

 **Associa**<sup>®</sup>  
Association Services of Florida

4<sup>th</sup> QUARTER 2011

From the President  
**GEORGE SKRBIN, CMCA<sup>®</sup>**

**WOW, CAN YOU BELIEVE IT IS ALMOST 2012?**

Now is the time for my annual reminder for the importance of education. For those of you on the boards of condominiums, this is required. For those of you in homeowners associations, this is a good idea.

You are all facing the active “in season” of your communities which brings annual meetings, budgets, board meetings, committee meetings, community socials. This all creates the noise than can so easily distract you from your own continuing education. Board director education is important to enhance the likelihood of smooth association operations. We recently had the pleasure of hosting the local Community Association Institute’s (CAI) Essentials of Volunteers course. One of the many education opportunities there are this time of year for board members.

The Essentials course provides a wide perspective of the history of community associations. Topics explored where the trend of community association living is headed, best practices for risk management, understanding association finances and problem solving techniques. For example, did you know that in 1970 there were only 10,000 community associations with 2.1 million residents living in them? By 2010 there were 306,600 community associations with 62 million people living in them. There are an estimated 60,000 community association managers in the United States with an estimated 10,000 community association management firms. 1.75 million volunteers serve on community

association boards.

These are staggering statistics which really drill home your importance as a community volunteer on your board.

Continuing education and training will keep you informed of trends and best practice. Your leanings can be executed in your communities to continually enhance the lifestyle that the homeowners have bought into.

**WHERE CAN YOU GET EDUCATION?** Trade organizations such as CAI ([caionline.org](http://caionline.org)) or the various industry related groups such as the Broward Coalition ([browardcoalition.org](http://browardcoalition.org)), The Kendall Federation ([kfha.org](http://kfha.org)), the Alliance of Delray ([allianceofdelray.com](http://allianceofdelray.com)), Miramar Communities Council ([miramarcommunities.org](http://miramarcommunities.org)) Community Advocacy Network ([canfl.com](http://canfl.com)), The Community Association Leadership Lobby ([callbp.com](http://callbp.com)), and your association’s legal counsel to name a few. Many of these are free to board members.

Increasing your knowledge base as a volunteer certainly enhances your leadership within your community. We are also happy to provide specialized training for your boards in such areas as board governance, how to understand your financial statement, goal planning and problem solving amongst a few topics. Simply let your community manager know.

We thank you for your business this year and of course most importantly, make this holiday season a great one with family and friends.



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The Associa Advantage Network is a free and voluntary **VALUE-ADDED SERVICE** available to members of the Associa Family. By leveraging the purchasing power of Associa's 8,000 communities and 2 million households, we are able to negotiate exceptional savings on household goods and services commonly used by our clients, maintenance groups and employees.

Through the Associa Exclusive Offers area members will find trade partners that are icons in their industry such as Lowe's, Sherwin-Williams, DoodyCalls, 1800-GOT-JUNK?, Budget Blinds and *Bulbs.com* to name a few.

Choose the best and take advantage, [www.associaadvantage.com](http://www.associaadvantage.com).

“I recently placed an order with *Bulbs.com* through the Associa Advantage program and was extremely pleased with their pricing and service. I received a quote from our normal supplier and *Bulbs.com* beat their price by 50%! The ordering process was easy and we received our shipment fast. This is a phenomenal program and I look forward to sharing the savings information with my Board of Directors and using their services for future orders.”

-BLAKE ROSE, CMCA®  
COMMUNITY MANAGER

“I was getting ready to order more bags for our pet stations and thought this was my chance to experience Associa Advantage for myself. There was definitely a huge savings! For \$115, I received 4000 bags from DoodyCalls! The closest competitor would have cost the Association \$250. In times like these the Association definitely appreciates the savings.”

-MAYEA HENDERSON, CMCA® AMS®  
BEECHTREE COMMUNITY MANAGER

## REQUESTS FOR PROPOSALS

By: Hedy Maurer, CMCA®, Director of Management Services

As we come to the end of the year, it is always a good idea to review all current contracts and assess their value. While the Board may be happy with the current contractor, a good idea is to get some comparison bids, while also allowing your current contractor to give you a proposal. This is actually part of the fiduciary duty of the Board of Directors, to ensure the best value for the Association.

The first step to putting a project out for bid is a good RFP (Request for Proposal). Whether it is for landscaping, roof replacement or something as simple as pressure cleaning the sidewalks, your request needs to be made in writing with all aspects of the

job defined. It is important that all bids come in with the same scope of work, so that the Board can make an informed and accurate decision.

All RFP's should have the following items listed on them:

- Start and finish date
- Insurance requirements
- License information
- Payment requirements (deposit amount etc.)
- Vendor contact information
- Complete Scope of Work (Quantity, quality, color, permits, etc.)

When requesting the RFP's, make sure that you include a deadline for the submission. You may also want to include a statement that you only

want a proposal for what is in the RFP and not anything extra. This way the Board will be able to compare all RFP's equally as they will be apples to apples. Make sure that you indicate where you want the proposal sent to and if it is to be a sealed bid. Many Boards choose to have sealed bids, so that no vendor has the benefit over another. If it is a sealed bid, make it clear in the RFP that any proposal coming in that is not sealed will not be considered.

All in all, the bidding process does not have to be difficult or stressful as long as a proper RFP is written and sent to reputable vendors that will follow what you are requesting.



# AssociaLiving.com

AssociaLiving is a fun and insightful online magazine created specifically for our Associa communities and homeowners.

A resource of useful and inspiring information for residents and community associations across North America, AssociaLiving includes relevant stories about Entertaining, Home, Practical Living and Community, each geared toward enriching our homes and building stronger community associations.

Sign up for AssociaLiving ([www.associaiving.com](http://www.associaiving.com)) to get great recipes for fall or to discover activities for the whole neighborhood. Keep reading to be inspired with holiday decorating ideas or to learn the ins-and-outs of weatherproofing your home. AssociaLiving has something for everyone in your family and community.

For those everyday clever ideas, visit AssociaLiving's Neighborly Notes blog. Neighborly Notes provides quick and savvy ideas to help make your home a happier,

healthier and more efficient place to live. Blogger Carol, like many of our homeowners, juggles a life comprised of many roles: spouse, parent, child and working professional, to name just a few. She has hectic days like everyone else, but no matter where they are spent, she ends them all at the same place: home. The editors of AssociaLiving hope the helpful tips and tricks about everything from organizing things around the home to entertaining with a twist will help make your days run a little smoother.

Celebrate the best of community living.

Visit [www.associaiving.com](http://www.associaiving.com) and sign up to get the latest ideas in Home, Community, Entertainment and Practical Living.



Associerge is your exclusive private virtual concierge, available to you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. As a resident within an ASF-managed community, you will enjoy the exclusive benefit of membership. Use Associerge to make arrangements for errands, shopping, entertainment and travel, and much more. It's first class service – designed to save you time! Check it out at [www.associerge.com](http://www.associerge.com).



## ASSOCIA CARES<sup>SM</sup>

Associa Cares is a nonprofit charity to support families and communities in times of crisis.

You can help Associa and its companies with its charitable work nationwide.

To contribute, visit [www.associacares.com](http://www.associacares.com), or email [associacares@associaonline.com](mailto:associacares@associaonline.com).

# Problem Solving

By: Joanne L. Willoughby, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM® | Director of On-Site Communities | Director of Education and Training

In all of our lives on a daily basis, we deal with either minor or major issues, personnel or professional, that needs resolution.

Everyday issues arise in many areas associated with Community Association Management. Maintenance, violations, ACC approvals, legal issues, board member disputes and dissident owners are just a few common problems. So the question arises; “Who do we turn to” and “How do we prepare”? It would appear that we need a battery of advisors to assist us but ultimately it is a thorough assessment of the problem that leads us to the “solution”.

When problems arise, step back; do not jump to a quick fix. Evaluate what the problem is and how best to resolve the situation, not just for today but for the future.

There are processes and techniques for us to use:

- Define the problem.
- Evaluate, does this issue warrant immediate action?
- Gather all the relevant facts.
- Think about possible solutions.
- Consider the pros and cons of your solutions.
- Decide on the best solution and go with it.
- Communicate to everyone involved your decision and how you reached it. Also communicate how this decision may impact all parties involved.
- Monitor and evaluate the plan.

Remember that some decisions can be more difficult to enforce because you do not have the knowledge or experience to implement your decision. This is where you must call in an expert, a professional who can remove the liability off of the board of directors and the Manager.

Never feel that the faster we make a decision, is more important than the long-term outcome. Emotions should never take over logic. Always know the cost and the risk to each problem solving solution.

In some cases the decision to do nothing is the correct action. Do not be forced into a decision if you have not considered the implications carefully and have decided the best solution is to do nothing different, in the right way, for the right reasons.

Whatever decision you make to resolve the problem at hand, be objective and be prepared for questions. Well prepared decisions are easier to make and to implement and generally produce the best results. Be realistic with your decisions; consider time constraints and if there will be any budget concerns.

When faced with a big problem and decision, it is easy to get lost in the details and circumstances. Calculate what the pros and cons, the advantages and disadvantages are and what you want your short and long term goals to be. You need to be clear on what you hope to achieve.

Much of what the Manager and Members of the Board of Directors do is to solve problems and make decisions. Some say this is the hardest part of the job. Problem solving and decision making is a key role for the board directors. If you follow the procedures above you should not ever feel the “fear or failure” that makes some boards procrastinate on taking action.

When making the final decision, you will know the direction that you will be taking and you will commit to the course of action. Recognize that you cannot know with 100% certainty that your decision is correct. Just be sure that you do everything possible to assess the problems and the needs along with the benefits and the risks and use good business judgment. Don't worry about the “what ifs and don't look back”. Trust yourselves to make the decision and be prepared to deal with confidence, on any consequences that arise.

And lastly, communicate with yourselves and your owners. Keep everyone abreast of what is happening and when.



# How to Be a Leader

When a community hires a Management Company or a Manager, they are looking for a leader. Someone with knowledge and experience who can solve problems and educate the Board of Directors and owners. A leader is someone that the Board and owners look to for guidance and to solve the community's problems.

Boards of Directors are leaders in their communities, as are the Association Attorney, Accountant, Engineer and other professionals that we hire to educate and assist in solving problems.

Leadership is guiding and showing the way for others and helping them to work together towards the same direction. Leaders are role models and visionaries that understand the importance of communication.

## **WHAT A GOOD LEADER SHOULD DO:**

- Understand what you, as a leader want to accomplish.
- Always maintain strength and conviction with your decisions.
- Enlist people to assist you, that otherwise would not help.
- Accept change as “good”. The hardest thing to do is to enact the vision and have people accept the change.
- Take responsibility for your actions and those of your employees. You are the communicator, if you do not communicate clearly, it is your mistake.
- Communicate with all parties involved; Board, owners, residents, vendors and staff members. Staying in touch with all the people affected by your decision is crucial.
- Choose the right professional to gather your information from. It should always be a trusted source.
- Make sure everyone has the same information.
- Understand what you are asking people to do.
- Try to see things through others eyes.
- Always display integrity.
- It is very important the Manager and the Board of Directors understand the culture of the community. They need to understand the difference in behaviors of the residents and how and why people do what they do.
- It is important to know which people to get your knowledge from. Different perspectives are important.
- Always be seen.
- A good leader isn't just a talker, but also a listener.



- The “good, strong” leader always takes ownership. There is no better way to lose your credibility as a leader than not to practice what you preach.

## **ALL GOOD LEADERS SHARE THE FOLLOWING ATTRIBUTES:**

- They are confident.
- They are kind yet can be firm when necessary.
- They are decisive in their decisions and actions.
- Embrace constructive criticism and welcome the different opinion.
- They have a vision that excites people and makes them want to follow you.
- A good leader is genuinely concerned about the people they lead.
- A good leader is a mentor at all times.
- A good leader understands that different perspectives are important and should be discussed.
- A good leader knows how and when to give praise.
- A good leader says “please” and “thank you.”
- A good leader fully visualizes every repercussion of each of their decisions in advance. If along the way a decision turns out to be wrong, accept the responsibility and correct the process.

Becoming a leader isn't easy because it takes a conscious commitment and consistent effort to develop one's leadership skills. Anyone willing to make the effort can become a good leader.

If your actions inspire others to learn more and become more, you are a leader.

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By: Joanne L. Willoughby, CMCA®, AMS®, PCAM®  
Director of On-Site Communities  
Director of Education and Training

# ASSOCIA SUPPORTS KIDS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD

In 2011, Associa launched nationally the Associa Supports Kids (ASK) program in communities across the U.S. The program is Associa's way to show its support for the health and safety of our children in and around the home. "Thousands of children live and play in Associa-managed communities, and we have an opportunity to make a difference," said John Carona, President and CEO of Associa. "Through the Associa Supports Kids program, we are helping protect our kids and helping them grow into well-rounded people."

**Safety:** One focus of ASK is to educate parents and kids about safety through our brochure and on the ASK website: [www.associasupportskids.org](http://www.associasupportskids.org), which features fun downloadable tips and facts for kids, and a variety of Safety Tips and Statistics for parents and grandparents. At neighborhood events, Scout, our lovable golden retriever mascot, hands out Safety Tip Coloring books and plush Scout toys to each child in attendance. Parents receive an Associa Supports Kids safety

brochure and a ChildPrint identification kit for each of their children.

**Sports and Fitness Sponsorships:** ASK is also focused on keeping kids strong and healthy by promoting physical activity. Studies show that the average American child spends more than seven and a half hours a day watching TV or movies, or using phones or video games. Scout wants to lend a helping paw by assisting in kids passions to stay strong. To help, ASK offers a kids' health and fitness brochure that details how parents may request sponsorships for their children's team sports activities, up to \$250 annually, for teams associated with a community managed by an Associa company.

**Safe and strong kids:** Associa Supports Kids demonstrates Associa's firm commitment to safe communities and safe, healthy kids. Plus, the program makes a great addition to any Associa community looking to enhance a positive community experience for their residents. To find out more about Associa Supports Kids, visit our website at [www.associasupportskids.org](http://www.associasupportskids.org) or contact your community manager.



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