



## Thank you hardly seems enough

*On her last day at ASWB, Pat Olinger wore a T-shirt that her staff gave her that read “This chick is retired!”*

After 19+ years, Pat Olinger has retired from ASWB. She has been described as one of the foundational members of this organization, serving a critical role in developing and managing the Candidate Services Center, exam administration services, and more recently exam development. Her attention to detail and her “persnickity-ness” to demand the best of herself and others were the right ingredients to ensure that all aspects of the exam program ran smoothly. Her legacy is a well-run department and staff who will miss her, but she leaves knowing that a very competent and well-trained staff will continue what she started.

At the time Olinger was hired, ASWB had 10 staff members and

was administering around 20,000 exams annually. Then executive director Donna DeAngelis hired Olinger to bring under ASWB’s roof two functions that were being outsourced: the association’s accounting and tax preparation, and exam registration services. There were efficiencies and economic benefits to making both changes.

Olinger was already doing ASWB’s accounting at an outside agency, but neither she nor anyone else at ASWB knew anything about registering candidates to take the social work exams. Until that time, exam registration, administration, and reporting services were all handled by the testing services vendor that administered the exams.



*Raising a glass to Pat*



*Pat Olinger and son Michael, Culpeper's mayor*

As DeAngelis explained, “None of us had ever done this before, but Pat figured out how to do this and she’s been doing it ever since. She has done a remarkable job.” The call center that Olinger developed and managed was an important addition to ASWB services, DeAngelis said, because it gave ASWB contact with the candidates, who then came to understand that ASWB was not just “the testing service.”

Olinger was hired October 16, 1997, and the call center was to begin answering calls and taking registrations December 16. Exam administration with the new test vendor was to begin January 2, 1998. With only two months to startup, applicants for positions in the call center had to be interviewed, hired, and trained. She recalls that by the middle of November one representative and an assistant supervisor began training “pretending to answer calls and get a handle on how the call center should work.” At the beginning of December, three more representatives joined the team to train. The first day, the call center

registered 12 people. On its busiest day, the call center handled more than 400 registrations by mail, fax, and phone. As Olinger recalls, this was all manual entry “before we had the technology we have today.”

Moving with the times, ASWB made online registration available as soon as technology advances and security measures allowed. Over time, candidates have shown a preference for online registration. This year, 76 percent had registered online as of June 30. The remaining 24 percent of candidates registering for exams in that time period called in, faxed, or mailed their registrations. Satisfaction ratings from candidates that registration went smoothly in the first half of the year was greater than 90 percent.

Despite the candidates’ preference for online registration, ASWB’s Candidate Services Center (CSC) remains busy. The CSC staff, who now number 11 representatives and 2 supervisors, still register candidates. They also answer candidate questions, listen to candidates’ concerns, and handle sales of ASWB’s exam guide, online practice test for registered candidates, and group practice test for social work programs, as well as the supervision guide written by Dr. Carlton Munson. In the first six months of this year, the call center had answered 41,515 calls.

As director of exam services, Olinger was responsible for 19 staff members serving in exam development and exam administration, including the call center. In 2015, the association administered nearly 45,000 exams, and Olinger’s oversight ensured that the process is efficient and reflects best practices. In fact, ASWB’s Board of Directors sent a letter of commendation to

Olinger and her staff that recognized “the exceptional work you and your staff demonstrated. It was noted that your department registered 37,715 in the first three quarters of this year, while answering 66,357 calls. These numbers are unprecedented and exceed all previous records. We acknowledge the amount of hard work and dedication it took to deliver quality service at this level.”

Olinger managed this growth by paying attention to the numbers and knowing her staff. One of the first people hired by Olinger now holds a supervisory position in the CSC. The Exam Services Department went through a reorganization in 2013 to consolidate exam development and exam administration under Olinger as director. Tanya Carpenter and Lavina Harless were promoted to managers of exam administration and exam development, respectively, during that reorganization. They both worked closely with Olinger this year to move into leadership positions after her retirement. “This growth from within ensures the integrity of the exam program and builds trust within the department,” said ASWB CEO Mary Jo Monahan.

In addition to managing the CSC, Olinger managed exam administration services, which included oversight of candidate accommodations and interactions with member boards regarding score reports among other responsibilities. She created the templates for the reports that are presented quarterly to ASWB’s Board of Directors and was responsible for their content.

Olinger also was the face of exam services for many years at ASWB meetings. Some of her roles included staffing the Administrators

Forum, helping at the registration desk, getting confidentiality statements signed by members at delegate assemblies, giving the exam services reports, and “doing whatever was needed.”

This willingness to “do whatever was needed” is largely why Olinger’s contribution to ASWB is so significant—and why she will be greatly missed. During her tenure with ASWB, Olinger was involved in exam administration, financial management, and human resources as well as providing contract oversight of ASWB’s test administrator and making sure the custom software programs written for exam services were tested and functioning properly. When Registry and contract services started in 2004, Olinger had oversight of those programs for a number of years. She assisted with the purchase of the building that houses the call center and other exam administration offices and worked with the building contractor to complete needed renovations. She later negotiated the contract for the purchase of the third building in the current office park, where Member Services is located. She served as staff liaison to the Philanthropy and Social Affairs Team for three years, helping the team establish a budget and manage their contributions to local charitable organizations. DeAngelis jokingly said it would take at least five people to replace Olinger. Maybe that’s no joke.

Dwight Hymans wrote about Olinger’s contribution to ASWB in the association’s staff newsletter:

Pat was part of a group who interviewed me. When I left the office following my interview, I remember thinking that she



“Oh, the places you’ll go: The Pat Olinger edition”

was very personable....But as most of us know, she is not someone you want to mess with. To paraphrase Dr. Seuss, she meant what she said and she said what she meant. ... This quality, along with many others, has been a significant part of why ASWB has become what it is today: a highly competent organization that serves our constituents with integrity and excellence....In my view, she will be one of the people who was the bedrock of ASWB: solid, dependable, and staying.

To commemorate Olinger’s retirement, ASWB’s Philanthropy and Social Affairs Team planned a party. The office closed for the afternoon so that all staff could attend and give Olinger the sendoff due someone who has developed close ties and deep respect. Olinger’s family came, and Olinger’s son, Michael, now Culpeper’s mayor, spoke of how much his mother loved her work at ASWB.

CEO Mary Jo Monahan thanked Olinger’s family for sharing Pat

with ASWB and thanked Olinger for her dedication to excellence, her tireless attention to detail, and her thoroughness, noting, “It is exactly what ASWB needed for the last 19 years.” Monahan also recognized Olinger’s deep caring for people as one of her outstanding qualities, saying that “it balances her ‘just do it quality’ that has made the Candidate Services Center a best practices center.” The call center and its staff are, in Monahan’s words, “Pat’s legacy.”

The Exam Services Department recited a tribute to Olinger written by Harless and based on Dr. Seuss’ poem “Oh, the places you’ll go.” Each staff member took a verse in round robin style, highlighting her many attributes. After that, there were few dry eyes. Many others spoke at Olinger’s retirement party thanking her for giving them opportunities to grow and for caring about them. At the request of one CSC member, the Exam Services Department joined voices to sing “You are my sunshine” to Olinger.



*Pat giving her thanks to the rest of the ASWB staff*

Olinger in turn thanked everyone, turning her accomplishments into shared successes, saying: “Without all of you, none of it would have been possible.”

Olinger said that she retired with many happy memories and will always remember all of the opportunities her position offered her to interact with the leadership team,

coworkers, board members, board staff, outside consultants, and test vendor staff. She says that she appreciated their help and support throughout the years and will cherish the memories of the many thanks from candidates and board staff who would call to chat or send a note of thanks after she had assisted them in some way.

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## Leaving Exam Services in good hands

Although Pat Olinger has retired from ASWB as director of exam services, continuity of service, dedication to excellence, and best practices in all aspects of exam development and administration will remain in place. Beginning on August 16, 2016, Tanya Carpenter, manager of exam administration, and Lavina Harless, manager of exam development, were promoted to directors of their respective programs. Carpenter celebrated 22 years with ASWB in January, and Harless celebrated 11 years in March. Congratulations to both!