



# Northwest Outlook



hfma™ washington / alaska chapter  
healthcare financial management association

November - December



2009



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Opinions expressed in articles or features are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the view of the Washington/Alaska Chapter, the Healthcare Financial Management Association, or the Editor. The Editor reserves the right to edit material and accept or reject contributions whether solicited or not. All correspondence is assumed to be a release for publication unless otherwise indicated.

### Publication Objective

The NW Outlook is the official publication of the Washington/Alaska Chapter Healthcare Financial Management Association. Our objective is to provide members with information regarding Chapter and national activities, with current and useful news of both national and local significance to healthcare finance professionals and to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and information.

## President's Message

by Grant Baumgartner, President



### A New Decade of Healthcare

**A**s I write this note in mid-December, we are drawing to a close of the first decade in the twenty-first century and on

the precipice of possibly the biggest regulatory changes to our industry since the beginning of the Medicare and Medicaid programs over forty years ago. What will the New Year bring? More people with health insurance? New insurance options? Insurance rate regulation? Reimbursement cuts? Higher taxes? Physician integration? Electronic Health Records? New and better HFMA?

With or without significant regulatory changes driven by Congress, change is inevitable. It is our job as healthcare financial professionals to assess the potential impact of changes and deliver the message within and outside of our

organizations. To be **the** indispensable resource for healthcare finance, it is our job as an HFMA Chapter to provide a forum to discuss and share ideas on the implications of healthcare reform or other changes, so we may formulate our own conclusions and educate others within our organizations and communities.

Our HFMA Chapter has long provided periodic face-to-face forums to discuss and learn about healthcare financial management issues. Now, it is time to create the ability for our Chapter

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### Contributing Writers

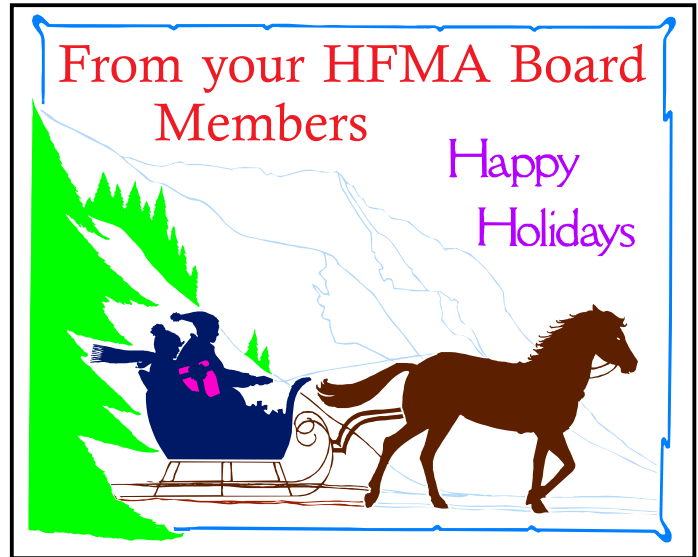
Grant Baumgartner  
Jim Heilsberg  
Lori Laubach  
Cathy LeMay  
David Morgan  
Schawn Pedersen  
Catherine Wakefield

## THANK YOU!!!

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members to engage in dialogue on issues on a real-time basis, 24-7 if they wish! Our new Chapter web site, to be launched in the next couple of months, will provide members with the ability to exchange ideas and information on virtually any topic they wish through members-only chat rooms. When someone asks you, "what's the impact to our organization of health insurance rating based on age of no more than 2:1?", or "what's the impact of Hospital Value-Based Purchasing?" If you don't know, you can check with Chapter members on our website and potentially receive several points of view within minutes! This new feature to Chapter members will help us further our vision of being the indispensable resource for healthcare finance. I think this new tool will be invaluable to you as you move into the next decade of healthcare.

What will the New Year bring? A myriad of



healthcare industry changes I'm sure, but also greater opportunities to interact with and be supported by your fellow Chapter members. Here's to a new decade of healthcare! ■



# 2010 HFMA Region 11 Symposium

by Jim Heilsberg

The 2010 Region 11 Symposium will provide attendees with an outstanding educational experience of policies and trends affecting major segments of the healthcare industry. This year is especially challenging with the many changes that are being proposed in our industry.



David Feherty

Our opening keynote speaker will be David Feherty, a PGA Tour professional golfer who is a bestselling author, current Golf Magazine columnist and broadcaster. David will speak about his career, work at CBS Sports, and other funny stories

including his own personal experiences with healthcare.

Monday morning will continue with Dr. David Brailer from Health Evolution Partners. He will speak on the importance of providing services, technologies, and information solutions that improve the delivery, organization, and financing of health care.



Dr. David Brailer



Susan Dentzer

On Tuesday morning, Susan Dentzer, an on-air correspondent with "The News Hour" with Jim Lehrer on the Public Broadcasting Service, will speak on healthcare reform under the new Administration and Congress and the potential impact on hospitals and health systems.

Wednesday morning will begin with Janet Rush. Ms. Rush is an energetic entertainer, educator and motivational speaker. Her session is entitled "Even Eagles Need a Push to Soar in Changing Times." She will talk about how to stimulate innovation, change and growth in order to lead your organization to success.



Janet Rush



Ross Shafer

In Wednesday morning's closing session we will hear from Ross Shafer, comedian and television host turned motivational and customer service speaker/trainer. Ross' presentation, "Are you Relevant?" will discuss how smart organizations can thrive in any economy. The balance of the conference will consist.

The balance of the conference will consist of 25 different breakout sessions focusing on intermediate and advanced topics designed to provide every attendee with valuable proven techniques on current issues and developments from healthcare professionals from around the country. The areas of specialty covered in the breakouts are: Finance, Revenue Cycle, Legislative and Compliance, Leadership, Managed Care, and this year a new track developed especially for Critical Access Hospitals.

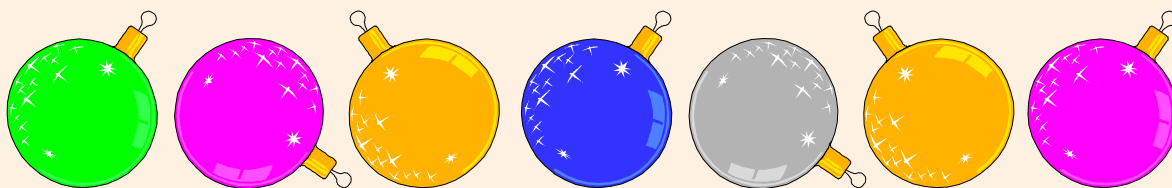
Be sure to mark your calendar now to attend starting Sunday, January 24<sup>th</sup>, 2010, or go to [www.HFMARegion11Symposium.org](http://www.HFMARegion11Symposium.org) for more details.

Feel free to contact

Jim Heilsberg @ [heilsbj@whmc.org](mailto:heilsbj@whmc.org)

or

Rik Lewis @ [Richard.lewis@mossadams.com](mailto:Richard.lewis@mossadams.com) if you have any questions. ■





# SEASON'S GREETINGS

## & THANKS TO OUR CORPORATE SPONSORS



## CORPORATE SPONSORS

The Chapter would like to thank  
the following companies  
for 2009 - 2010 sponsorships:

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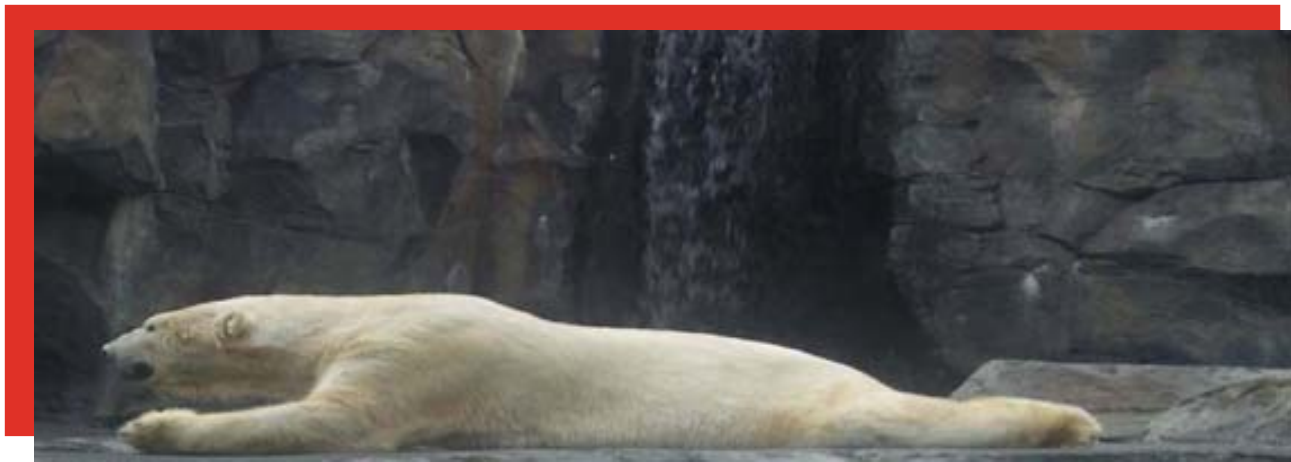


# Alaska Healthcare Watch



This column is intended to share and inform the Chapter Members about Alaska healthcare financial news

by David Morgan,  
Director of Reimbursement  
Southcentral Foundation



As Alaskans joyfully move into the holiday season, a lingering question, not sugar-plums, dance in their heads. Will the Senate pass the Health Bill? Senator Murkowski will not support the 2200 page Senate version. She believes the bill will create more problems than good, jeopardize seniors, increase taxes, and not reform the system. Senator Begich is more optimistic about the same bill and will support it.

So will Santa be delivering a bill before Christmas? We cannot predict the future but we do expect the Congress to pass a bill before the end of the year. Mean while in Alaska.....

The Alaskan legislative reaction to the Health bills under consideration by Congress has Representative Mike Kelly intending to introduce the Health Care Freedoms Act. The Act "would

give the people of Alaska the opportunity to vote on a change to the Constitution. It would amend the constitution to: prohibit the passage of laws that would force any person or employer to participate in a particular health care system or plan".

Three pieces of legislation relating to health care workforce issues in the state were not acted on in the last session. All three bills could have an impact on improving the health care workforce shortage in Alaska. SB 18 Postsecondary Medical and other Education Programs, SB 139 Incentives for Certain Medical Providers and HB 58 Educational Loan Repayment Programs will be introduced in this session in January 2010.

During the upcoming legislative session we should continue to monitor the progress of these bills.

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## Alaska Health Care Commission Draft Strategic Plan Released:

The Alaska Health Care Commission released their strategic plan for public comment. The report addresses accessibility and healthcare quality in Alaska. The Alaska Health Care Commission seeks public input on its five-year strategic plan for improving Alaska's healthcare delivery system.

The commission was created in December 2008 to develop a statewide plan for addressing the quality and availability of healthcare. The commission's draft of the report details everything from cost, role of the consumer and workforce development in the Alaskan healthcare system.



The draft report is posted online at <http://hss.state.ak.us/healthcommission/>.

## Medicaid Update:

The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services had public workshops on proposed regulation changes in Title 7 AAC 43 Medical Assistance – Home and Community-Based Waiver Services, Rate, and personal Care Services. The regulations were circulated for the public workshops. They were not noticed for adoption. The basic concept is to develop a state wide cost based rates for these services. I attended this workshops and a lot of work needs to be done by the Medicaid State Review.

I have enjoyed my two years brining you news from Alaska on Healthcare reimbursement and issues. But, sadly this is my last Column, I have been appointed to the Municipality of Anchorage Health and Human Services Commission, and will no longer have the time needed to devote to this newsletter.

From all of us in Alaska – may this Holiday Season bring you one very special moment that outshines all the rest.



## New Members

The Washington/Alaska Chapter is pleased to announce the following new members:



**Larion Barsukoff**  
Providence Health &  
Services Alaska

**Suzan Bast**

**Dendra Chavez**  
Yukon-Kuskokwim  
Health Corp.

**Catherine Dimon**  
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Medical Pay Solutions

**Patty Mason**  
Legacy Health System

**William Warner**  
Chugachmiut



# Get Connected!

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## Electronic Health Records: What Are the Risks?

By *Lori Laubach* | *Partner, Health Care Consulting Group*

Electronic health records (EHRs) offer many benefits, including greater hospital efficiency, and they have significant momentum in the public sector today, thanks in part to the \$18.9 billion in stimulus monies that have been earmarked for the implementation of EHRs.

But digital medical data present potential risks that must be addressed up front, before unintended consequences set in and real problems occur.

Right now one of the main concerns when it comes to EHRs is authorship integrity risk. Who's to say that someone hasn't borrowed record entries from another source or author? Or that someone isn't representing or displaying the past as current documentation? Or that someone isn't misrepresenting or inflating the nature and intensity of services provided?

There's also a risk related to auditing integrity. Inadequate auditing functions make it impossible to detect when an EHR entry was modified or borrowed from another source and misrepresented as an original entry by an authorized user.

Technology is a positive, but when we're dealing with EHRs, we must be mindful of the risk of documentation integrity, which becomes a reality when there's automated insertion of clinical data and visit documentation using templates or similar tools that have predetermined documentation components with uncontrolled and uncertain clinical relevance.

Automated coding by the EHR can lead to a regulatory compliance risk as well if the coding protocols implemented do not meet regulatory guidance or are misleading. Patient identification and demographic data risks are an issue too. The potential problem here is that automated demographic or registration entries

can generate erroneous patient or insurance information.

As health care consultants, our job is to anticipate EHR problems like these and solve them as quickly as possible in order to harness technology's vast potential and improve the quality of health care in our communities. ■

## Electronic Health Records: Additional Issues

By *Schawn Pedersen* | *CPC, CEMC, Manager, Health Care Consulting Group*

There are a number of additional issues that require attention when you're deploying EHR systems. This technology has the potential to create enormous and sweeping cost-saving efficiencies, but it also has the ability to wreak havoc on health care entities in the implementation phase.

The first areas to focus on are the cut-and-paste and copy-and-paste functions. When blocks of text or complete notes from another physician encounter are pasted into those for a current encounter, the credibility of the document is frequently compromised.

Another risk area is the use of templates. In many cases there's a lack of sufficient documentation to support an encounter. Many templates are also developed to chart by exception. In other words, the template is completed, usually by clicking on check boxes, only for any abnormal findings.

Some EHR systems may not accurately match the medical necessity of the encounter with the level of service to be billed. There's also risk that providers will be coached to add documentation to meet a specific level of service.

The amendment process with EHRs is especially vexing. It's hard, for instance, to know what the EHR looked like at the time the physician started

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making changes. And too often EHR technology doesn't allow physicians to understand why other practitioners may have made certain clinical decisions.

There's also a concern with abbreviation transfers from paper records to EHRs, the problem list needs to be updated on a timely basis, and the code tables within an EHR need to be maintained and updated.

Each of these small but significant issues must be identified and addressed if we're to take full advantage of EHRs' cost savings and efficiencies. ■

## Value Added Services

by Catherine Wakefield | MultiCare Health System

One of the many things I like about HFMA is the value added nature of the organization. Networking, educational offerings, and vendor services are three key elements.

### Networking

I have been Committee A (Compliance and Health Policy) chair/co-chair for several years now. In the course of putting together sessions for the quarterly meetings, I have had the opportunity to work with Carla DewBerry of Garvey Shubert Barer (co-chair for many years). She has always impressed me as having one of the larger professional networks of anyone I know. When we need a legal or compliance speaker, Carla can always name at least three off the top of her head. If she thinks, she comes up with more. When she asks someone to speak, they do it for her.

I have met many excellent professionals through my HFMA committee work. I have called, consulted with, given references for, and hired many of them to help me add value to my organization. Involvement with HFMA is rewarding just from the people aspect. The WA/AK chapter is friendly, inclusive, focused on the provision of quality, compliant, cost effective

services. Everyone is supportive.

### Education

I have attended many educational offerings over the years that have resulted in my going back to my organization and offering suggestions for process improvement, financial gain, complaint processes, and changes to be addressed. Our quarterly meetings cover numerous topical areas as broken down by our committee structure. Committee A focuses on Compliance and Health Policy; Committee B is responsible for the Revenue Cycle (always a big draw); Committee C gets our keynote speakers; Committee D develops programs for Finance and Information Systems; Committee E supports Critical Access and Rural Hospitals; and Committee F puts together Alaska programs.

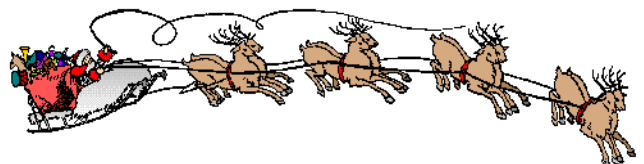
At the HFMA Annual National Institute (ANI), held this last year in Seattle, we had a broad range of topics from nationally known speakers. RAC education was especially timely and valuable.

### Vendor Services

The WA/AK chapter is blessed with the support of many local, regional and national vendors. Our chapter sponsorship has been extraordinary. We are thankful for the sponsorship and the services provided by our vendors.

At ANI this year, I had the opportunity to meet new vendors. I came back from the event with a list of products and services that could help my organization. From that list, we have now contracted with two and are in process to reap benefits from them. These are services I had not known about. The ones we are currently working with are Accounts Payable recoveries—credits, returns, quantity billings, pricing comparisons. The contracts are on a contingency basis. We only get benefit. We will also learn new and better processes so we can manage this on a go forward basis. HFMA is value added.

Meet people, get involved, learn stuff and identify opportunities to improve your organization. It doesn't get much better than this. ■





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# A Moment of Silence

from Jim Heilsberg

**R**ecently a man died in a nearby community as a result of a fall while out hunting. At several public events, people have paused and observed an appropriate moment of silence. At one such event, I was standing with others in silence, and a thought hit me. Is a life a moment of silence?

While it is appropriate to pause and observe a moment of silence in the death of a loved one, or to pause and reflect and say a prayer for the family involved, is life to be summed up as a moment of silence?

The thought would not go away from my mind. Life should not be a moment of silence. Life should be a moment of noise. Each of us has an unknown, undetermined amount of time to live. None of us knows when life may end. Life is filled with many events, both joyous and sad. Some lives seem to have more of one than the other. All lives have the potential for joy. Some cultures do practice events, such as an Irish wake, to celebrate a life.

During this Christmas season it seems appropriate to celebrate with moments of noise that ring throughout our land as a celebration of life. In fact, that is what Christmas is about, celebrating love of life and joy. For many that joy comes from being with loved ones. For many it is remembering loved ones that have gone before us by those moments of joy.

In our sadness there can be joy. I have found myself recently remembering my dad. Dad died several years ago now, but the memory of him lives on. Memories of the jokes he would tell come flooding back. The memory of how he would light up when family got together and also be glad when the family left. A smile comes to my mind every time I think about him.

My parents, like many, lived or live life as a moment of noise (Mom is still living a life with passion). Each of them, in their own way live(d) their life out with passion. I love that about them. I would love to have one more moment with my dad to share that passion. I choose to have moments with my own family to live that passion and pass on that joy of life.



Life is full of good and bad things. It seems that we are so often bombarded in the news and life with the bad things of life. What a great time of year to be able to have a chance to be reminded of the joy in life.

My faith in God teaches me that life is joy. Life is intended to be a gift that is given freely to each of us. A gift to be shared not held. A gift of noise or joy to be given to each other. God has identified in so many ways, how he wants us to live a joyful life, filled with giving to each other and sharing our joy of life.

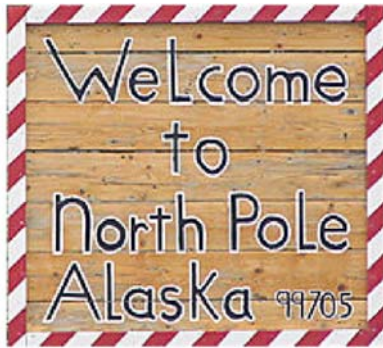
We have so many great traditions that have arisen around the holidays. One that seems to bring so much joy to others has fallen out of style. The tradition of going to other houses or locations and singing carols is not as popular as it once was. The gift of music is so basic. There are no strings attached when we sing or play an instrument in a public setting. The music goes out and is shared. The heart that sings it, can give the gift of joy as they sing and it costs nothing other than time and effort.

As we listen to carols, it is often that we find a smile creep across our face. A smile generated from the warm feeling we feel when hearing the music of Christmas. Songs like Joy to the World, God Rest ye Merry Gentlemen and other songs bring joy to our souls. Other songs like Jingle Bells and We Wish you a Merry Christmas give us a chance to share a moment of light heartedness with another.

My wife purchased a figurine that talks when a button is pushed. This particular figurine recites a section of the script from the Charlie Brown's Christmas Special where Charlie Brown asks, "Does anyone know what Christmas is all about?" Linus, matter of factly, lets Charlie Brown know what it is all about. It is about a gift that God gave us. The gift that produces love, joy and good will to men.

Take time this season to remember those that have gone before us with a moment of silence. Don't forget, however, to have a moment of noise. Share a carol with a neighbor, a meal with friends, help those less fortunate with the surplus you may have and in general make noise that will ring throughout our communities with the joy of the season. ■

## A holiday message from Committee F - The Alaska Committee ...



Did you know that Santa lives in Alaska? It's true! That is just one of many reasons Alaska is so special. In keeping with the holiday spirit, here is a little information about North Pole, Alaska.

**North Pole** is a city in Fairbanks North Star Borough, Alaska, United States. It is part of the Fairbanks, Alaska metropolitan statistical area. According to 2005 Census Bureau estimates, the population of the city is 1,778. The name "North Pole" is often applied to the entire area bounded by Fort Wainwright, Two Rivers, Alaska, and the Chena River Flood Control Project.

The city is a summertime attraction for tourists visiting nearby Fairbanks, and traveling to and from the Alaska Highway and Valdez. Its biggest attraction is a gift shop named Santa Claus House with the world's largest fiberglass statue of Santa Claus outside. Prior to Christmas each year, the USPS post office in North Pole receives hundreds of thousands of letters to Santa Claus, and thousands more from people wanting the town's postmark on their Christmas greeting cards to their families. It advertises the ZIP code 99705 as the ZIP code of Santa.

The area that is now North Pole was homesteaded in 1944 by Bon V. Davis. (A fictionalized account of life on this homestead, *Battling Against Success*, written by his son T. Neil Davis, was published in 1997.) Dahl and Gaske Development Company later purchased the Davis homestead, subdivided it, and named it North Pole, in hopes of attracting a toy manufacturer to the area. The City of North Pole was incorporated on January 15, 1953.

North Pole is located at 64°45'4"N 147°21'7"W 64.75111°N 147.35194°W (64.751048, -147.351969). It is situated 13 miles to the southeast of Fairbanks on the Richardson Highway. According to the United States Census Bureau, the city has a total area

of 4.2 square miles (10.9 km<sup>2</sup>), of which, 4.2 square miles (10.9 km<sup>2</sup>) of it is land and 0.04 square miles (0.1 km<sup>2</sup>) of it (0.47%) is water. The city is located to the north and east of the Tanana River, though access to the river is not easily made due to the extensive system of levees. Beaver Springs Slough meanders through the heart of the city, emptying into Chena Slough.



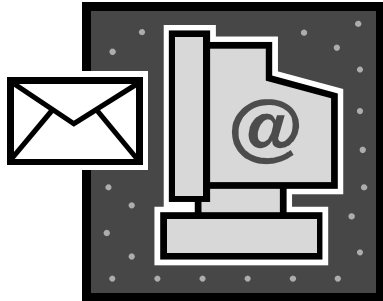
As of 2004, there were 1,675 people, 652 households, and 431 families residing in the city. The population density was 373.6 people per square mile (149.3/km<sup>2</sup>). In the city the population was spread out with 29.8% under the age of 18, 13.2% from 18 to 24, 33.3% from 25 to 44, 18.5% from 45 to 64, and 5.2% who were 65 years of age or older. The median age was 29 years. For every 100 females there were 110.7 males. For every 100 females age 18 and over, there were 115.2 males.

Christmas-themed streets in North Pole include Santa Claus Lane, St. Nicholas Drive, Snowman Lane, and Kris Kringle Drive. Street lights in the city are decorated in a candy cane motif, and many local businesses have similar decorations. The city's fire trucks and ambulances are all red, while the police cars are all green.



# How Do I Change My HFMA INFORMATION?

All of our chapter directory information including e-mail and addresses



for the newsletter are received from the National HFMA database.

The easiest way to make changes is via the internet. Simply follow these steps to change any of your personal information.

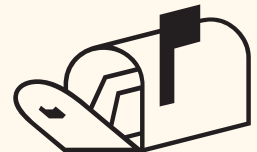


- 1. Log on to <http://www.hfma.org>**
- 2. Go to the membership section**
- 3. Log in using the username and password prompts**
- 4. Follow instructions to access your Profile**
- 5. Edit information.**



You could win \$100 by writing an article for N.W. Outlook! Share your knowledge & experiences with other HFMA Members. You can help make a difference!

Please send information & articles for upcoming newsletters to:



Fredrik Andreasson  
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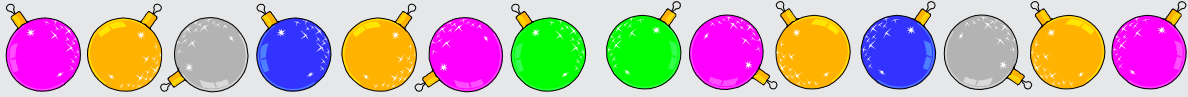
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E-mail:  
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hfma washington / alaska chapter  
healthcare financial management association

# Job Opportunities



TITLE	ORGANIZATION	LOCATION	CONTACT
CFO	Columbia Valley Community Health	Wenatchee, WA	dewey@deering-associates.com
CFO	Kindred Healthcare	Seattle, WA	marcos.moore@kindredhealthcare.com
Controller	George L. Mee Memorial Hospital	King City, CA	lbutter@meememorial.com
Director of Accounting	Cascade Healthcare Community	Bend, OR	karen.turner@expresspros.com
Director of Financial Planning	Legacy Health	Portland, Oregon	503-415-5405
Director of Hosp. Patient Financial Services	Valley Medical Center	Renton, WA	faubionassociates@msn.com
Director, Internal Audit	Sterling Life Insurance Company	Bellingham, WA	Allison.hanegan@sterlingplans.com or 360-392-9483
Director, Revenue Cycle	Kadlec Regional Medical Center	Tri-Cities, WA	Kris.Gauntt@kadlecmed.org
Director of Performance Analytics	Cascade Healthcare Community	Bend, OR	karen.turner@expresspros.com
Senior Reimbursement	Legacy Health	Portland, OR	www.legacyhealth.jobs


For more information on these listings or to include a listing, please contact Kimie Delos Reyes at (360) 567-3594 or email at: kimie@hawesfinancial.com

See also National HFMA's website (www.hfma.org) for additional job listings.

[Last Update: Nov 8, 2009]



**Don't forget to  
VOTE  
in the upcoming  
Washington - Alaska Chapter  
Election for Officers & Directors.  
Watch your mailbox the first week  
of January for your official ballot!**



**Would you like to check your progress toward a Founders Merit Award?**

Individual scoring records for the Founders Merit Award program are maintained for chapter members by LCC Council III.

**To receive a copy of your record, please contact  
Tom Muller**

Telephone: (360) 459-8994  
Email: tjwashington@reachone.com



## UPCOMING CHAPTER MEETINGS

### DATE

Jan 24-27, 2010

[click for online Brochure](#)

Feb 24-26, 2010

[click for online Brochure](#)

### EVENT

12th Annual Region 11  
Healthcare Symposium

Joint Trade Fair & Conference w/AAHAM

### LOCATION

Caesars Palace, Las Vegas, NV

Hilton Hotel, Sea-Tac, WA



May 26-28, 2010

Chapter Meeting & Workshop

Davenport Hotel, Spokane, WA



[www.waakhfma.org](http://www.waakhfma.org)

## NW Outlook

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