Volunteer Outreach in Mr. Rogers’ Neighborhood

Sandra L. Baker

Invariably, our goal in museums is to fill the galleries. So we recruit volunteers to help us with accurate research, writing, and design of artifact displays, provide educational but entertaining tours, and greet and guide our visitors through the mazes of our spaces employing rehearsed spiels of warm hospitality and accommodating customer service. And because volunteers do such a great job at all of these tasks, our visitors return, become members, and carry the word into the community that we are worthy of their support.

But there is another tool in the box that volunteers are uniquely qualified to wield: outreach. Electronic billboards, eblasts, press releases, and social media are all fine, but nothing works like face to face. Nothing impresses people more than the fact that you cared enough to run a MapQuest search, fill up the gas tank, and then get in your car and fight the traffic to pay them a visit on their own turf. At the Heinz History Center in Pittsburgh, our mantra has become, “You gotta get out to get the people in.” You may know it as an adaptation of, “If the mountain won’t come to Muhammad, then Muhammad must go to the mountain.”

As they do so often, our volunteers took up this new road warrior assignment with the same enthusiasm and attention to detail that they have always brought to all we ask them to do on site. In this case, they are uniquely positioned to bring a whole new dimension to the task, because they live in the communities we are asking them to serve. Often they were born and raised there. They know the small-town mayor or the local fire station chief or the senior citizen activities director. They have connections. And after all, Pittsburgh is Mr. Rogers’ hometown. We are well schooled in the power of the neighborhood.

We have deployed our army of volunteers into the community in several key ways, all designed to use the skills they honed in the museum. First, we asked them to help distribute our quarterly newsletters by dropping them at their local libraries, schools, doctor’s offices, gyms—you get the picture—so word seeps into the many corners of the community that we could never reach, even with an updated mailing list. Needless to say, the savings in postage makes it a case of killing two birds with one stone.

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Heinz History Center Volunteer Program Jazz Committee
Letter from the President

As a member of the American Alliance of Museums’ (AAM) Council of Affiliates, AAMV prepares an annual report that presents its accomplishments and evaluates its challenges. These highlights from our spring 2014 report review the AAMV board’s work in 2013–2014, list AAMV’s services and accomplishments, and describe the challenges we are working to resolve.

Who We Are
AAMV members are both volunteers at museums (most often docents and docent organizations) and museum employees who manage volunteer programs. Three-fourths of our members are paid volunteer program managers or paid staff who have this function along with other job titles. Members can be individuals or groups. We currently have 100 members.

The aim of AAMV is primarily to support volunteerism and the development of professional volunteer management in museums through an exchange of ideas and information. Thus, communication is key to our work, but it remains a challenge due to the time constraints of an all-volunteer board.

Services and Accomplishments
AAMV continued to share information with members and nonmembers alike in a variety of ways:


- **An active listserv**, launched in 2006, gives members a forum for sharing questions and concerns. Members find it to be an extremely useful tool in getting questions addressed and finding helpful information from their peers. Topics cover a broad range of issues related to volunteer program management.

- **Conference and workshop sessions** at the local, regional, and national levels—with AAMV members as organizers and/or participants—are another information-sharing mechanism. We sponsored one session at AAM’s 2014 annual meeting: “When Volunteers Turn Bad: Whom Do You Call?”

- **A quarterly newsletter** offers news and information for museum staff who manage volunteer programs as well as volunteers and docents who support museums.

- **A statement of Standards and Best Practices for Museum Volunteer Programs** provides guidance for the range of museums and diversity of volunteer programs.

During 2013–2014, the AAMV Board worked on several new initiatives, including developing a statement of purpose to examine our work and goals and to serve as a basic document for recruiting new members. We added a membership director to the board to help us make a more aggressive effort to build membership, which has dropped in recent years. We hope to expand the presence of programming at the AAM annual meeting and offer regular webinars. The webinars in particular have been effective in reaching a wide audience.

Challenges
Our biggest challenge is a familiar one to every small, all-volunteer organization: Board members have limited time to contribute to board work. Identifying candidates to fill board openings has been difficult. While we currently have an excellent treasurer, he is anxious to step down due to the demands of his museum position. For this board office, it is extremely difficult to find required expertise. We welcome suggestions or inquiries from members who would be willing to join the board in this capacity. A related challenge is the lack of funding to support travel to board meetings as well as the reluctance on the part of some museums to encourage staff to divert work time for AAMV tasks (despite the clear benefit as professional development). These factors are daunting to potential board members.

Navigating nonprofit rules and regulations and keeping paperwork up to date has been time-consuming for our treasurer. We find that we need pro bono legal expertise to make changes to our bylaws that allow us to make practical adaptations—such as telephone conference calls for board meetings and an virtual annual membership meeting—that are still in compliance with nonprofit legal requirements. In addition, because we do not have an office, we need physical space to archive important records or

*continued on page 5*
TrendsWatch 2014

The American Alliance of Museums’ annual overview of trends happening now is valuable food for thought for every museum. TrendsWatch 2014 examines five trends to keep an eye on:

1. Rising social entrepreneurship as for-profit businesses take on typically nonprofit goals
2. Greater demand for multisensory experiences and better technologies for delivering them
3. Growth in “Big Data” and sophisticated data analytics capacity
4. More privacy concerns as a result of data mining and surveillance
5. Collaborative consumption in a “sharing economy”
6. Development of small, mobile robots with a wide range of capabilities

The report describes the potential impact on museums and gives intriguing examples of how museums are not just anticipating but participating in this changing world. AAM encourages museums to share the report with paid and volunteer staff, boards, donors, and policymakers. The lively analysis would make a perfect discussion-starter for a volunteer-staff brownbag lunch.


AAMV Newsletter

Editor
Ellen Hirzy
ellenhirzy@gmail.com
202–544–3998

President
Lois Kuter, kuter@ansp.org

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the American Association for Museum Volunteers, the nonprofit membership and service organization dedicated to the millions of volunteers in all categories of museums in the United States and to professionalism in museum volunteer program management. AAMV welcomes submissions of manuscripts for publication. Queries should be made to the President. Information about AAMV’s other services is available at www.AAMV.org.
Our volunteers become the friendly mail carriers that senior centers come to rely on.

Second, we created a volunteer position called affiliate liaison and asked individual volunteers to adopt one of our satellite affiliate museums or historical societies. Just as the Heinz History Center is an affiliate of the Smithsonian Institution, nearly 250 local and small museums sprinkled throughout our region have partnered with us in the exchange of information and resources. Many of these smaller institutions are run exclusively by volunteers. Who better to understand their concerns than another volunteer? By assigning a volunteer to visit them, consult with them, and offer programs designed to help them address their recruitment and training needs, we are cementing these partnerships and inspiring higher levels of investment on both ends.

Out of this outreach effort grew a program designed by an English professor at a local university who assigned students to create digital stories based on a semester spent learning the history of a neighborhood or region through the resources of a Heinz History Center affiliate institution. Students are amazed at the history they never knew lived in their own backyards; senior volunteers learn that technology is really not that scary and was designed to preserve their heritage. Watching young students and retired, veteran volunteers fall in love as they work together toward a common goal has been utterly inspirational.

In a third outreach effort, we trained volunteer ambassadors to take the Heinz History Center’s stories on the road. Through researching, writing, editing, and preparing digital products, including PowerPoint presentations and video and sound recordings, our volunteers are reaching out to other institutions as partners in both content and capability. Two years ago, we chose to study the history of jazz in Pittsburgh because it was an ideal entrée into the African American community and a draw for music lovers of all ages, meeting our mission of diversity and inclusion. From day one we knew the potential for a series of win-win relationships was excellent, and we were so right.

The volunteer who initially took on the task called for help from fellow volunteers, and we were soon a committee of 20. They met with faculty in the Music Technology Department of the California University of Pennsylvania, who were so excited by the project that they created a practicum for several students to add sound and video to our historical presentation. The committee also invited the Performing and Creative Arts High School Jazz Quartet and Orchestra to perform as we rolled out the program for our ambassadors to show them what we wanted them to take on the road. It was National Jazz Appreciation Month, so committee members reached out to Downtown Pittsburgh Cultural Trust venues and the Manchester Craftsmen’s Guild on the city’s North Side to suggest that they might want to run our videos. They said yes before they even saw them.

As volunteers go out into Pittsburgh’s distinctive neighborhoods, which have their own histories and personalities, they spread the word to get the people in. But there’s much more to our volunteers’ outreach efforts. The relationships they are building—with individuals, affiliates, educational institutions, and other organizations—help make the Heinz History Center an active community citizen.

Sandra L. Baker is volunteer program director at the Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and a member of the AAMV Board.

Tips for Successful Outreach

- **Train volunteers as leaders.** Create positions that capitalize on their experience and talent, and provide formal training to promote their effectiveness.
- **Link volunteers to community organizations based on their personal knowledge and history.** Passion and commitment come from connections to a community or a topic.
- **Match senior volunteers with youth.** Intergenerational learning is inspiring and fun for both age groups.
- **Build community partnerships.** Make it your goal to create long-term relationships as well as time-limited projects.
- **Celebrate success.** Bring volunteers and community members together to recognize the value of their contributions.
Tip & Techniques

Our members-only listserv is the place to ask your colleagues for help with daily challenges, feedback on best practices, and ideas for engaging volunteers. Some recent hot topics:

• Who handles volunteer scheduling?
• What information do you keep in volunteers’ files?
• How do you deal with a difficult volunteer relationship?
• Do you engage parents in communication about your youth volunteer program?

To subscribe, send a message to: aamvlist-subscribe@yahoogroups.com.

A Volunteer Explains What Volunteers Need

Mary Nuznov, a volunteer at the Dearborn Historical Museum in Michigan, wondered why volunteers at her institution were so content, confident, and successful in their roles. In a guest post for the American Association for State and Local History’s blog, The Inkwell, she shared a simple list of what volunteers need:

1. Volunteers need to feel that their work is meaningful. Know your volunteers, and place them in jobs that match their interests and capabilities.
2. Volunteers need and want to be trained. Trained, confident volunteers feel more accomplished and are more likely to recommend volunteering to a friend.
3. Volunteers need to feel appreciated. Volunteers don’t know what a difference they make unless someone on the museum staff thanks them for their contributions.

The Dearborn Historical Museum “is run by four part-time staff members and a small army of volunteers,” she says. “I truly believe that if you feel like your institution is having a hard time keeping volunteers interested, then you should try to address the items on this list.”

Read more here: http://blogs.aaslh.org/what-a-volunteer-needs/

Volunteer Performance Evaluation Template

Connie Pirtle

Recently I’ve been asked several times for a guide to volunteer performance evaluations or reviews. It’s a task that many volunteers and staff often dislike and/or overlook. Let’s face it: “Reviewing” someone’s performance can be uncomfortable sometimes. But it doesn’t have to be if you’re coaching volunteers continuously and if you frame the evaluation as an opportunity for both staff and volunteers to decide what’s working and what isn’t working. I encourage you to coach volunteers throughout the year and to do a formal assessment at least every two years. Here is a generic form that you can use as a guide and adapt to your circumstances.

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Volunteer Performance Evaluation

Name: ____________________________ Supervisor: ____________________________ Date: ____________________________

Volunteer Vision Statement: We celebrate the unique contributions of our volunteers, who join us as steadfast ambassadors of XYZ Organization and leaders in providing [services].

The purpose of this evaluation is to help our volunteers work to their greatest potential and to help XYZ better involve volunteers in participating in their success at XYZ.

Please assess the above-named volunteer by considering the following competencies and key behaviors. [This statement can be directed toward either staff or a volunteer who does a self-assessment.] Please rate each item as Excellent, Good, Fair, or Poor, and feel free to include your comments in the appropriate section.

Thank you for completing this evaluation. Please return it to [name] by [date]. The results will be shared with the volunteer and staff partners.

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<th>Competency</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Adheres to XYZ’s policies</td>
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<td>2. Can work independently</td>
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<td>3. Desires to grow and learn</td>
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<td>4. Displays integrity</td>
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<td>5. Displays appropriate enthusiasm and/or attitude</td>
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<td>6. Follows instructions</td>
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<td>7. Gives and takes feedback well</td>
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<td>8. Handles difficult situations effectively and appropriately</td>
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<td>9. Handles difficult people (visitors, volunteers, staff, clients, members, patrons) effectively and appropriately</td>
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<td>10. Leads when appropriate</td>
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<td>11. Conducts him/herself in a professional manner at all times</td>
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<td>12. Manages time efficiently</td>
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<td>13. High quality of work performed</td>
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<td>14. Punctuality/attendance</td>
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<td>15. Respectfulness</td>
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<td>16. Respects confidentiality</td>
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<td>17. Responsive</td>
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<td>18. Self-motivated</td>
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<td>19. Shares XYZ’s mission</td>
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<td>20. Exhibits concern for participants (clients, visitors, customers, etc.)</td>
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<td>21. Willing to help where needed</td>
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<td>22. Works well with staff</td>
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<tr>
<td>23. Works well with participants (clients, customers, visitors, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>24. Works well with other volunteers</td>
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Reprinted with permission from VolunteerToday.com: The Electronic Gazette for Volunteerism. Connie Pirtle is a consultant and trainer who has worked with museums of all types and sizes, from Smithsonian museums to the Museum of Osteology. She served on the AAMV board for 15 years, was executive editor of AAMV’s Transforming Museum Volunteering, and is an editorial reviewer for the International Journal of Volunteer Administration.
### AAMV BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Organization/Position</th>
<th>Email Address</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Lois Kuter</td>
<td>Manager of Volunteer Services, Academy of Natural Sciences of Drexel University, Philadelphia</td>
<td><a href="mailto:lvk26@drexel.edu">lvk26@drexel.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immediate Past President</td>
<td>Virginia (Gin) Wachter</td>
<td>St. Louis Art Museum</td>
<td><a href="mailto:email@ginwachter.com">email@ginwachter.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acting Treasurer</td>
<td>Michael Kruelle</td>
<td>Director of Operations, International Spy Museum, Washington, DC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mkruelle@spymuseum.org">mkruelle@spymuseum.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Membership Director</td>
<td>Erica Marshall Holmes</td>
<td>Visitor and Volunteer Services Manager, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History &amp; Culture, Baltimore</td>
<td><a href="mailto:holmes@maamc.org">holmes@maamc.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Regional Director</td>
<td>Herbert S. Jones</td>
<td>Volunteer &amp; Intern Programs Coordinator, Museum of Fine Arts, Boston</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hjones@mfa.org">hjones@mfa.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New England Regional Director</td>
<td>Alexandra Fioretti</td>
<td>Volunteer Coordinator, Zoo New England, Boston</td>
<td><a href="mailto:AFioretti@zoonewengland.com">AFioretti@zoonewengland.com</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic Regional Director</td>
<td>Sandra L. Baker</td>
<td>Volunteer Program Director, Heinz History Center, Pittsburgh</td>
<td><a href="mailto:slbaker@heinzhistorycenter.org">slbaker@heinzhistorycenter.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-Atlantic Regional Director</td>
<td>Motoko Hioki</td>
<td>School &amp; Tours Coordinator, Volunteer and Interns Coordinator, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, Washington, DC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hiokim@si.edu">hiokim@si.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeastern Regional Director</td>
<td>Richard Harker</td>
<td>Education &amp; Outreach Manager, Museum of History &amp; Holocaust Education and Department of Museums, Archives, and Rare Books, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA</td>
<td><a href="mailto:rharker@kennesaw.edu">rharker@kennesaw.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Plains Director</td>
<td>Meg Morris-Aabakken</td>
<td>Manager of Volunteer Services, Denver Art Museum</td>
<td><a href="mailto:mmorris@denverartmuseum.org">mmorris@denverartmuseum.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mountain Plains Director</td>
<td>Fyve Hilton</td>
<td>Manager of Volunteers, Perot Museum of Nature &amp; Science, Dallas</td>
<td><a href="mailto:fyve.hilton@perotmuseum.org">fyve.hilton@perotmuseum.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Regional Director</td>
<td>Deirdre Araujo</td>
<td>Manager, Volunteer Services, Exploratorium Museum of Science, Art, and Human Perception, San Francisco</td>
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<tr>
<td>Western Regional Director</td>
<td>Carly Ofsthun</td>
<td>Education Manager, Musical Instrument Museum, Phoenix</td>
<td><a href="mailto:carly.ofsthun@mim.org">carly.ofsthun@mim.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director-at-Large</td>
<td>Maretta Hemsley-Wood</td>
<td>Manager, Docent Program, Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum, Washington, DC</td>
<td><a href="mailto:hemsley-woodm@si.edu">hemsley-woodm@si.edu</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Director-at-Large</td>
<td>Maria Christus</td>
<td>Washington, DC</td>
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### Calendar

- **Association of Midwest Museums (AMM)**
  - Website: [www.midwestmuseums.org](http://www.midwestmuseums.org)
  - Event: July 14–17, St. Louis, MO

- **Association of Zoos & Aquariums (AZA)**
  - Website: [www.aza.org](http://www.aza.org)
  - Event: September 12–18, Orlando, FL

- **American Association for State and Local History (AASLH)**
  - Website: [http://aaslh.org](http://aaslh.org)
  - Event: September 17–20, St. Paul, MN

- **Mountain-Plains Museums Association (MPMA)**
  - Website: [www.mpma.net](http://www.mpma.net)
  - Event: September 28–October 2, Aspen, CO

- **Western Museums Association (WMA)**
  - Website: [www.westmuse.org](http://www.westmuse.org)
  - Event: October 5–8, Las Vegas, NV

- **Association of Science-Technology Centers (ASTC)**
  - Website: [www.astc.org](http://www.astc.org)
  - Event: October 18–21, Raleigh, NC

- **Southeastern Museums Conference (SEMC)**
  - Website: [www.semdirect.net](http://www.semdirect.net)
  - Event: October 20–22, Knoxville, TN

- **Mid-Atlantic Association of Museums (MAAM)**
  - Website: [www.midatlanticmuseums.org](http://www.midatlanticmuseums.org)
  - Event: October 22–24, Washington, DC

- **New England Museum Association (NEMA)**
  - Website: [www.nemanet.org](http://www.nemanet.org)
  - Event: November 19–21, Boston/Cambridge, MA
What is AAMV?

There are more than one million volunteers and volunteer program managers in all categories of museums in the United States. Founded in 1979, the American Association for Museum Volunteers (AAMV) is America’s only national association dedicated to the paid and unpaid museum staff who work together. AAMV is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization.

Who are AAMV Members?

We are volunteers, docents, and paid museum staff who bring a wealth of experience and ideas in promoting volunteerism in museums and in starting or improving museum volunteer programs. We welcome members from zoos and aquariums, botanical gardens, historic houses, and other cultural organizations with an educational mission.

What does AAMV do?

• Promotes professional standards of volunteerism
• Provides a forum for the exchange of ideas and information
• Offers opportunities for continuing education through panel discussion and workshops at local, regional and national conferences
• Encourages volunteers and volunteer managers to become familiar with project and programs both locally and nationally
• Informs and supports museums and volunteerism in advocacy for legislation at local and national levels
• Accomplishes these goals in cooperation with museum directors, staff and boards of trustees

Membership Benefits …

• Participation in a vibrant Members-Only listserv
• Quarterly newsletter
• Access to information to create and sustain a museum volunteer program
• Opportunities to take part in workshops and presentations at state, regional, and national meetings
• Access to state and regional representatives as well as a nationwide network of volunteer management professionals and experienced volunteers
• Advance notice of AAMV publications, such as Transforming Museum Volunteering, plus workshops, presentations, and meetings

Become an AAMV Member Today!

Name ___________________________________________ Institutional Affiliation ____________________________ Date ____________

Mailing Address ____________________________________________

Phone _____________________________ Fax _____________________________ E-mail _____________________________

Volunteer ☐ Staff ☐ Title (if staff) ____________________________ Department _____________________________

Check here if you would like to be added to the listserv ☐

MEMBERSHIP CATEGORIES

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<tr>
<td>Volunteer Group*</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sponsor **</td>
<td>$100 ☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Additional Contribution</td>
<td>$ ___ ☐</td>
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Make checks payable to AAMV. (Membership by PayPal is available online at www.aamv.org)

If you have any questions about your membership send an email to Lois Kuter at kuter@ansp.org.

*Allows 3 individuals from same institution access to AAMV listserv

**Individual membership plus $65 deductible contribution

Send membership applications to:  AAMV, P. O. Box 9494, Washington, DC 20016