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The NCMA LA Gateway Chapter was recently awarded the Walter R. Graalman Gold Award for excellence. Metro employee members (from left) Joe Marzano, Margaret Merhoff, Lonnie Mitchell, Phyllis Walker and Susan Dove each contributed to the group effort that earned the chapter its national recognition.

Photo by Jimmy Stroup



NCMA LA Gateway Chapter Receives National Recognition for Excellence

By JIMMY STROUP

(Feb. 5, 2008) The LA Gateway chapter of the National Contract Management Association (NCMA) received an award at the NCMA Leadership Conference in Las Vegas on January 12 for its excellent record of promoting professionalism and education in the field.

The Walter R. Graalman Gold Award is awarded to NCMA chapters that meet a certain criterion of excellence. In only its fourth year, the Gateway chapter was recognized as "Quality" in 2005, "Bronze" in 2006 and now "Gold" for last year.

"It takes working and achieving a level of professionalism by what you've done and contributions to the profession itself," said Phyllis Walker, the chapter's president. "We've had several of our members published in the NCMA magazine, *Contract Management*, which discusses relevant and current issues in the field."

To qualify for the award, a chapter has to provide its members with educational opportunities, host speakers to further the knowledge of contract managers and demonstrate that its members excel in the field.

"Our programs are set up to provide training to the various kinds of things we could encounter in our daily work," Walker said. "We have experts come in and give talks on lots of different subjects. Eric Feldman, inspector general of the National Reconnaissance Office, spoke earlier this year about 'How to Detect and Prevent Procurement Fraud.'"

Velasquez a catalyst for chapter

Walker said that Ed Velasquez, Metro senior contract administrator, serves on the NCMA national Board of Directors and was the catalyst for bringing NCMA to the agency.

Velasquez broached the idea of starting a chapter at Metro to Lonnie Mitchell, chief administrative services officer, who supported the effort. Now the LA Gateway chapter boasts an active roster of 80 members.

Contract management is a sort of catch-all job that could be compared to a movie producer – there is no part of a contract job that a contract manager doesn't become heavily involved in.

Walker, for example, was involved in the bus and rail advertising contracts, and is currently working on the emerging congestion pricing programs. Contract management covers a project from the planning stages through source selection and award, contract administration and contract close-out.

"What we do runs the gamut – there is no one thing that contract management is or isn't," she said. "We have to be flexible."

Individual excellence as well

Just last year, Phyllis Walker and Bob New, Metro director of purchasing, were both inducted as Fellows of the NCMA. Chapter Vice President Margaret Merhoff, Metro contract administration manager, was awarded the Albert Berger Outstanding Leadership Award, which recognizes exemplary leadership at the chapter level.

A contributing factor to earning the Graalman Award was Bob New's individual contribution to forwarding NCMA values. New taught 15 courses through UCLA Extension. The courses are geared toward teaching information needed to pass NCMA certifications.

"It's a lot of work we've done," Walker said. "It's the members' contributions – individually and for the chapter – that made our getting the award possible."