Congratulations to all newly elected officers!

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