ALASBO News Link
is published for the members of the Alaska
Association of School Business Officials
and its affiliate members.

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Would you like to receive this newsletter in print,
rather than e-mail? Send a message to Amy Lujan at
the above address.

President's Message
Holly Holman, Unalaska City School District

Our annual conference is coming up quickly! ALASBO's Forty-Fifth annual conference will be held in Anchorage at the Captain Cook Hotel from December 3rd – 6th. If you have not registered already, I hope you consider registering for Alaska's very own information-packed conference for school business officials. I can say with certainty that you will come back to your district and use the information from the conference immediately, not to mention being able to finally meet that voice on the phone from DEED, one of your vendors, or other school business officials!

(Continued on page 2)

Contents
1-2 President’s Message
3 ALASBO Financial Statements
3 Executive Director’s Message
3-4 Experience Reopening a School
4 Dealing with the Boulders in Life
5 Power Lunch Schedule
5 ASBO International Conference
5 Send Us Your Pictures
6 ALASBO Spotlight: Ryan Ayars
6 Welcome New Board Member
7 ASBO International Recognition
7 Chart of Accounts Review Committee
7-9 Liaisons & Mentors
9 Upcoming Events
(Continued from page 1)

Every year I meet someone new at the ALASBO conference that I end up corresponding with during the year with questions or ideas, as well as touching base with colleagues that I’ve known for years.

This networking is invaluable in our jobs, as budgets are tighter and our time is precious.

Sunday, December 3 is our pre-conference day with six in-depth sessions – three in the morning and three in the afternoon - and the full-day School Business Academy. Don’t miss out on these sessions that thoroughly explore topics such as payroll, budgeting, HR, health care reform, p-card training, and teacher certification.

The planning for the conference started last summer in Sitka at our ALASBO Leadership Conference, taking suggestions from last year’s conference evaluations, and incorporating some new ideas. One of the big changes is that our vendor show is on Monday only! So take advantage of the dedicated morning and afternoon sessions on Monday to have some face time with your current vendors, and to check out the new vendors and products.

Our keynote speakers start off every day, with the riveting John Sedor, Esquire on Monday morning discussing legal issues in education, legendary dog musher DeeDee Jonrowe on Tuesday talking about pulling together through difficult times, and a timely legislative update and discussion of our state’s fiscal challenges on Wednesday.

Whether you are involved in every aspect of school business, or if you are specialized in payroll, HR, purchasing, or budgeting, there is something for you at ALASBO! Register today at: https://www.regonline.com/alasbo2017annualconference.

In September, I attended the ASBO International Conference in Denver. What a great training opportunity! This conference draws school business officials from around the nation and world, and if you have never attended, I would suggest you consider attending next fall! Keynote speaker Pamela Meyer provided scientific findings and practical tips for lie spotting in her presentation “Lie Spotting, Finding the Truth, Building Trust that Lasts”, with plenty of video clips and pictures to back up her findings. Her engaging presentation, sprinkled with plenty of humor and examples, was excellent!

The second keynote speaker, Aron Ralston, Adventurer and subject of the film 127 Hours kept the audience on the edge of their seats with his gripping near-death tale of being trapped by a boulder in the Utah wilderness and how he finally escaped his fate. His motivational speech about facing the boulders in life was powerful. (For more, see Amy Lujan’s article on this presentation in this newsletter!)

Our ALASBO group of 12 spread out and covered the conference sectionals, and I believe we attended nearly every one offered! We attended sectionals on budgeting, emergency preparedness, GASB updates, internal controls, business communication, procurement, impacts of marijuana laws on schools, dealing with the press, and many other topics that each of us face in our jobs every day. The ASBO International Conference is a wonderful opportunity to network with school business officials around the nation and world, and to share our challenges and successes from our school districts back home!

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our dedicated ALASBO board members: Cassee Olin, Carl Horn, Mark Vink, Kim Johnson, Meridith Boman, Lila Krosschell, Ryan Ayars, Karen Quitlund, and Ashley Bjornson. These are the people behind the scenes making it all happen! Their countless hours helping with the conference planning and preparing for and attending monthly meetings is much appreciated. A heartfelt thank you to every one of you! Also a huge thank you to our Executive Director, Amy Lujan! Amy fills the role of taking care of all the details, big and small, and also keeping an eye on the big picture of ALASBO, keeping the board focused on our strategic plan. Thank you, Amy, for your deep commitment to ALASBO and hard work for our organization! Finally, I would like to thank each and every one of our ALASBO members for their dedication to serving Alaska’s youth. I can truly say that this team of professionals exemplifies our ALASBO Theme this year of Pulling Together for Alaska’s Youth!

◆ Alaska ASBO - Pulling Together ◆
Executive Director’s Message
Amy Lujan, Executive Director

As you can imagine, I’m busy with many details to pull together this year’s annual conference! President Holly Holman did an excellent job of summarizing the reasons you’ll want to join us. We’ve trying some new formats this year, but we’ll have the same great professional development that the conference has become known for over the years.

Be sure to register soon for the conference, if you haven’t already! Then start planning your ugly sweater outfit and prepare for a fun night of karaoke and casino games too; yes, the annual conference is a lot of fun too!

2nd Annual: ALASBO Ugly Holiday Sweater Contest!

Experience of Re-Opening a Village School
Ryan Ayars, Southwest Region School District

Southwest Region School District staff and community members were very excited to re-opened a school in an area village, Clark’s Point. The school had closed in 2009 due to low enrollment. With an influx of students, we were able to open the doors once again.

This was a large project that required the collaboration of the business office, maintenance department, instructional staff, village leaders, and area contractors. As this is such an unusual occurrence, we hit a few road bumps along the way.

First, acquiring a building that met the State of Alaska’s fire safety guidelines proved difficult. After a failed attempt at using a new building that was shipped in, the staff and students are temporarily occupying the village council building, with hopes of transitioning into a refurbished former school building next year.

The trials of having to occupy a building that was not intended as a school building have been another setback. Our great maintenance crew worked tirelessly to make the space a safe and comfortable learning environment on very short notice.

Staffing is always difficult in villages, and gathering great staff quickly was even more difficult. However, we were able to work with

(Continued on page 4)
local leaders and staff the majority of the positions with current residents or residents who returned because of the school opening.

Finally, finding housing for the teachers in an area where housing is scarce was challenging. We saw the community really step forward to find solutions, though. The village bought and delivered a brand new modular home for our Teacher/Principal to occupy, which has worked out very well.

With the opening of the new school, we have seen new life breathed into this village, and the residents have shown great commitment to the project. We only anticipated 11 students, but after our final count ending this October, we were pleased to document 15 students enrolled this school year, due to families returning to the area because their children no longer need to leave to attend school.

The school re-opening has been an incredible experience, and I consider myself very fortunate to have contributed to this project.

Dealing with the “Boulders” in Your Life
Amy Lujan, Executive Director, ALASBO

Many Alaskans enjoy outdoor adventures. But have you ever thought about what you would do in the event of a serious accident? What would you be willing to do to save your own life, or that of someone else?

ALASBO members confronted this question when we had the chance to hear Aron Ralston speak at the ASBO International conference a few weeks ago. Aron’s survival story was the subject of a major motion picture, “127 Hours” starring James Franco, and Aron is almost as good looking as Franco!

Aron opened his presentation by saying that he wanted to tell us not just about the guy who cut off his own arm to survive an accident in the wilderness, but the guy who would cut off the other arm, with a smile on his face, if he had to do it!

During the presentation, it was as if Aron was reliving his experience of being trapped by a boulder while hiking. This was very emotional for the audience as well. Most importantly, we were asked to consider the boulders we experience in our own lives – illness, loss, financial or career set-backs, tragedies, etc. Some of the things Aron experienced during those 127 hours are instructive:

- Rage during the first moments may be necessary but is non-productive
- Stop – think – plan
- There are no bad ideas (even cutting an arm off…?)
- We make decisions even when we don’t realize we have, such as taking the last bite of food or sip of water
- What’s really important to you? When you confront boulders, your values become more clear. In Aron’s case, the pain alone recalibrated his entire sense of being.

In Aron’s experience, it was the will to love, even more than the will to live that gave him the courage to take the necessary actions to save himself. He experienced a vision of being a father in the future, a vision that did come to pass in Aron’s life. The entire experience was transformative, changing his outlook on life forever.

Aron Ralston has continued a life of outdoor adventure, including volunteering for search and rescue and as a wilderness advocate. He has returned to the boulder 11 times! Final advice from Aron: don’t go out alone without telling someone your plans; you can do one, but not both!

May your boulders be your blessings!
Power Lunch Schedule
11 AM to noon, usually the 2nd Tuesday of each month via teleconference; call 605-472-5814, code 533-330-891

Nov 28 TRS and Possible Social Security Enrollment

ASBO International Conference
Sarah Jahn, Juneau School District

Thank you, ALASBO Awards Committee, for selecting me as the 2017 Tom Freeman Grant recipient for attendance at the 2017 ASBO International Conference in Denver, CO, in September of this year. And, thank you, CORE, for your continued sponsorship of this valuable opportunity for new business leaders.

My informal theme for the conference was “Internal Controls”. I was glad to see so many presentations on this important topic. I’ve been the Finance Officer for about 18 months, and I’m very interested in improving my district’s internal controls. The ASBO conference provides ample opportunity to research this topic, and I received valuable information from multiple presentations.

One of my greatest internal control challenges is improving controls over student activities. On Friday, I attended the internal controls and reporting workshop presented by professionals within and outside of the school district office. This delivery approach gave a unique perspective on establishing internal controls, detecting fraud and error, and developing partnerships with internal and external stakeholders to ensure the fiscal accountability of student activities. I appreciated learning how auditors perform risk assessments and how school business officials develop best practices to protect student and district funds. This was one of my favorite presentations because we learned effective techniques for developing, implementing, and measuring internal controls.

On Saturday, I attended a fraud risk assessment presentation by Karen M. Smith, (MBA, SFO, CFE, Heinfeld Meech, AZ). Ms. Smith discussed the fraud triangle and methods to reduce opportunity risk. She presented multiple internal control suggestions and data analysis techniques that organizations can use to detect possible fraudulent activity. I appreciated her detailed Excel demonstrations on how to evaluate data for possible fraud.

On Sunday afternoon I attended an in-depth discussion of Uniform Guidance and grants management. Presenters reviewed the layout of the compliance supplement and expected subject updates as well as cash and non-cash internal controls, procurement guidelines, and additional resources. The presentation handout will be a useful reference tool as I finalize changes to our procurement manual.

The ALASBO group and their guests took part in an “escape room” activity on Sunday evening. None of us got out ahead of the buzzer, but what a great time! I highly recommend it for new or well-established workgroups. Thank you, American Fidelity, for sponsoring our activity!

Monday morning was short on time but long on information. Earl Burke, CFO, Hinds County SD, MS shared real-world stories of fraud and highlighted tactics to strengthen internal controls. He also shared statistics about fraud in the workplace and resources for improving internal controls.

As a self-proclaimed GASB geek, I was delighted to finish the conference with a presentation on GASB updates. As Tammy Groves mentioned last year, David Bean, GASB Director of Research and Technical Activities, is a delightful presenter who obviously has a passion for his work and a penchant for bow ties. We do learn better when we’re having fun!

In between all of these valuable presentations and activities, I met wonderful people from across the country. Again and again, I was reminded that no matter the size of the district, school business officials are supportive, collaborative, funny, and exceedingly smart people who want to do their jobs well. It was humbling to meet these amazing people.

Send us your pictures – anytime you’re traveling around the district, take a photo for the ALASBO annual meeting slideshow!

Send them to: yodean.armour@klawockschool.com
Member Spotlight
Ryan Ayars, Southwest Region School District

Q: Tell us about your school district
A: Our school district serves eight area villages located anywhere from 15 to 75 miles away from our district hub in Dillingham. We have roughly 150 staff members to support our 600 students.

Q: How long have you been in school business?
A: This position is my first experience working in school business, and I have been here for four wonderful years with, hopefully, many more to come.

Q: How did you get into this business?
A: I have always had a passion for helping children. With my business degree and background, I felt like my current position would be the best placement for helping the school district.

Q: What do you like best about your job?
A: I love being challenged. It really helps me put forward my best work.

Q: What advice do you have for those new to school business?
A: I can’t overemphasize the importance of having the ability to problem solve. Daily, you will face obstacles that require quick thinking, and the ability to efficiently find great solutions.

Q: How have you benefited from membership in ALASBO?
A: ALASBO has been an excellent resource for me, especially as a newcomer to school business. I have been able to reach out and find helpful insight from other members time and again.

Q: What do you like to do for fun?
A: I have a large family and we love to be outside as much as possible. You can always find us fishing, hiking, boating, camping, or snow-machining with our four dogs in tow.

Q: If you could visit any place in the world, where would you go and why?
A: I would travel to Iceland because they are the healthiest and happiest people on Earth. They really must have things figured out over there.

Q: Tell us something about yourself that most people don’t know?
A: Most people don’t know that I am an Emergency Medical Technician and volunteer with the local EMS and Fire Department.

Q: What is your proudest accomplishment?
A: My proudest accomplishment is my family. They are hands down the best thing I have ever done with my life.

Welcome to New Board Member
The ALASBO Board has appointed Ashley Bjornson of Matsu School District to fill the term vacated by Alicia Campbell, as of September 1. Welcome, Ashley, and thank you for stepping forward! Ashley’s term will run through December, 2018.

ALASBO members are encouraged to step forward to serve on the Board. Each year, a Nominations Committee of ALASBO Past Presidents selects a slate of nominees to propose at the annual meeting on the last day of the conference. This year’s Nominating Committee Chair is Mark Vink (mvink@bssd.org).

If you’re interested in serving on the Board, contact Mark or fill out a nominations form during the annual conference. You can find the Board member job description on our website: http://www.alasbo.org/policies-and-procedures/
ASBO International Recognition

Congratulations to the following districts that have been recognized by ASBO International for their financial documents!

Certifications of Excellence in Financial Reporting – FY16 Statements
- Anchorage School District – 25 years or more
- Fairbanks North Star Borough School District – 25 years or more
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District – 25 years or more
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

Meritorious Budget Award – FY17 Budget
- Juneau School District
- Kenai Peninsula Borough School District
- Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District

Learn more about the criteria for these ASBO programs here: http://asbointl.org/

ALASBO 2017 Liaison and Mentor Assignments

Liaison/Mentor match-up’s are a two-way street; contact your match today!

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Chart of Accounts Review Committee

The Ad Hoc Committee designated by the Board to review the Chart of Accounts has been meeting regularly during the month of October, under the leadership of Luke Fulp from Matsu School District. The committee includes 13 ALASBO volunteers from districts of various sizes and the Department of Education and Early Development.

The committee’s goal is to have a draft of proposed changes to the state Chart of Accounts for discussion at the annual conference and presentation to the ALASBO Board in December.

We would love to hear from you about what changes you think are needed to the Chart of Accounts! You can join the discussion on Ed Connector (www.edconnector.org). Click on Discussions and type “Chart of Accounts”. If you have difficulty with Ed Connector, contact Lora Jorgensen, lora@edconnector.org.
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Upcoming Events
• ALASBO Annual Conference, Anchorage, AK,
  December 3-6
• ASBO International Executive Leadership
  Forum, Austin, TX, February 8-10