

The 2007 IAAI Annual Training Conference is now history. I would like to take this opportunity to report to the membership on the important news coming from the Annual General Meeting and the Board of Directors Meetings.

First of all, I would like to, once again this year, express my extreme disappointment in the number of members who took the 30 seconds to vote in the annual elections. In 2007, there were a total of 571 ballots cast. **THIS IS EVEN FEWER THAN LAST YEAR!** While it is hoped that the Chapter Presidents will have precise demographic data from the Election Committee, it is our sense that very, very few people from New Jersey made the effort to vote. The electronic ballot process was developed by the IAAI to counter the criticism that the direction of the organization was being charted by a small minority of the members who were able to attend the conference. Each and every member of the IAAI is empowered to express their opinion and vote. Yet, few even bother to make a minimal effort.

I would ask that anyone who can give me a reason for this apathy to contact me at [wendtcfi@optonline.net](mailto:wendtcfi@optonline.net) to let me know how this can be. If there is a problem, I will try to get it fixed. But I have a feeling that we will find out that you all simply don't care. And that is sad.

Congratulations to Bob Schaal of the Louisiana Chapter on his election to the position of 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President. The new Directors are; Gene Pietczak (NY), Rob Rush (FL), Mike Dalton (TN), Dan Heenan (NV) and Peter Manzi (UK).

I personally would like to thank David Kircher for his unselfish service in serving as the Interim 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President. He served this post with honor and dignity, exhibiting his trademark enthusiasm serving as an advocate for the IAAI. I consider Dave to be a friend and a mentor. He is truly one of the hardest working people in the IAAI.

In another bit of good news, I am pleased to report that Inv. John Frucci, Essex County Sheriff's Office was awarded the prestigious Investigator of the Year Award. John was recognized for his relentless investigative efforts during the highly successful investigation of the January 20, 2000 fatal arson fire at Seton Hall University. This award is well deserved. I am sure that you all join me in a "high five" for John.

I would also like to congratulate the Essex County Prosecutor's Office Arson Task Force for being named the Investigative Unit of the Year. The award was accepted by the Task Force Director, Assistant Prosecutor Jeff Cartwright. The Task Force was recognized for their dedication and commitment to the investigation and prosecution of the crime of arson in one of the highest fire areas in the United States.

Certificates of Appreciation were awarded to David Kircher, Bob McDermott (Morris County Prosecutor's Office Arson/Environmental Crimes Unit) and John Nichols (Essex County Prosecutor's Office Arson Task Force) for their hard work and professionalism in putting forth the Fire Investigator Safety training module on CFITrainer.net.

Last but not least, congratulations is in order to Jerry Naylis, who was elected President of the IAAI Education Foundation. During Jerry's first two days on the job, he was able to raise over \$7500 to further the Foundation's projects. The Education Foundation is an important part of the IAAI. Jerry is a perfect choice to lead this group.

Business highlights from the AGM:

- The office move is complete. The new IAAI address is 2151 Priest Bridge Drive, Suite 25, Crofton, MD 21114, 410-451-FIRE (3473). Please correct your contact list.
- The new Training and Communications Coordinator, Debra Alvarez, was introduced. She has hit the ground running and will be coordinating all of the IAAI training efforts, including assisting with the administration of the CFI program.
- Executive Director James Whitaker has resigned his position effective June 29, 2007. Jim cited personal reasons for this difficult decision. A search for a replacement is already in progress. I will keep you advised as the search develops.
- Several new certification programs will be in the development stage this year. First, a Certified Fire Investigation Instructor certification will be developed following the standards in NFPA 1401 and submitted to the Professional Qualifications Board for their approval. There will also be a new certification entitled Certified Fire Scene Technician. This certification program, also expected to be submitted to the Professional Qualifications Board, is being designed to allow those investigators who do not yet possess the qualifications to sit for the CFI exam to receive professional recognition of their training and experience. Finally, it has been decided to begin development of specialized endorsements for those attaining the CFI designation. This will allow those investigators with a particular specialty to take an additional exam to receive professional recognition for their knowledge. The first of these endorsements will be for Wildland Fire Investigation. Future endorsements may include Vehicle Fire Investigation and Marine Fire Investigation.
- CFI Trainer continues to flourish. There are now 10 modules on line. There are approximately 11,000 registered users and approximately 9000 certificates of course completion issued. This represents approximately 31,000 contact hours of training. Several new modules are in the planning and development stages. If you have not yet availed yourself of this training, go to [www.cfitrainer.net](http://www.cfitrainer.net) and check it out.
- As the NJ Chapter knows all too well, the IAAI database is facing some serious challenges. An initial review of the system reveals several problems, many of them dealing with data input and data maintenance. The Officers and Board of Directors have promised to attack this problem aggressively in order to rectify it as soon as possible.
- That said, it is YOUR responsibility to make sure that YOUR information is correct in the IAAI database. Go to the Members Only section of the website and check your info today. It is especially important to make sure the email address on file is correct.

- The building in Bridgeton, MO; owned by the IAAI Education Foundation and formerly occupied by the IAAI Offices has been sold. Closing is expected on or about May 30, 2007. The proceeds from the sale will be used by the Education Foundation for the benefit of the members of the IAAI.
- Next year's ATC will be held April 27-May 2, 2008 in Denver, CO.

As you can see, this is a very busy time for the IAAI. It is evident that the NJ Chapter is a powerful and influential group in the IAAI. If you have any comments or questions, please feel free to contact me at any time. I will keep you advised of any developments within the IAAI as they occur. Thank you for your continued support.