

# APRIL 2004 ISSUE

## SHORT COURSE REVIEW

*"This was my first time at a MAFMIC Short Course. I thought it was excellent and learned a lot from it!"*

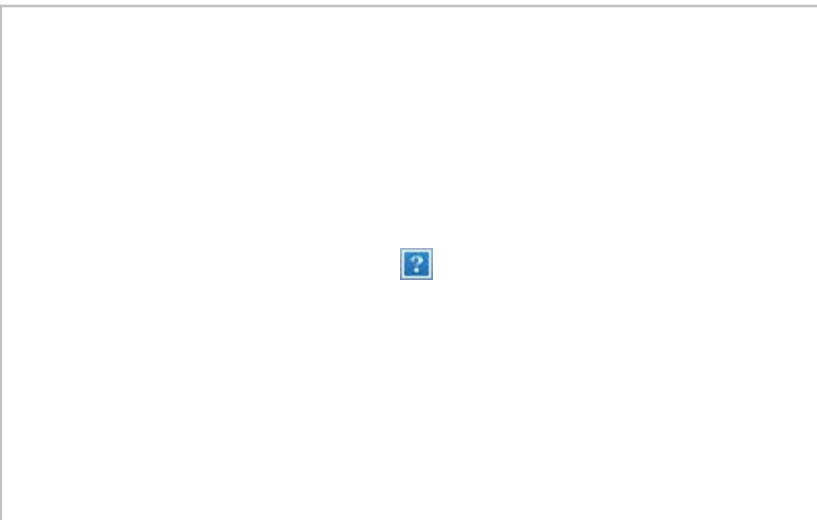
*"Great job by the MAFMIC Education Committee and staff. Thank you!"*

We would like to add our thanks to everyone who helped in orchestrating the 2004 Short Course as it returned to the Holiday Inn in St. Cloud on March 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup>. It takes a lot of people to make it all happen . . . including the 441 of you who were in attendance!



Pictured above are just a few of the players on this year's Short Course team. Above (L to R) **Sherry Ask**, MAFMIC President; **Bert Tellers**, Education Committee Vice-Chairman; **Gwen Batalden**, MAFMIC Chairman; and **Jim Dauphinais**, Education Committee Chairman. With the close of the Short Course, Jim completed his year as chairman of the committee. A great big thanks to him and all of the committee for a job well done!

*"Great keynote speaker!"* Following his keynote presentation, **Dr. Jim Verlengia** (below left) is shown talking to **Mike Kaufman**, Manager of Unity Gordon Hartford Mutual in Cold Spring. Dr. Verlengia's presentation, *"You Can't Take it With You"* was very well received by those in attendance.



## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

*By: Sherry Ask, MAFMIC President*

**You CAN take it with you!** There's a joke going around regarding a guy, on his deathbed, who wanted to take all his hard-earned money with him when he died. He made his wife promise that before they closed the casket that she would put all the money in the casket and that he **WOULD** take all his money with him. His wife followed his request to the letter....she put all her husband's hard-earned money in **her** account and then put a check for that amount in the casket with her deceased husband!

MAFMIC's 2004 Short Course is somewhat similar to this story, but the effects are much greater. There is NO bogus check and the attendees (455 registered) were able to take every bit of information back to their mutual companies with them. The Short Course provided over 8 hours of continuing education credits! The Education Committee did it again. They provided a relaxed atmosphere to talk to managers, agents and board members from all over the state. It gave new managers a forum to learn about MAFMIC and their responsibilities with regards to deadlines and forms that must be filed and many, many other topics that were of great interest. The compilation of the evaluation forms has not been completed yet, but by all outward appearances, the 2004 Short Course definitely scored a bunch of homeruns!

Thank you to everyone who had a hand in making this one of the best Short Courses in recent history! Thank you to everyone who attended! We here at the MAFMIC office appreciate your support and welcome any suggestions for future programs. Mark your calendars **NOW** to attend the 2005 Short Course at Arrowwood Resort in Alexandria!

Another educational opportunity is coming up fast! The Spring Agent's meetings will be held April 27 in Thief River Falls, April 28 in St. Cloud and May 4 in Owatonna & May 5 in Morton. Hope to see you all there!

## 2005 SHORT COURSE

Next year the Short Course will return to the Arrowwood Resort near Alexandria. Dates of the Short Course will be March 16<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup>. Most people will require sleeping rooms for the nights of March 15<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup>. Rooms are available at the rate of \$83, single or double. Reservations can be made by calling the Arrowwood at (320) 762-1124.

## BOARD MEETING SYNOPSIS

*By: Kevin Strandberg, Secretary Treasurer*

The MAFMIC Board of Directors met at the Holiday Inn in St. Cloud on March 16<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Secretary-Treasurer Kevin Strandberg gave the financial report to the board. President Ask gave the administrative report.

Chairman Gwen Batalden read a letter of thank you from Stub Nelson on his receiving the Robert C. Seipp Service Award.

The following board members gave reports from their respective committee's.

- Terry Timm, Government Affairs Committee
- Jerry Kraft, Strategic Plan Committee
- Dan Rupp, Education Committee
- Greg Parent, Policy Committee
- Randy Holland, Technology Committee
- Maureen Reineke, Marketing Committee
- Bob Wendorff, Mutual Assistance Comm.

The board approved the addition of Farmers Mutual Hail Insurance Company as an affiliate member. The board also approved the addition of Web 2B Payment Solution, Quality Claims Service Inc., Clean & Press, and Benefits & Incentives Company as associate members.

Dick Newton of RAM Mutual gave a presentation regarding the work he has done in development of a home replacement cost guide to be used by member companies.

Randy Holland made a report about the progress of the construction of MAFMIC's new office building.

## CREDENTIALS REPORT

During the annual business meeting at the convention, Chairman of the Credentials Committee, **Ken Bargfrede** gave a report to the membership outlining the attendance figures for the convention. Due to the time of the business meeting, the staff is unable to provide accurate figures to the Credentials Committee prior to the meeting. Now that final figures are in, the Credentials Committee Report has been updated as follows. "There were 484 persons registered for the 109<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention of the Minnesota Association of Farm Mutual Insurance Companies. This included 255 delegates, representing 75 member township mutual companies and 28 delegates representing 4 member statewide companies. There were 27 delegates and exhibitors representing 12 associate and affiliate member companies. There were also 139 registered for the Auxiliary and 30 non-members, guests and exhibitors, plus 5 from the MAFMIC staff."

## COMMITTEE NEWS

**Marketing Committee** ~ Under the direction of the Marketing Committee, MAFMIC members recently participated in two farm shows. During February, **Ruth Rothstein**, Manager of Paynesville Mutual, organized association members to promote the mutual insurance industry at the Central Minnesota Farm Show in St. Cloud. Then in mid-March, **Mark Lageveen**, Mutual Service Support Specialist with Grinnell Mutual, did the same for the Owatonna Farm Show. Both show organizers reported that the shows were a success in their area. Thanks to Ruth, Mark and everyone who helped promote the mutual insurance industry during these shows!

**Government Affairs Committee** ~ The Government Affairs Committee met on March 17<sup>th</sup> at the St. Cloud Holiday Inn. **Marcus Marsh** gave the committee an overview of the 2004 session to date.

- **Insurance Fraud Unit Bill:** Most of the MAFMIC membership is exempt from funding the program thanks to language included in the bill by the Commerce Department. MAFMIC members will, however, be able to use the services of the fraud unit.
- **MAFMIC Bill:** The bill that MAFMIC introduced to clean up verbiage regarding cancellation passed out of both commerce committees. This bill would clarify/separate the homeowner's policies (PH) from all other TP-1 policies.
- **Small Company Taxation:** Marcus is watching this federal legislation carefully for potential ramifications to the township mutual companies.
- **MAFMIC-PAC:** The current balance in the PAC is \$6,845. Marcus will work on raising additional funds for this year.
- **Congressman Kennedy Visitation:** A meeting has been scheduled with Congressman Kennedy on April 8<sup>th</sup> in the congressman's St. Cloud office. MAFMIC members who are located within the congressman's district will be invited to attend.

**Upcoming Meetings** ~ The following committees will be meeting in the upcoming weeks and months. If you have any ideas or concerns that you would like a committee to consider, please contact a committee member or a member of the MAFMIC staff.

April 29<sup>th</sup> MAFMIC Policy Committee  
May 12<sup>th</sup> Marketing Committee

## TECHNOLOGY CORNER

By: Kevin Sheehan, Technology Committee Member

*I hate rebuilding computers ... spyware just about got me!*

Please indulge me for a bit of a story. It's a true story. This happened to me personally. If you don't care to read the story behind the information, you can skip to the "(The short version starts here ...)" paragraph.

I have a computer in my home that used to be used a lot by my high school age daughter. Among many other things, she did a bit of music downloading from Napster, and after that shut down, a bit from Grokster. She has since graduated from high school and moved on to college and has her own computer, but uses the computer at home on occasion. My other daughter is in the sixth grade and is expanding her use of the home computer. My wife also does a fair amount of on-line shopping. I have my own computer that I connect with a wireless connection when at home, so I don't use the home computer, hardly at all.

About a month ago, my family told me they could not get on the Internet. It was coming up "Page not found". I fiddled around for a couple of hours trying everything I could think of. I had re-built the machine once before when it was shaky, just to upgrade to XP and get the stability that XP has inherently. It struck fear in my heart to think I may have to do that again! They have a lot on that machine and I would be bugged off and on for the next month or so for getting everything back on, not to mention the day or so trying to get it ALL back on initially. (Not even to mention that this time would not be billable!) Well I got to the point where I only had two remaining options. One: rebuild the machine, overlaying windows. Two: wipe the machine out completely and rebuild it from scratch. My first option was clearly the least work, with the second option being the "last resort". Ok, so I tried the first option, brought up the Internet explorer, and got a sinking feeling when I saw "Page not found"!!!

Well, I was at that wipe out and rebuild stage ... when it occurred to me that I had one more chance! I am fortunate to have access to some other rather knowledgeable people in my office. I am no slouch in computers, but am not an expert in all areas. There are others in my office that know more about this kind of situation. I brought the machine to the office and they perused it for a short time and informed me that they didn't think there was anything they could do. They concurred that a rebuild from scratch was probably what would be required. (I guess they weren't smarter after all!) Well, I took the computer home with the intention of rebuilding it over the weekend ~ like I have nothing better to do on the weekend!

When I was at home that evening, my son who works with me and thinks he knows more than his dad, thought it should be scanned for spyware. We had about a fifteen minute conversation on why I didn't think it would help; it just didn't appear to be that kind of issue. Why would it do what it's doing? Spyware is useless unless it passes information somewhere. The tech staff in the office didn't suggest that, so apparently they didn't think so either. They had used the cleaning software on other machines to cure slowness and other similar issues. After discussing it for a while, I told him to go ahead and try it, I had nothing to lose. (It won't work anyway ...)

Ok, so he was right and I was wrong. (That's only the second time in his life, but that's another story. Nobody better tell him I said this either! I have an image to protect!)

(The short version starts here ...) **Spyware** is software that some "free" services download surreptitiously onto your machine to pass information to the company that is providing the "free" service about what kind of sites you visit and other personal information, so they can sell this information to others. That's how they can afford to offer the "free" services. Spyware by definition is put on your machine without your knowledge. Also if they don't want you to know it's there, they also don't want it easily removed, so it is installed in a way that it is hidden, difficult to detect and difficult to remove. Most current "free" music download companies are notorious for this. Another similar function is **Adware**. In one form it differs from spyware in that it just pops up ads from companies when you start or use the internet explorer. Annoying to say the least. Sometimes this can make Internet use virtually impossible. This type of software actually "broke" the Internet on my home machine. That went a bit beyond annoying!

Because of the nature of the type of activity that can cause this kind of a problem, spyware or adware issues are much more likely to occur in the home environment than the office. But, as I said, our support staff has run it on a number of customer's computers where they reported dramatic slowdowns, and have seen significant improvements in response times. We don't know and don't question what companies do with their computers, but it does happen in offices. As a side issue, this is another reason to have an Internet Use Policy in place for your office.

RCC (Rural Computer Consultants) has used this spyware detection and removal product successfully but your experience may differ. I am not aware of any side effects caused by the use of this program. But, in any event, caution should be exercised.

The version of the Lavasoft program we used is available for free on [www.downloads.com](http://www.downloads.com). Once there, search for "Ad-aware 6". Currently the item you should download is "Ad-ware 6.0 build 181". I ran it just as it was downloaded. (It may even be more effective by loading the current version of the Ad-aware 6 Reference File. To do that, download the reference file and open and then extract the reflist.ref file into the "C:\PROGRAM FILES\LAVASOFT\AD-AWARE 6" directory. You may need some assistance on this, remember these are "free" downloads.)

One last related note: I have had very good luck at eliminating Internet Explorer pop-ups by using a pop-up blocking feature of the Google toolbar. The Google toolbar lets you type in a Google search from any open window, and has an option to stop pop-ups. I use Google search engine a lot. To get a copy of the toolbar, simply go to [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and click on the hyperlink for "Services & Tools". Near the bottom of the page you will notice a hyperlink for "Google Toolbar". Follow the instruction on the screen to load the toolbar. One last warning: the installation will ask if it's ok to "Enable advanced features". This is a similar concept to spyware, but they use it for other reasons. By them asking for permission by definition it is not spyware. You can read more about it from them to make up your own mind if you want to enable advanced features.

Good luck, and may all your computer problems be little (solvable) ones.  
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## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Support Staff Seminar** ~ There's still time to register! The Support Staff Seminar will be held at the Bigwood Event Center in Fergus Falls on April 13<sup>th</sup> and at the Holiday Inn in Owatonna on April 15<sup>th</sup>. This seminar is designed for administrative professionals such as secretaries, office assistants and customer service representatives for mutual companies and agencies. Celebrate Administrative Professional's Day a week early and send your staff to Fergus Falls or Owatonna!

**Spring Agents Meetings** ~ The Spring Agent's Meetings will be held on April 27<sup>th</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> and May 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup>. Topics to be covered include *The History of Mutual Insurance Companies, Using Marshall & Swift/Boeckh, The Minnesota Assigned Claims Bureau, Basic Electricity for Agents, Scheduled vs. Unscheduled and E&O Issues*. Application has been made for 7.5 hours of non-company continuing education credits for this seminar. Registration is \$70.00 for township mutual member agents and \$110.00 for non-township mutual agents, if registered prior to the registration deadline. After the deadline, a late fee will be assessed. Seminar information and a registration form were included in the February NewsBulletin and have been sent to all member companies. You can also download the registration form from MAFMIC's website ([www.mafmic.org](http://www.mafmic.org)). Plan now to attend the meeting in your area!

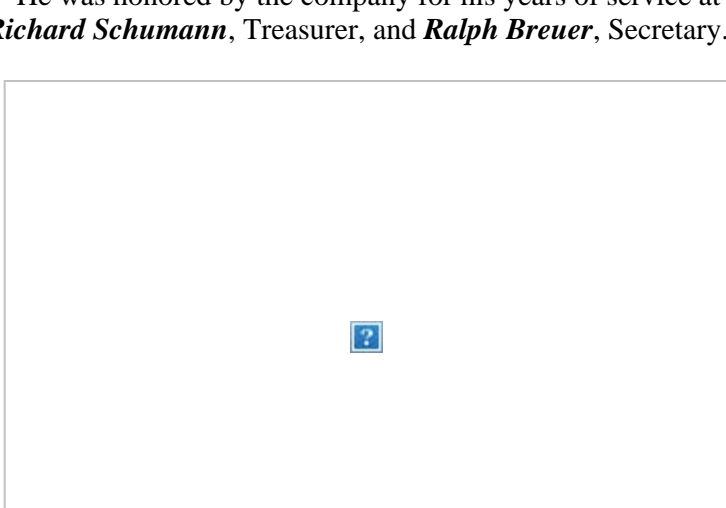
<b>April 27</b>	<b>Thief River Falls</b>	<b>7 Clans Casino</b>
<b>April 28</b>	<b>St. Cloud</b>	<b>Holiday Inn</b>
<b>May 4</b>	<b>Owatonna</b>	<b>Holiday Inn</b>
<b>May 5</b>	<b>Morton</b>	<b>Jackpot Junction</b>

**Golf Outing** ~ Make plans now to attend the social event of the summer! The MAFMIC Golf Outing will be held on July 29<sup>th</sup> at the Little Crow Country Club in Spicer. This event is open to anyone associated with the township mutual industry . . . and their friends or family! Net profits are donated to the MAFMIC Scholarship Fund.

**NAMIC Ag Risk Inspection School** ~ At this time, the MAFMIC Education Committee has no plans to offer an inspectors or adjusters seminar this summer. MAFMIC would like to encourage you to attend NAMIC's Ag Risk Inspection School being held August 17-19 at the Sheraton Bloomington Hotel (formerly Radisson Hotel South). For more information, watch future issues of the NewsBulletin or visit NAMIC's website at [www.namic.org/seminars/agrisk.asp](http://www.namic.org/seminars/agrisk.asp)

## DIRECTOR RECOGNITION

**Norbert Marx** recently retired after 52 years of service as a director of Gillford Mutual Fire Insurance Company. He joined the Board of Directors in 1952 after his father retired from the board. Norbert prided himself in being a loyal director and officer for the mutual. He was honored by the company for his years of service at a retirement party. Pictured below is **Norbert** (center) with **Richard Schumann**, Treasurer, and **Ralph Breuer**, Secretary.



At the annual convention, MAFMIC recognized several township mutual directors who had or would soon be retiring from their respective boards. Since the convention, this list has been updated to include the following individuals.

George Anderson, 37 yrs	Mid-State Mutual	R.D. Knakmuhs, 39 yrs	Redwood County Farmers
Wilfred Anders, 27 yrs	North Fork Mutual	R.D. Knakmuhs, 39 yrs	Gillford Mutual
Carol Asche, 24 yrs	Agassiz & Odessa Mutual	Norbert Marx, 52 yrs	Minnesota Lake Mutual
Katherine Caskey, 9 yrs	King Town Farmers Mutual	Henry Minks, 47 yrs	Elmdale Mutual
James Croatt, 6 yrs	Agassiz & Odessa Mutual	Albert J. Nelson, 44 yrs	Sverdrup Mutual
Art Fjestad, 25 yrs	Oscar Parke Mutual	Milford Nelson, 35 yrs	South Central Mutual
Arthur Gutknecht, 40 yrs	Has San Lake Mutual	Forrest Passer, 47 yrs	Palo Mutual
Fred Hanks, 33 yrs	Bloomfield Mutual	Willard Pearson, 6 yrs	Redwood County Farmers
Leander Hansen, 28 yrs	Mid-Minnesota Mutual	Norman Ramey, 39 yrs	Palo Mutual
Edmund Heinze, 21 yrs	North Fork Mutual	Betsy Ringhofer, 13 yrs	New Prague-Ceska-Louisville
Ralph Huxford, 19 yrs	McPherson Farmers Mutual	Joseph Skluzacek, 38 yrs	Mid-Minnesota Mutual
Archie Ihle, 33 yrs	South Central Mutual	Elmer Vossen, 29 yrs	Corn Belt Mutual
Milton Kirkeby, 28 yrs	Flom Region Mutual	Delbert Wiese, 20 yrs	Kelso Farmers Mutual
		Mark Wiest, 17 yrs	

MAFMIC would like to extend their thanks to all of these individuals who represent over 750 years of combined service to the township mutual industry! This is incredible. Congratulations and our best wishes to each of you!

## POLICY UPDATES

Even after a year, MAFMIC's office continues to receive questions on what needs to be done to ensure continued compliance with the Terrorism Risk Insurance Act of 2002 (TRIA). As a reminder, this act allows for federal reimbursement to insurance companies that comply with the act for losses incurred to commercial property and liability, including farming, caused by a Certified Act of Terrorism.

During the past year, the MAFMIC Policy Committee has worked on a new form to make compliance easier for you. The committee developed and recently released **Form 8TL (2-04), Certified Terrorism Loss Coverage** that includes non-certified terrorism loss exclusion; nuclear, biological and chemical exclusion; and war & military action exclusion. (This form replaces the PDN-CT, PDN-CB, CBX and 8T-1). On renewal policies only, the PDN-8TL (Policy

Disclosure Notice) should also be attached. These forms work with both the TP-1 (03) and TP-1 (98) versions of the policy.

In a nutshell . . .

New Business	Attach Form 8TL
Renewals	Attach Form 8TL & PDN-8TL

If either the township mutual or the packaging company have elected to charge for terrorism coverage, all new and renewal business must contain a line item on the declaration page informing the policyholder of the existence of coverage for terrorism along with any premium charged for this coverage. The policyholder may elect to reject terrorism coverage; in this case it is recommended that this notice be received from the policyholder in writing.

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### **THANKS . . . FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP!**

MAFMIC would like to thank ***Rural Computer Consultants*** for their recent contribution to the MAFMIC Scholarship Fund. We appreciate your generosity! We would also like to recognize the following companies for their contribution to the fund last fall: ***North Star Mutual, West Central Mutual, Redwood County Farmers Mutual, RAM Mutual, McPherson Farmers Mutual, Southeast Mutual, Wilmington Mutual*** and ***Westbrook Mutual***.

With the help of these companies and everyone who has participated in any of the fundraisers for this fund, the MAFMIC Scholarship Selection Committee has been able to increase the number of scholarships given each year. In the first year, the Selection Committee received 52 applications and was able to award two \$500 scholarships to qualifying high school seniors. Last year they received 47 applications and awarded six scholarships. This is only the third year and MAFMIC received 70 applications and will award eight scholarships to high school seniors. Applicants must meet established eligibility criteria in order to be entered into a blind drawing for a scholarship. The Scholarship Selection Committee met during the recent Short Course to review the applications for eligibility. This year's winners will be notified after the MAFMIC office verifies that the recipient's parents or guardians are policyholders of a member mutual company.

### **HELP! Recipes Needed**

Recipes for the auxiliary's cookbook are coming in, but not as fast as we would like. Please consider including one or two of your favorites in the cookbook. We'd really like to have all MAFMIC member companies represented. If we get enough, we'd also like to include a 'Submitted by Men' recipe section and a '100 Year Old Recipes' section. A copy of the form was included in the last NewsBulletin. You can also call the office for a copy of the form or download it off MAFMIC's website (look in the News & Notes section).

### **FBI Update**

During the recently completed Short Course, ***Deborah Pierce***, Special Agent in charge of the Minneapolis division of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, addressed the membership. She encouraged our members to contact the FBI with any questions or concerns that they may have. The 24-hour phone number for the FBI is (612) 376-3200. Information about the FBI can also be found on their website: [www.fbi.gov](http://www.fbi.gov).

### **MAFMIC E-BULLETIN**

Beginning in June, the NewsBulletin will be sent via email to all subscribers who are able to receive the electronic version of the publication. To help us out, **please send your email address to [info@mafmic.org](mailto:info@mafmic.org)** so that we can prepare for the transition. You may also send questions and/or comments to this address.