

Congratulations

Congratulations to HCMS Managers for earning the CMCA (Certified Manager of Community Associations) designation from Community Association Institute (CAI): **Gina Craig, Karen Lopez, and Elizabeth MacNutt**

Congratulations to HCMS Manager **Elyse Harkins** for earning the AMS (Association Management Specialist) designation from Community Association Institute (CAI). •



Associa is a group of property management companies across the nation. We share ideas in an effort to continually enhance and improve the services that we all supply to our clients. We try to use our volume of members to your advantage-seeking volume discounts on services provided on a national basis. We offer on-line newsletters and advice for our clients as well as a means of networking for our managers. We all strive to the best the industry can offer. •

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"Exclusively for those who serve the community"

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Your Buying Power at Work!

As a valued client of Houston Community Management, your community benefits from programs that are made possible by the amount of buying power we represent. One of those benefits happens to be property and casualty insurance, and considering the insurance industry as a whole, we are very excited about our program.



Through our parent company, AssociaSM, USI Insurance Services has established a new commercial property and general liability master insurance program available to community associations managed by AssociaSM member firms in Texas. The rates under this new master program are in most cases more competitive than those that we could obtain through other master programs or individually on behalf of a single association. The annualized

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Home Based Property Managers

For a variety of reasons, more and more businesses are home basing employees. Technology has dramatically changed the functionality of a corporate office, and has continually diminished the importance of it. In many businesses that center on phone and computer contact with their customer, the location of the person handling the inquiry is of no importance, thanks to the use of modern technology, mainly computers, and all the data now available at our fingertips.

well suited to home basing property managers. All the characteristics of a good property manager are also a key to a successful home office employee. Being proactive, organized, deadline sensitive and self-motivated are essential qualities for anyone who is going to work from home. By implementing a system of reporting to supervisors on weekly activity and regularly scheduled home office inspections, quality control is no more an issue than with in-house employees. The work obligations remain

The property management industry is

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the same, with a little flexibility added. Home basing of property managers is designed primarily to reduce stress and burn out caused by a business that does not have a defined work schedule. Meetings are held to convenience Board Members serving in a volunteer capacity, typically meeting in the evening hours. Add to this the general membership meetings and a portfolio manager with 8 properties can expect to be away from home at least 2 evenings each and every week. It is for this reason many excellent property managers are unable to manage a satisfactory family life without some flexibility to offset this challenging and unpredictable schedule.

Most families of home based office workers that I have spoken to, enjoy and appreciate the fact that their wife, mother, or significant other, can work from home and are willing to modify their expectations as needed in order to make the situation work out well for all. Houston Community Management Services now has 3 home-based property managers and 2 will be home based before the end of the year. Home basing has proven to be a success for the company and the family. Perception is always paramount and the perception of the home-based manager is that they have more control of their time. Those

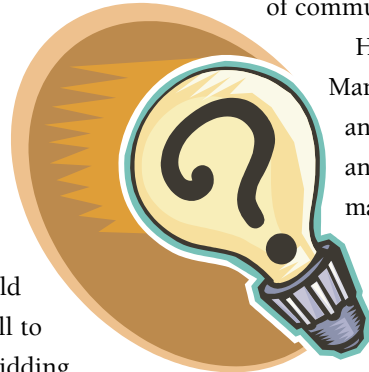


around them share the perception that the availability and flexibility is the new culture of the office.

We are interested in your comments on the home-based property manager. Please let us know what you think by sending your comments to www.homebase@houcomm.com.

What is Associa Power?

ASSOCIA POWER is a cutting edge plan to bring the benefits of electricity deregulation to community associations operated by the Associa nationwide family of management companies. Communities whose annual purchasing volume would normally be too small to attract competitive bidding can "piggyback" onto the total volume



of the Associa program. This program is just another advantage to being a part of our family of community associations.

Houston Community Management is very pleased to announce the results of our annual energy search, We have made a commitment with Tracabel for a verified savings (depending on the meter load) of 16.5 to 19.4%.

For more information, visit us at www.houcomm.com.



HCMS Book Club

RECOMMENDED BOARD MEMBER READING

Be Reasonable! by Kenneth Budd

"HOW COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS CAN ENFORCE RULES WITHOUT ANTAGONIZING RESIDENTS, GOING TO COURT, OR STARTING WORLD WAR III"

Many managers have spent their careers stressing to Boards how they are responsible for enforcement of restrictions and warning them that they could be held personally liable if they failed to enforce the restrictions. Unfortunately many of them failed to emphasize reasonableness and flexibility. It also includes expert opinions, analysis and discussion of court cases and real life controversies, as well as practical tips for writing reasonable rules for everything from pets to parking.

This book may be purchased on-line at the Community Association Institute Book Store, www.caisecure.net.

ARROGANT, SELF-SERVING, ARGUMENTATIVE...

Can You Relate?

Millie had had it with the Board! Every time she dealt with them, she found them arrogant, self-serving, argumentative and condescending. This time, she was going to do something about it! Within a week, a For Sale sign went up in front of her home, a buyer was found and Millie started packing. She had already located a beautiful condo not far away at just the right price.

She moved in, settled in but it wasn't long before trouble brewed again: She found this Board was just like the last one: arrogant, self-serving, argumentative and condescending. She couldn't believe her bad luck! And after all that trauma of moving! It was not long after that she decided another move was in order.

This time, however, she was going to do her homework. Besides finding the right home, she spent quite a bit of time talking with her future neighbors. She asked them how the Board ran things and if the community was happy. All the neighbors responded that the Board was great...they were humble, altruistic, conciliatory and deferential. What a relief!

As Millie was moving in, the Board President came out to greet her. She was impressed! Soon she was bending his ear about all the trouble she had had with previous HOA Boards. "I heard that I would find it different here" she finished.

The Board President reflected for a minute and said, "No, I think you'll find the Board is arrogant, self-serving, argumentative and condescending here too." "What?" she gasped. "How could I get stuck three times with a lousy Board?" He replied, "The Board isn't lousy. The Board here is great. You asked me how you would find the Board."

Moral of the Story: It's important to remember that the community is made up of neighbors usually doing their best to live and let live. If you have a hostile approach, you're sure to find the hostility you expect. On the other hand, if the attitude is conciliatory, you're likely to find that too. It takes two to tangle.

WELCOME ABOARD

OUR NEW CLIENT COMMUNITIES

Regatta Townhomes

Claremont Homeowners Association

Burkshire Homeowners Association

POWER continued from cover

rates (premiums and fees) many of our condominium and townhome clients will see under this program represent significant SAVINGS over current rates, especially for those that have not participated in USI's master program in the past. Carriers under this new program are Lexington Insurance Company (an A++ rated carrier) for the commercial property coverage and Mt. Hawley Insurance Company (an A rated carrier) for the general liability coverage. Even our single-family communities that have amenities will likely see savings as policies come up for renewal.

In addition to this new master package policy, USI has also recently established a new umbrella liability master for AssociaSM member firms. Rates under this new umbrella master are very competitive, typically offering savings of at least 30% over comparable products. The carrier for this new umbrella program, which has a \$15 million limit, is American International Specialty (an A++ rated carrier).

As we continue to grow, our buying power improves so as more and more communities take advantage of the low rates and deductibles these master insurance programs provides, we are hoping to see rates go down even more. As always, Houston Community Management strives to bring our clients the best possible products and values on issues that relate to their communities. We are currently looking at the possibility of implementing a blanket waste disposal program that should net a great deal of savings as well so stay tuned for more information on your buying power at work!