

# Ohio PIA addresses agency perpetuation

## Pilot internship program builds for future

By Katie M. Smith

Agency perpetuation continues to be a top issue for independent insurance agents across the country. Agency owners quickly approaching retirement age recognize the need to prepare their agencies for a successful transition into the next generation. Attracting young talent to perpetuate the American agency system has become an industry-wide initiative and a leading concern for Professional Insurance Agents members.

PIA affiliates are taking on statewide initiatives to tackle this national issue. Ohio PIA's Staff Development Task Force, under the wing of the Agents' Resource Committee, used focus groups, surveys and task forces throughout the state to determine new, innovative ways to take on the inherent issues of perpetuation planning.

"We wanted to develop a vehicle to introduce young, talented individuals to the insurance industry," said PIA Staff Development Task Force Chairperson Mark Reilly, CPCU, CIC, CRM. "Perpetuation has been consistently identified as one of the top priorities and is an overwhelming concern for our members."

PIA National President Ray L. Peretti agrees perpetuation planning and attracting young talent are top issues facing the industry.

"Encouraging young people to consider a career in the independent agency system must be a top priority for

all of us. Perpetuation of our agencies and of our industry depends on attracting talented people and giving them the recognition they deserve," said Peretti while presenting the inaugural PIA National Young Insurance Professional of the Year award at the 2006 PIA Federal Legislative Summit in April.

program was that it allowed us to create a conduit to attract qualified young professionals and expose them to our industry," he said.

PIA worked with two area universities to attract college juniors and seniors to the program. Bowling Green State University and Ohio Northern

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To address the issue, PIA of Ohio launched its pilot internship program in summer 2006. The program was supported in-part by Columbus-based The Motorists Insurance Group. The internship was designed to attract entrepreneurial-minded college students to the career options available in the insurance industry.

"We needed to identify ways to bring people into our industry that had not been otherwise thought of," said John J. Bishop, CPCU, CLU, chairman, president and CEO of The Motorists Insurance Group. "The advantage of the internship

University invited PIA representatives to present the internship program to their students. Four students were selected to take part in the pilot program.

"The goal is to get the students involved so after their last year of college they will consider insurance as a career," said Timothy J. Stolly, CPCU, LUTCF, agency principal of Stolly Insurance Inc. and PIA board member

The internship was structured as an eight-week program. Four weeks were spent working with an agency. Diversified Insurance Service, LLC, in Elmore, and Stolly Insurance Inc., in Lima, were selected to be host agencies. While

## 2006 PIA Interns



**Sarah Allman**  
Hometown: Canton, Ohio  
University: Ohio Northern University  
Major: Marketing and Business Management  
Class: Senior



**Casey Amend**  
Hometown: Troy, Ohio  
University: Ohio Northern University  
Major: Marketing and Business Management  
Class: Senior



**Lisa Sikorski**  
Hometown: Parma Heights, Ohio  
University: Ohio Northern University  
Major: Marketing and Business Management  
Class: Senior



**Jillyn Wood**  
Hometown: Castalia, Ohio  
University: Bowling Green State University  
Major: Accounting and Management Information Systems  
Class: Junior

working in the agencies, the interns learned about personal and commercial lines, quality control, client relations and financial services, including 401k enrollment. The interns also participated in special projects, including the creation of voicemail scripts and working with automated renewals. The interns spent the remaining four weeks working with an insurance company. At The Motorists Insurance Group, the interns gained experience in each department, including underwriting, risk engineering and claims processing.

“We wanted the internship to be hands on,” noted Reilly. “Our job is to educate, not train the students. We recognize that knowledge must be applied to be practical.”

The students targeted as candidates for the 2006 program were non-insurance majors. Traditionally, insurance and risk-management majors tend to favor the corporate career track and actuarial positions. Because the intent of the internship program is to attract college juniors and seniors to the agency side of the industry, PIA committee members decided to select students majoring in business and entrepreneurial studies.

At the conclusion of the program, the interns were invited to make presentations to PIA, the agency owners involved in the program and Motorists

representatives. Each intern expressed an interest in pursuing a career in the insurance field, noting they would not have considered the industry prior to taking on the internship.

“I am definitely interested in pursuing a career in the insurance industry, post-college graduation. This is something that I would have never considered prior to this internship but I really feel as if I have learned more during the past two months than I have learned in the past year of my college education,” said PIA Intern Jillyn Wood of Bowling Green State University. “There are so many different careers within insurance. I would someday love to own my own business and be passionate about it; I think I have the mind-set to do so.”

Plans now are underway for the 2007 internship program. The focus will be expanded in next year’s program to include more Ohio colleges and a greater number of internship candidates. Task force members plan to build on the success of the 2006 program.

“It is an absolute win for everyone,” said Reilly. “If we can direct even one-third of the interns into our career, we will all benefit in the long-run.”

For more information about the internship program, contact Ohio PIA at (800) 555-1742.

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