



NEWS LINE

December, 2011

President's Message

- Pam Brown, SUGA President

The SUGA Board is currently in discussions with SunGard Public Sector (SPS) regarding a proposal that was presented in August 2011 to the SUGA Board. SUGA has sent some emails to members and posted some information on the discussion groups. Additionally, a survey was sent to members to get feedback about issues. The number of members that responded has been wonderful. If you missed what the items in this proposal consist of, they are posted on the SUGA website at <http://www.sugainc.org/news/2011/10/06/news/sept-26th-e-mail-with-member-letter/>

Where do we stand now?

We are still in discussions with SunGard executives regarding their proposal. While the proposal involved several items, it is important to remember that anything related to conferences would not even be considered until 2013. SPS knows and respects that SUGA has an existing conference contract for 2012, so any changes proposed regarding conference structure are with the vision of the year 2013. We remain hopeful that the dialogue will continue with SPS and that a resolution that is acceptable to both entities can be reached.

What does this mean for the future of SUGA?

First, your board is committed to keeping SUGA as a viable and independent organization that has the collective voice of users. We also are thinking of ways to somewhat "reinvent" what SUGA does to give this organization added value to its members and retain a unified voice related to product development to SPS.

What can you do as a member?

Participate! Don't just delete those emails. Read them and ask any board member if you have a question. Log in and participate in the IDEAs process. A link to the IDEAs site can be found on the SUGA website at <http://www.sugainc.org/main/product-ideas/>. See the SUGA website to give specific direction on sessions for the upcoming international conference and attend the international conference in Lake Buena Vista, Florida in 2012. This is your opportunity to vote in the board elections or run for a board position and impact the future. ■



Pam Brown
2011-12 SUGA
President

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As An IFAS User.....

- Bill Haight, SUGA Director-At-Large

Over the years, I've been very active in the IFAS community. As a past member of the BSNUG Board, I participated in everything from planning conferences to presenting during breakout sessions. With that activity I felt I was able to influence the direction of the IFAS modules to better serve the IFAS community. For a time I stepped back from that role ; however, for a variety of reasons, I've decided that I need to be more actively engaged in helping SunGard Public Sector determine the directions, features, and functions we see in the new OneSolution software.

Those of you that know me, know that I am an enthusiastic advocate of getting people together to talk about the innovation and successes we've had using the system. Even more important is the ability for users to get together to talk about the challenges and problems we face as well. We often think that what we do as an organization is unique and that we are the only ones facing a certain set of challenges. In a community as diverse and skilled as the SUGA membership, we often will find that someone else had already been down a path or is having the same problems. This is the real value of SUGA. SUGA links you with your peers and provides you with the network you need to take the software further and accomplish your goals.

✓ SUGA is a great way to combine your voice with hundreds of other users

Your participation, as former IFAS users, in SUGA is one of the key ways that you can help influence the software to do the things you need it to do. Membership in SUGA is an great way to combine your voice with hundreds of other users for the betterment of the system. Joining and renewing is easy with our online services. Membership in SUGA combines your voice with hundreds of others. If you're not already a member, I urge you to join by visiting the SUGA website at www.sugainc.com. If you already belong, thanks for your membership.

Your SUGA Board is working hard on your behalf to further the software. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please contact any member of the board. Our contact information is at the end of this newsletter as well as on the website . We are always glad to hear from you.

UPCOMING CONFERENCES

2011 West SUGA Regional Training
In progress

2012 Mid Atlantic SUGA Regional Training
February 20—23, 2012

2012 South Central SUGA Regional Training
January 17—20, 2012

2012 SUGA Educational Training
June 3—7 , 2012

See our website for further details



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The Meaning of SUGA

- Anthony Sorce, SUGA Past President

As you know the SUGA Board is currently in discussions with SunGard Public Sector regarding their concept of what our User Groups future direction should look like. I thought I would comment on this from my personal perspective as the board member who has the longest tenure and one who is in his last year of serving our group's members. It is my belief that this vision from SunGard did not start recently. SUGA did receive a letter from SunGard last November indicating that they were not going to attend our 2011 May conference in Clark County Las Vegas. At the time I was President and knew that their late decision would probably bankrupt SUGA and deplete our nearly \$400,000 in assets. As you know, these assets were gained through yearly dues and conference fees paid by our local government and not-for-profit agencies as well as through sound management practices by the SUGA Board. Eventually we were able to get SunGard to participate in the 2011 conference but their involvement was limited to providing trainers since they eliminated their extra activities such as their reception, sales meet and greet and other smaller events. Other than the fact that we were contracted with the hotel for food and beverage commitments that SunGard would no longer provide, we were happy that they decided to participate in the training of the 500 or so SunGard customers and SUGA members at our conference.

The reason I mentions the previous history is because as a member of HUG and now SUGA I find the value that our group provides to be a valuable resource. I not only rely on SunGard for answers but on our members to guide me in new process that we undertake at our organization. I find the networking and training we have at our own User Group sponsored conference to be geared more toward what I want as a member. SUGA is constantly trying to balance the introduction of new SunGard products with the training on more widely used products to give users what they need. It is an ongoing discussion between SUGA and SunGard to communicate that our members are interested in new innovations but we do not want training to become sales pitches that overshadow our reason for attending these conferences. We attend to gain knowledge about the products we are actually using.

I firmly believe that a user group, by its very nature should be autonomous from the vendor whose product its members use and I also acknowledge the critical need to blend our wants as users with the needs of our vendor (SunGard). In this way there can be no overbearing influence from the vendor with regard to what we need and want as users but allows us to remain sensitive to SunGard's business environment. It allows us to speak with one bigger independent voice not the smaller voice of a single agency. I have been told by SunGard representatives that we are somewhat unique in today's business environment in that many user conferences and groups are literally run by the company that supplies the software product. This does not seem like a healthy way to truly communicate user needs and wants to a vendor who at times may be reluctant to make any changes or commitment to its users.



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The Meaning of SUGA *(continued)*

While I was new to the existence of user groups 12 years ago, I immediately started volunteering from the first day I attended a national conference in 1999. I continued to volunteer for about 5 years then eventually I applied for a member-at-large board position and subsequently ran for the position of Treasurer and eventually for the President elect position. I now know the reason for our existence and why 24 years ago some of us (users of, at that time, the HTE product line) decided it was worth the effort to form a group that would function as the voice for a large group of the software product users. Users were not being heard as individual organizations, there needed to be a bigger voice to get the attention of the software provider. There was a fundamental problem getting the software provider to hear and act on the changes users wanted made to the products they were using and they wanted discussion groups and training conferences to communicate product knowledge between users. There needed to be accountability from the vendor. This could only be accomplished by allowing users to speak with a bigger voice through a users group and by forming a relationship with HTE and now SunGard that takes into account the many changing business environment variables that both SunGard and users are operating within.

While we need to work together as one group, each organization has separate needs and sometimes separate goals. We as a users group recognize this and are more than willing to work with SunGard on any issue that does not destroy our groups core purpose or ability to exist. In the end we are a group that has been developed to be autonomous but highly supportive of our vendor, promote open communication among our members through various means, create training opportunities and make the necessary decisions that will allow our group to continue as an ongoing entity. I would ask that SunGard use us as their sounding board for old and new ideas. We are already formed, we have a large percentage of their product users as members, we have a strong structure and history and we are financially solvent. There is not a better opportunity for SunGard to become stronger within its own customer base, they only need to take advantage of it and recognize that their actions can also harm the very entity that in part is there to help them better serve their customers. ■



NEWS LINE

The IDEAS Process

- Dan Owens, SUGA Secretary

Have you used the new IDEAS process yet? It has been a couple of months since new features have been added to the IDEAS site. These include the ability to register for notification on future entered IDEAS in a particular category and the ability to receive a notification when additional activity occurs in an IDEA you are interested in. So far, in my own observations these enhancements work very well.

So, have you entered an IDEA yet? I encourage everyone to try it out. Look at the site, check out the IDEAS that are already there, subscribe to one, or better yet, enter one of your own. We all have great IDEAS on how we would want to improve the software we use, here's your chance to tell SunGard how.

And, to those who have used the process...how was it? Do you think we have a good process in place now for SUGA members to voice their IDEAS? Or, are we missing something that could make it better. Your SUGA board wants to know your opinion.

Please give any feedback you have on the IDEAS process and e-mail it to Sugaboard@gmail.com. I promise you every e-mail will be read and forwarded on for consideration.

A Note From Our Treasurer....

- Denise Christmas, SUGA Treasurer

SUGA has proven once again to remain financially strong, thanks to all of YOU, our members! We are looking forward to another great conference next year at Disney. As a reminder, your membership dues are very beneficial to you, your organization, and SUGA. These funds allow SUGA to provide all members with list serves, electronic social networking, lower registration fees, quality training, and most importantly...a voice. We hope to see you at Disney next year! Thank you again for being the biggest part of SUGA's success!!!





NEWS LINE

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