President’s Message

Sofia M. Nirshberg, P.E.
VN ENGINEERS, INC.

I am amazed how quickly the first six months of my WTS CT Valley Chapter Presidency went. I have had the pleasure of working with great Board of Directors, Committee Chairs, and the Past President.

Although we still have a lot of work to do, we have made great strides thus far in 2004. Together we have started to review and update CT Valley Chapter’s by-laws. Lori Long is appointed to initiate this task.

We have also elected a Scholarship Program Chair, Susan Woods, to start implementing the CT WTS Scholarship program which will provide women in the transportation field with opportunities to develop and advance their careers and as a way to encourage and assist students to enter the field of transportation.

WTS CT Valley Chapter has welcomed eight new members in the past six months. We want to increase our membership and continue to grow on a local and national level. The larger we are the more influence we have in making sure the WTS mission and goals are achieved. I also challenge all members to bring in one new member this year. Program incentives will be available for those meeting this challenge – contact me at snirshberg@vnengineers.com for details.

The website for the CT Valley Chapter was launched in June, 2004. Please visit the updated site at www.wtsnational.org today, check out “Chapters” and see what is happening in our local Chapter. With real-time updating, you can get information on Chapter activities at any time. Currently, our Past President, Leslie Haines, has been acting as Website Coordinator for the CT Valley Chapter. We are currently seeking someone to maintain this website at the CT Valley Chapter level. If you are interested, please contact either myself at snirshberg@vnengineers.com or Leslie at lhaines@Dewberry.com.

Finally, we should improve the recognition of our volunteers who make WTS such a great organization, as well as all the companies and agencies that support their employees’ efforts. We could not do it without all of you.

Warm Regards for a nice summer.
“Transportation Drives the Economy” and WTS hops on for the ride – I was fortunate to attend yet one more National Conference, this year in Detroit, Michigan. As far back as I can remember, I believe this will be my sixth (6) consecutive WTS National Conference which have been held from San Diego to New York City and many cities in between. As always, it was a pleasure to meet and greet many WTS Friends, attend some great programs and be involved in a few intriguing sessions. It’s hard to imagine how much is involved in organizing a conference, however, Michigan seemed to do it with professional ease and the overall commitment was quite apparent. Many of the ladies worked around the clock to make everything perfect, and it really did show!

One of the highlights of the Conference was a simple Professional Development Session on “Getting Noticed to Getting the Nod”. The session was fantastic, where three (3) prominent women spoke of their careers, their personal struggles and their sweet successes. The result of this program was a huge amount of pertinent information in a short amount of time. It was apparent that the information they shared could be used in both professional and personal lives. The session was above board for many reasons. First and foremost, it was about women who had succeeded and who had real stories, solid advice, down to earth comments and most of all a really good sense of humor and the know how to use it in many aspects of their presentation. Each speaker was dynamic as they spoke with passion, and their enthusiasm was felt throughout the whole room. They were so passionate about what they talked about. It was emotional and something that could be seen on their faces and truly felt within. Hats off to Michigan for bringing such dynamic and energetic leaders to the Conference, and how lucky was I to have had the opportunity to attend the session.

My travel arrangements back to Connecticut did not allow me to attend the final luncheon. As I raced for my plane, I grabbed the same cab as one of the speakers I had just mentioned – SCORE, I got an additional 40 minutes with one of the best speakers I had heard in a very long time! What a great end to yet another National Conference.

In closing, I can only encourage all members to attend a WTS National Conference. Once you attend, you will become hooked and strive to attend year after year. The next conference is scheduled for May 26 thru 28 2005, this falls on Memorial Day weekend 2005. We will be going to Phoenix, Arizona where they promise sun and fun in the wonderful Cactus State. If I can assist in any way, please don’t hesitate to contact me.

Lori Long, DMJM+HARRIS, Inc.

WTS National Update:

WTS has adopted a new tag line on their current logo – look for it. It’s a great addition to this organization:

WTS
Advancing Women in Transportation

New Section: Suggestion Box
Do you have any suggestions for and comments about our local WTS chapter? Since your feedback is always welcome, please E-mail any comments or any suggestions you may have for future events, speakers, topics, committees, etc., to Brooke Hoberman at bhoberman@rideworks.com. Also, if you would like to volunteer for a specific committee, send that along to her as well. All of your comments will be reviewed by the executive board, all comments are welcome. We look forward to hearing from you!
WTS CT Valley Chapter Annual Luncheon

Mr. Emil Frankel & Sofia Nirshberg

The CT Valley Chapter held our Annual Meeting Luncheon on April 30, 2004 at 500 Blake Street in New Haven. In addition to our Chapter Members, some of the attendees came from the Boston and New York City Chapters of WTS. We were very happy to take Membership Applications from six new Members at the Luncheon for a total of eight new Members this Spring.

Everyone enjoyed networking and socializing before a delicious lunch was served. Following an introduction by our Chapter President, Sofia Nirshberg, P.E. and President of VN Engineers, Sofia introduced our Speaker, Mr. Emil Frankel, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Transportation Policy. Mr. Frankel, who previously served as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Transportation from 1991 to 1995, was on home turf and enjoyed seeing old friends. During his term as Commissioner, he was the Chairman of the Standing Committee on the Environment of the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials and Vice Chairman of the I-95 Corridor Coalition.

Mr. Frankel gave a presentation on “SAFETEA – The Safe, Accountable, Flexible and Efficient” (Reauthorization of the Federal Transportation Funding Bill). He brought the most up-to-date information out of Washington, D.C., confirming the extension of the current T-21 (Transportation Equity Act) Bill to June 30, 2004. This extension will allow current projects to be able to continue to work without disruption to construction, furlough notices to workers, etc.

Unfortunately, the news was not encouraging with the House and Senate (Conferees) trying to work out their differences in the Bill. The Senate had passed the Bill “as is” but the House Bill, with a lesser dollar amount than the Senator version, contains more public works funding than funding for transportation. Mr. Frankel said that Connecticut, New Jersey, and New York “will be lucky to hold their own” with funding appropriations. He confirmed that President Bush has made it clear that he is committed to a six-year re-authorization of the T-21 Bill in the amount of $256 B, noting that we are already months into that six-year period with no agreement on the Bill contents in sight. The Conferees are hesitant to give the President a Bill that he has indicated he would veto. It is Mr. Frankel’s opinion that, if the Conferees did not make a decision within the next week (from April 30, 2004), then there probably would not be a decision made this year (2004), necessitating continued “rolling extensions” of the current Bill. He pointed out that it will become harder and harder to have a clean “rolling extensions” because Congress wants to bring home project dollars to their individual states, extending the “tweaking” process of the Bill.

Mr. Frankel emphasized that the Federal government can no longer rely on the gas tax as the means of funding transportation. Investment avenues need to be expanded, allowing the private investor into highway transportation funding, and there are already anxious investors ready to “come on board”. On the State level, there is the need to find new means of transportation dollars even if it is through toll highways. There are so many issues at stake. Other considerations include the need for reliable and seamless transportation of goods (freight) and improved intermodel systems.

Barbara Smith, DMJM+HARRIS, Inc.
WTS Annual Leadership Training

In January 2003, I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend the WTS Annual Leadership Training Program. This program is offered to the entire WTS Membership. The only requirement is that you submit an application for acceptance into the program. Each year, the applications are reviewed and fourteen candidates are selected to attend. In my opinion, this is one of the greatest benefits of being a WTS Member and not only is this a fabulous program but one that you will continue to benefit from year after year. Once you are selected, you are required to pay for your travel expenses to the training (held in New Jersey), however, the program is offered at no further expense to the member.

My experience with the program was as follows:

The WTS Annual Leadership Training Program was about learning and understanding yourself, looking at others in a new light, hearing about the most recent transportation issues and success stories of women and men in the transportation industry, it was about understanding that everyone runs into the same roadblocks, some just conceal it better then others. This program is about meeting a tight knit group of women and holding them close in your network circle. It involves your heart and soul, your mind and body and everything you are made of for three full days. Once you have completed this program, you leave feeling so full of energy and information that it will take you weeks to try and digest it all. The final result is a renewed sense of accomplishment and a better self-understanding and self-awareness. Now that a considerable amount of time has passed, I continue to work with the techniques I learned during my training and with pride I often take time to reflect back on the experience that taught me to set my goals high and reach them one step at a time. I have learned that both WTS Women and Men want to help women succeed and advance in the transportation industry. I have continued to stay in contact with many fellow leadership alumni and received good and practical feedback. The enlightening experience has only reassured my love for the industry and my desire to continue to forge through and advance in my career. I am confident that there are many opportunities available to me, and I look forward to continuing the learning adventure. I am also anxious to hear how fellow alumni are progressing and eager see them succeed as we remain close in contact.

I encourage all WTS Members to be apart of the spectacular program, it is an opportunity that should be taken advantage of and one that should absolutely NOT be missed.

Lori Long
DMJM&HARRIS

Message from a Past President

What has WTS done for Me

This is a recurring topic for discussion in the WTS Annual Chapter President’s Meeting, which is held during each year’s WTS National Conference. During the President’s meeting, the representative for each Chapter brings to the table any concerns or items which they would like some assistance with. As in the past, many Chapter Presidents face the question “What has WTS done for me?” or “What value is WTS National to me at the local level?”

What are the Benefits of a WTS membership?

My answer to you is this: WTS is what you make of it. Several years ago a close friend urged me to go to a WTS meeting with her. She not only pushed me to join, but to share the responsibility for the Chapter Newsletter. For this I thank her. As a result of her pushing, not only did I become a member, but a very active member. I worked on the Newsletter, assisted with
program planning, and even became Chapter President.

Because I became an ACTIVE member, I had the opportunity to participate more intimately with programs, to meet many members of the local and national transportation community, and learned how to effectively network. I learned how to make an impressive presentation in front of large groups, I learned more about how the industry works, and who the real players are. I’ve improved my meeting facilitation skills.

My company, Parsons Brinckerhoff, supports my involvement in WTS, and makes financial contributions to WTS National, because they see the benefits: employee satisfaction, employee professional development, employee and company networking opportunities, and make promoting women within the industry a top priority. This allows the company an edge – PB’s support of WTS impacts their hiring and retention of qualified professional women and men, as well as give them a fast track to information about upcoming business opportunities.

How can I benefit from WTS National, being involved at the local level?

There are many opportunities for local members to become involved and fully benefit from WTS National and these I offer to you. WTS National has a new upgraded website (this will be our second update and will be available shortly). WTS National offers two (2) programs open to the membership, Leadership Initiative and Leadership Training. These programs have proven to enhance leadership skills for utilization in fast track career paths in this transportation industry. One of the greatest benefits you will receive, should you choose to connect with WTS National, is NETWORKING, “Women helping Women, Women sharing with Women, and Women supporting Women”. Please glance through your membership directory (now on the website), you will be impressed with what you find. I guarantee if you contact anyone in this book/website, identify yourself as a WTS member, you will get their attention and an immediate response to a question, an inquiry regarding a company or any other information you are seeking. If you attend a National Conference, JUST ONE, you will get hooked and you will meet people who will knock your socks off, help you when you need help and let you fly by the seat of their pants (skirt) whatever. Having attended several conferences, this has become a highlight of my year. Each National Conference is different, yet equally as exciting. Each year I meet new people, made new friends, and catch up with old friends and colleagues. I come back refreshed, gaining new insight, additional energy, and full of new ideas – all from networking, attending dynamic workshops and presentations. Nothing will give you greater satisfaction, motivation and at the same time a true feeling of rejuvenation.

WTS has been a key component for me to better understand what it takes to move ahead, define and reach interim career goals, to set and prioritize daily activities, and to creatively network and utilize this information throughout my career and personal life. WTS is what you make of it. WTS can open the doors. You are responsible for knocking. To me, my success in my career is a priority. And my success has been, in part, due to WTS and my active involvement in the organization. Therefore, WTS is a priority for me. Is it worth the time and money? You to can have this same success, get motivated, become an active member and BENEFIT from WTS at the Local and National Levels! You will not regret it!

Kathleen Boyle
Parsons Brinckerhoff
M. Christina Olson ("Stina" to her friends) passed away suddenly on Sunday, July 18, 2004 in North Carolina. Christina was one of the original founding members of the Connecticut Valley Chapter which started in 1991, and was incorporated in January 31, 1992. In 1988, she attended the WTS National Conference and met Grace Crunican from the Washington, D.C. Chapter, who at the time was serving as WTS National President. Their meeting and open exchange of ideas gave Christina a vision to start the Connecticut Valley Chapter. Under her reign, WTS CT Valley published its first newsletter in November 1991, which continues even now. Christina tirelessly served as its President until 1994, but always continued to be an involved in the organization. Prior to her retirement recently to North Carolina, she served for many years as the Director of Transportation Operations for the Greater Hartford Transit District. Christina will be missed by her friends, colleagues, and family members.

Please join the Chapter in welcoming our newest members!

Roxane Mckee Fromson  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Betty Ambler  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Gloria Mills  
Connecticut Association of  
Community Transportation (CACT)

Shanon LaJeunesse  
Valley Transit District

Claudia Kersten  
Connecticut Department of Transportation

Maureen Strong  
Middletown Transit District

From the editor,

I have been a member of the WTS CT Valley Chapter for over a year now and I am excited and honored to hold the position as WTS CT Valley Newsletter Editor. Since my acceptance of the position, I have become more involved with the organization and have gained valuable experience and met many women in the transportation industry. WTS is indeed an outstanding professional organization and I am proud to be apart of its many activities and to network with many fine leaders.

As I am still a little green in compiling the newsletter I request your patients but moreover, your input which will assist me in compiling a newsletter that the members have had input in. In addition, please feel free to submit articles, information or ideas that you would like published in this quarterly letter. Finally if you or a member you know have received a promotion or have news you would like to share, this information can also be included. You can reach me at choor@hwlochner.com. We look forward to hearing from you.

Chee Yeun Hoor  
Civil Engineer  
H. W. Lochner, Inc.
Meet the Executive Board and some of the Committee Members
Left to right, Brooke Hoberman, Lisa Rivers, Roberta Yegidis, Barbara Smith, Sofia Nirshbeg, Lori Long, Claudia Kersten and Kim DeMatto

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Bylaw Committee Chair
Newsletter Committee Co-Chair
Lori Long
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WTS CT Valley Chapter
Upcoming Programs and Events

Annual Summer Outing - Dinner on The Essex Steam Train

August 6, 2004 (7:00 PM), Dinner aboard the Essex Steam Train. The train is scheduled to leave the Station at 7:30 PM. For the 2-1/4 hours you will travel through beautiful Connecticut experiencing spectacular views from the dining car while dinner is served and a cash bar is available. It may not be too late to come along. With 45 seats in the dining car, there may be seats available should you decide to join us. Please contact Barbara Smith at Barbara.Smith@dmjmharris.com to make your reservation.

September Speaker Program

September 28, 2004, Dinner speaker/program featuring Mr. Art Gruhn, Chief Engineer of the Connecticut Department of Transportation, and Mr. Franco Balassone, Resident Engineer of DMJM+HARRIS, Inc. will make a spectacular pictorial presentation on the infamous “Bridgeport I-95, Howard Avenue Bridge Fire”, both from the initial emergency stage to the current recovery process. The program will focus on details directly following the time the bridge was extinguished to present. Social hour will precede the program and the speakers will be available to answer any questions you might have during or following their presentation. There will be plenty of seating room and we encourage attendance. Become a NEW WTS Member and your dinner is free. Join during this program, and you receive the first three (3) months at no additional charge. Details will be available at the door. Your reservations will be honored by phone, no shows will be billed.

October Joint Speaker Program with ITE (Institute of Transportation Engineers)

Tentative plans include a speaker from the CT Transportation Strategy Board.

Holiday Social - December

December 2004, this is the time of year to gather with colleagues, associates and friends of WTS for Holiday cheer. We are still working on the details for this year’s social. The format will remain the same as years past: your admission to the social will be a donation to a local charity. We hope you will stop by and join us even if during this busy time of year you may have other engagements.

Annual February Legislative Breakfast
Details to follow.

MEMBERS: E-mail Addresses Needed

E-mail is quicker and more economical than snail mail (US Mail), we’re trying to obtain E-mail addresses for all WTS CT Valley members. Please send an email to Brooke at bhoberman@rideworks.com with your E-mail address and name so we may update our database.