

Newsletter

VOLUME 2020, NUMBER 2

OCTOBER 2019

President's Message

By: Priscilla Suggs



Greetings Austin AGA,

As of September 23rd, autumn has officially fallen upon us! If the coming of crisp, fresh air and orange and yellow leaves isn't exciting enough, I'd like to introduce our October 10th luncheon speaker, James Thomas, who will be speaking on *Chasing Greatness!* Join the Austin AGA to hear Texas Rangers Lieutenant, James Thomas, discuss nearly two

hundred years of history surrounding the Texas Rangers. Mr. Thomas will provide a glimpse into his journey and how chasing something greater than himself has led to his present success; he hopes his story may help others do the same personally and professionally.

October Words for Thought:

"Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do."

-- Steve Jobs

Welcome New AGA Members!

I'd like to welcome new members Mamie L. Steverson and Arnold K. K. Robinson, both governmental accountant members. Be on the lookout to welcome our new members during the October luncheon!

Board Participation

As always, we are looking for additional participation on the board and committees. Please reach out to any of our committee members if you would like to get involved or contact priscilla.suggs@hhsc.state.tx.us or Kieran.Coe@CohnReznick.com directly. Thank you in advance for your continued support of the chapter. See you all this Fall!

Your President,

Priscilla Suggs

In this issue:

- President's Message
- Highlights from the September luncheon
- AGA Austin Chapter 2019 PDT awards
- September Chapter Executive Committee Meeting Minutes
- Member Spotlight: Meet Patty Hamm

Upcoming trainings, meetings & events:

October 10, 2019	CPE Luncheon - TBD 1 CPE
October 23, 2019	Webinar – Internal Control 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
November 20, 2019	Webinar – Ethics 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
December 11, 2019	Webinar – Internal Control 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
December 18, 2019	Webinar – Professional Development 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
January 8, 2020	Webinar – Uniform Guidance 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
February 5, 2020	Webinar – GASB Update 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)
March 4, 2020	Webinar – Improper Payments 2 CPEs (www.agacgfm.com)

Membership News

By: Aria Negahban

The Chapter reported 113 active members as of October, including 4 new members who joined over the last month:

- Ms. Rebecca Lyssy
- Mr. Arnold K. Robinson
- Ms. Mamie L. Steverson
- Ms. Jacqueline D. Tate

All of us here at the Austin Chapter extend a warm welcome, and look forward to meeting everyone at the next event.

We would also like to acknowledge the following member who is celebrating an AGA membership milestone in October:

20 Years:

- Mr. John M. Amidon



Benefits of Becoming an AGA Member

AGA is the only association supporting 15,000 professionals working in federal, state and local governments as well as the private, nonprofit and academic sectors. AGA membership gives you the tools and support you need to make your mark on the profession.

As an AGA member, you gain access to a host of benefits designed to support your career growth and success. Key benefits include:

- Education, leadership and networking opportunities through more than 100 AGA Chapters
- Four annual national training events with member rates that save you more than \$150 per event
- Complimentary members-only webinars
- Advocacy: AGA provides valuable input to standards-setting bodies and policy-makers on behalf of the government financial management profession
- Subscription to the quarterly *Journal of Government Financial Management*
- Discount on CGFM renewal fees

DID YOU KNOW?

Student membership is available to any individual enrolled as a full-time student at an accredited higher education institution AND not gainfully employed.

Sign up to be a member at

Government - \$100/year

Private Sector - \$160/year

Young Professional - \$45/ year

Student – FREE Electronic Membership!

Retired—\$35/year

Lifetime—Free

October CPE Luncheon — “Chasing Greatness”

By: LaTosha Goard

Meet Lieutenant James Thomas on October 10, 2019

The AGA Austin Chapter will host its October 2019 luncheon on October 10, 2019 at Pappadeaux Seafood Kitchen located at 11617 Research Boulevard, Austin, TX. Come meet Lieutenant James Thomas present ‘Chasing Greatness.’



James Thomas began his career with the Texas Department of Public Safety (DPS) in 2001, attending the twenty-six week training academy held in Austin, Texas. After graduating the academy in March 2002, he spent the next 9 ½ years in the Texas Highway Patrol. In April 2011, he joined the Texas Ranger Company “A” Special Response Team (SRT), a specialized team comprised of a cross section of officers from the Texas Highway Patrol, Criminal Investigations Division, and the Texas Rangers. SRT members are trained to conduct high risk warrant service and provide initial response to critical incidents. In October 2011, Thomas promoted to special agent with the DPS Criminal Investigations Division in Houston, where he served in the gang division. In April 2013, he was appointed as a Special Deputy United States Marshal with the United States Marshals Service Gulf Coast Violent Offenders and Fugitive Task Force. In May 2015, Thomas was promoted to Texas Ranger in El Paso, serving in Company “E”. He currently serves as a lieutenant in the Texas Rangers and is stationed at the Company “F” headquarters in Waco. James holds a doctoral degree in Education Leadership from Lamar University in Beaumont, Texas. He earned a Master’s degree in Behavioral Science from the University of Houston – Clear Lake. He also received a Bachelor’s degree in Criminal Justice from Lamar University. His educational interests are related to studying the environmental factors impacting adolescent African American males. Thomas has held a basic TCOLE instructor license since 2004 and is a Master Peace Officer.

Sign up at:

<https://www.agaustin.org/cpe-events/event2.html>

Member - \$29 | Nonmember - \$34

<i>October 2019</i>						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

Past Events

By: Bhakti Patel
Photo Credit: Sharita Jefferson



Ed Kelly presenting 'The Texas CDO Journey'

We kicked off the 2020 chapter year with a presentation from Ed Kelly, Chief Data Officer of Texas for the Department of Information Resources (DIR) on the Texas CDO Journey - Looking Back, Looking Forward. Ed begin his presentation with an overview of DIR's four primary services: Policy and Planning, Shared Technology Services, Bulk Purchasing, and Cooperative Contracts. He went on to discuss eligible DIR customers, which include 6,200+ local governments, 183 Texas State Agencies and Institutions of Higher Education and other organizations such as private schools, volunteer fire departments and even public entities outside of Texas. The Data Program was established in 2015 with House Bill 1912 in order to improve the control and security of information collected, promote the sharing of information between state agencies, reduce information collection costs, develop and implement best practices, among other initiatives. Ed wrapped up his presentation with a discussion of some of the challenges of the program and its future.

"You have to be patient and persistent"



Vanessa Creador, Michelle Roland, Maria Berke



On behalf of the AGA, I'd like to thank Ed for taking time out of his busy schedule to educate the membership on these amazing programs at the DIR. And thanks for the I ♥ Data pins, Ed!!

\$2 billion of cooperative contracts run through the Department of Information Resources every year!



Patti Roano and Salvador Sanchez

"You can't do data analytics without doing data management"



Rob Stiles, Michelle Walker, John Rivers



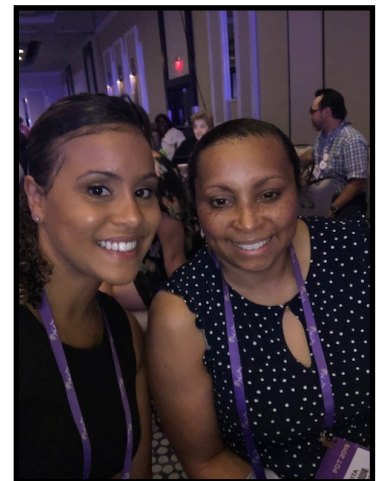
Priscilla Suggs, Ed Kelly, Aria Negahban, Eddie Chan

2019 PDT- New Orleans

The AGA Austin Chapter definitely represented at the 2019 Professional Development Conference held in New Orleans, LA from July 21—24, 2019. Priscilla Suggs, Kieran Coe and Sharita Jefferson all made their way down to NOLA for 4 days of informational training, amazing events and networking with peers around the country and, of course, that delicious Cajun cuisine!

Not only did our three CEC and committee members get to enjoy so much that NOLA has to offer, they were fortunate enough to accept two awards presented to the Austin Chapter for their efforts in 2019.

Priscilla Suggs accepted award for Chapter Newsletter and Kieran Coe accepted the Chapter Bronze Award. Congratulations Austin Chapter!



Community Service

By: Bhakti Patel

Information obtained from <https://www.givepulse.com>

Tutoring at UT Elementary School



Monday, October 7th, 2019 from 3:45pm - 4:45pm (CT)



- You will be working with the Neighborhood Longhorns Program to provide tutoring for elementary school students in a variety of subjects.

Please let the front office know that you are with the Neighborhood Longhorns Program and tutoring with Jennifer Montoya.

- Bring your driver's license or another form of identification to present at the front office of the school so that you may be allowed in.
- If you cannot attend the date you signed up for, please inform the event organizer as soon as possible

Multiple dates are available.

Location: 2200 East Sixth Street, Austin, TX 78702

NWACA-Third-Saturday-Park-Clean-Up



Saturday, October 19th, 2019 from 9:00am to 12:00pm (CT)



Clean up the park and trails at Bull Creek District Park. Join us at the parking lot at 6701 Lakewood Dr, Austin, TX 78731.

Location: 6701 Lakewood Dr, Austin, TX 78731

Sustainability Spirit Squad Football v Kansas



Saturday, October 19th, 2019 from 6:00pm to 10:00pm (CT)



Volunteers needed to help monitor recycling and compost bins making sure people are disposing their items correctly. Responsibilities include educating fans about recycling and composting, monitoring recycling and compost bins and sorting through trash/ recyclables when needed.

Volunteers will be given free T-shirts. This is a wonderful opportunity to earn service hours, support the "Bleed Orange, Live Green" initiative and support your team/university! With your help we can achieve our zero waste goal!

Location: Austin, TX 78712

26th Austin Film Festival and Conference



Wednesday, October 23rd, 2019 thru Friday November 1st, 2019 at 3:00pm (CT)



This October Austin Film Festival is looking for dedicated and enthusiastic volunteers to help put on the 26th Austin Film Festival. October 24th through October 31st, Austin Film Festival will envelop downtown Austin for 8 days of films and 4 days of the nation's largest writers' conference!

Volunteers will be performing general event work (line management, panel assistance, etc.) as well as specialized labor (transportation, site, projection, theater management).

Register at <https://austinfilmfestival.com/about/get-involved/volunteer/> to get on board!

Location: Austin, TX 78702

Birthday enthusiasts needed!!



Wednesday, October 23rd, 2019 from
7:00pm to 8:30pm (CT)



THE BIRTHDAY PARTY PROJECT hosts super fun, themed birthday parties for the children living at the Salvation Army's Downtown Shelter every month! They provide everything needed (from decorations to activities to cupcakes and more!) but we need birthday enthusiasts (that's our

funny name for volunteers) to really bring each party to life!! Depending on the theme each month (think DJ dance parties and petting zoos!) you'll get to play games with the kids, do crafts, sing Happy Birthday and give out lots of hugs and high-fives!! **PLEASE NOTE: You MUST register with The Birthday Party Project and have your background check performed in order to gain entry to the party.** Click on link below to view our Austin calendar and to sign up for the fun! Or email for more information

Location: Austin, TX 78701

Austin Senior Games Golf Event



Friday, November 1st, 2019 from 8:00am to
5:00pm (CT)



The Austin Parks and Recreation Department will need six great volunteers to help run the Golf event. The volunteers will help with various tasks assigned by the lead official including set-up and take-down.

Please dress according to the event/weather and bring lots of water to stay hydrated. We will not be providing food, so you can bring lunch if desired.

Location: Venue will take place at Morris William Golf Course, 3851 Manor Rd, Austin, TX 78723



Are you involved in a charitable organization? Have you had an amazing volunteer experience? Tell us about it!! Email us at communications@agaustin.org

Volunteers Needed for Fall Fundraiser - Beer, Wine, Swine & More for Manos de Cristo



Thursday, November 7th, 2019 from
11:00am to 3:00pm (CT)



Manos de Cristo is seeking volunteers for our upcoming fall fundraiser, Beer, Wine, Swine & More!

On November 7th, over 200 of Manos' most generous supporters and community members will join us to raise funds and awareness for Manos de Cristo's Dental Center, Adult Education Classes, and

Basic Needs Programs. The evening will consist of beer and wine tastings, delicious BBQ from RQ SmokeMasters, silent auction, live karaoke, and much more!

We ask volunteers to stay for the whole event and participate in clean up/tear down afterwards. Volunteer shifts are 1 PM – 5 PM for Set-Up Volunteers and 5:30 PM – 11:30 PM for Event Volunteers. Volunteers will have short breaks throughout the night, snacks and beverages will be provided. Dress code is Austin business casual.

We need help with the following volunteer opportunities:

- Set-Up (1 PM – 5 PM)
- Check-In/Check-Out
- Food Service
- Beverage Service (TABC Certified ONLY)
- Wine Pull Attendant
- Raffle Attendant
- Silent Auction Attendant

If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lily Lombardi at llombardi@manosdecristo.org or 512-628-4202. If you are interested in group volunteer opportunities, please include the number of people in your group and what you would like to help with.

For additional event details and information, check out our website at www.manosdecristo.org/beerwineswine.

Location: 4911 Harmon Ave., Austin, TX 78751

Chapter Executive Committee Minutes

By: Elba Morales

September 19th, 2019 | 12:00 pm

Priscilla Suggs called the meeting to order. CEC Members present: David Vasquez, Kieran Coe, Latosha Goard, Priscilla Suggs, Eddie Chan, Patti Roano, Bhakti Patel, Aria Negahban, Sharita Jefferson & Elba Morales

Debrief of September Luncheon

- Speakers for the October Luncheon will be confirmed
- Speakers for the May will also be confirmed

Chapter Membership Recruitment – brainstorm action items

- National office has resources – employer support—to share with our employers
- Find out which agencies are paying for the lunches
- Members will continue to brainstorm the luncheon venue
- A letter for companies to explore partnerships with AGA will be drafted

Networking Event Update- Exploring partnerships

- Ensure that a Memorandum of Understanding will be executed this year

Chapter Goals/ Action Items

- Everyone to send chapter points for your role to Bhakti
- Share the attached PDF and use language to encourage agency and industry partners to allow staff to participate in AGA
- Eddie to update website with attached speaker listing. October speaker will be confirmed by October 1 at the latest.
- Sharita to email Eddie prior year historian reports to post on the Chapter website
- Aria to identify networking event date and obtain board agreement on date selected; reach out to contacts to identify partners.
- Elba to work on listing of industry contacts to share luncheon information with
- Aria/Elba to share information on LinkedIn to increase our chapter exposure
- Priscilla to create sponsorship draft letter
- Kieran/Patti to update survey questions and partner with Patti to issue survey to membership

Adjournment –The meeting adjourned at 1:00 PM.

The next meeting is to be on Thursday, October 24, 2019 via conference line at 12 p.m. CST.

Respectfully submitted,

Elba Morales

Elba Morales
AGA Austin Secretary

Member Spotlight

By: Bhakti Patel

Meet Patty Hamm



If you have attended any of the AGA monthly luncheons over the past several years, then chances are that you have seen Patty! Patty has been a faithful AGA member since 1992. She is in attendance at almost every Austin AGA event as well as the PDT each year.

So we think it's due time everyone gets to know Patty a little better!

Part of a rare breed of native 'Austinites,' Patty graduated from the University of Texas (go Longhorns!) with an accounting degree and is certified as a CPA. After college, she worked in Internal Audit at UT and later, as a bank auditor. After auditing for several years, Patty served as Controller for a private company that owned all of the central Texas Taco Bells. Her final landing place took her full circle back to UT. She accepted a position as the Accounting Manager for Applied Research Laboratories (ARL) at the Pickle Research Campus in north Austin in 1991. Since 2006, Patty has been the Assistant Director for Administrative Services, managing several support groups facilitating ARL's research efforts. ARL is a fascinating place – performing research for the federal government, predominately the Navy, and many other agencies. In addition to enjoying work, Patty loves traveling and spending time with her family and friends!

Thank you for all your support of the AGA Austin Chapter Patty!



Treasurer's Report

By: David Vasquez

As of September 30, 2019

Beginning Bank Balance	9/1/2019	\$3,174.83
<i>Funds Received:</i>		
9/4/19 - 9/17/19	Square Deposits - September Luncheon	\$625.16
9/18/2019	ACH - Employee Retirement System Payment (May 2019 Luncheon Payment)	\$184.00
9/20/2019	ACH - ERS (September 2019 Luncheon Payment)	\$213.00
9/1/2019	Dividend through 9/1/2019	\$0.28
Total Funds Received		\$1,022.44
Funds Available		\$4,197.27
<i>Funds Expended:</i>		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Check No./Credit</i>	
9/11/2019	Bank Card	Web Hosting Services - Aplus \$119.27
9/13/2019	Bank Card	September Lunch- \$798.66
9/20/2019	Bank Card	Web Hosting Services - Aplus Upgrade for Secured Portal \$37.30
Total Funds Expended		\$955.23
Ending Bank Balance	9/30/2019	\$3,242.04
Check Register Reconciliation:		
Ending Bank Balance	9/30/2019	\$3,242.04
<i>Outstanding Checks:</i>		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Check No.</i>	<i>Description</i>
Total Outstanding Checks		\$0.00
<i>Outstanding Deposits:</i>		
<i>Date</i>	<i>Description</i>	
Total Outstanding Deposits		\$0.00
Adjusted Ending Bank Balance	9/30/2019	\$3,242.04
Total Chapter Funds Available Per Check Register	9/30/2019	\$3,242.04
<i>Cash On Hand:</i>		
	CU Min Savings Balance	\$5.00
	Luncheon Bank	\$40.00

Industry News

Submitted by: Debi Weyer

State Pension Reform – Finding a Workable Solution

One of the largest budgetary issues that states across the country are dealing with is managing state pensions; namely in ensuring the longtime viability of these plans and the states' ability to meet all obligations. It is such a pervasive issue that in the past decade, 48 states—including Connecticut—have passed some form of state pension reform, according to published reports.

The truth is these pension plans, as they were created decades ago, are largely unworkable today. When they were created, such as here in Connecticut, it was simply easier on the state budget to make promises for later down the road than to reward employees at that time. But now, of course, we've reached that point "down the road," and once these liabilities are measured under requirements of the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB), they are no longer affordable in their current form.

Those same published reports indicate that the majority of states that have engaged in some level of pension reform have modified their existing defined benefit (DB) pension plans, which provide recipients with steady monthly income for life. In most of these cases, plans have been altered for new hires to include things such as higher retirement ages, increased employee contributions and Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) reductions for retirees and existing workers. These reports indicate that no states have yet shifted to a defined contribution (DC) plan (such as a 401(k)) since 2005, though several states have adopted a hybrid type of retirement arrangement that combines reduced DB pension benefits with a mandatory DC plan.

This is progress, but more needs to be done. And the single biggest issue standing in the way of

true pension reform involves working collaboratively with organized labor on an agreement. Without support of unions, true pension reform is unlikely to work.

Of the 48 states that engaged in some level of pension reform, roughly half of them faced legal challenges from unions, and that fact alone speaks directly to the problem. The success of the lawsuits have varied state to state—some have been upheld, others have been rejected and no steady pattern as to how courts will handle them has emerged.

So rather than continue on the path of waiting for court-by-court decisions, a better approach could be to have a meaningful dialogue with union leaders to communicate that the current practice is unsustainable. Actions must be taken to preserve future benefits and address the structural issues, and if they are taken collaboratively with labor involvement, the chances of success are all the better. The issues that need to be addressed are:

- Increasing employee contributions;
- Creating a hybrid pension plan for new employees;
- Suspending/minimizing COLA adjustments; and,
- Raising vesting periods.

If done correctly, the benefits of such reform efforts could prove to be myriad. Taxpayers could see significant savings, retirees will see their long-term benefits preserved, and both current and future employees will have peace of mind in knowing their pension benefits are protected.

State pensions were created with the best intentions, but it happened long enough ago to outlive intended effectiveness. This is why a new approach is needed, in strict compliance with GASB, to ensure these problems don't linger for another generation. And, to ensure people who banked on these benefits all those years ago can still count on them.

By: Vanessa Rossitto, CPA



AGA Members: Read the latest copy of the Journal of Accountancy at agacgm.org



Just for Fun...



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AGA Austin Chapter

2019-2020 Officers and Committee Chairs

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Vacant

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Interested in joining the Chapter Executive Committee? Email us at:


communications @agaaustin.org

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