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## Dozen pioneers ushered into supply chain 'hall of fame'

*Bellwether League Inc. promotes 12, retires two and welcomes one*

SCHAUMBURG, IL (October 19, 2009) – Twelve individuals spanning roughly a century in healthcare operations were inducted into **Bellwether League Inc.**'s supply chain "hall of fame," on Tuesday, October 6, at the Renaissance Chicago O'Hare Suites Hotel.

The 2009 Honoree Induction Dinner fittingly occurred during National Healthcare Resource & Materials Management Week in a formal ceremony that alternately flipped from emotionally moving to uplifting.

**BLI's** Board of Directors inducted the following in its Bellwether Class of 2009: George Ainsworth, Charles Auslander, Guy J. Clark, Gordon A. Friesen, Lillian R. Matiska, Brien Laing, William M. McKnight Jr., Sara I. Mobley, Paul B. Powell, Samuel G. Raudenbush, Warren D. Rhodes and James E. Stover. They were chosen for their intellectual and operational contributions to healthcare through their achievements in hospitals, group purchasing organizations (GPOs), manufacturers and distributors, consulting firms, educational institutions and media properties. Read their profiles on **BLI's** Web site at [www.bellwetherleague.org](http://www.bellwetherleague.org).

Three are former presidents of the Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management (AHRMM) and one a former chairman of the Health Industry Distributors Association (HIDA) and the leader of two dealer buying organizations.

Executive Director Rick Dana Barlow opened the ceremony by committing **BLI** to helping the industry remember its past, which slowly is being lost to lore, and preserve the stories behind the industry's ongoing

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Deborah Sprindzunas, executive director, the Association for Healthcare Resource & Materials Management, lauded the select group of leaders being honored by **BLI** that “blazed a path” for future generations.

“During my 11 years with AHRMM, I’ve seen a major evolution in the profession,” she said. “What was previously seen as a basement position is now being recognized as a strategic position. There are a lot of unsung heroes in healthcare, particularly those who make sure that all the supplies are available for clinicians when they need them. AHRMM is pleased and honored to be a partner of **BLI**.”

Of the 12 honorees inducted as part of the Bellwether Class of 2009, five were recognized posthumously, two were unable to attend and five accepted their awards to rousing standing ovations befitting their contributions.

## Remembering excellence

As the first of the five honorees in attendance for induction, Sara Mobley drew some of the earliest laughs. “I would like to thank you for doing this while I’m still living,” she said, expressing humility and excitement for the honor, as well as appreciation for **BLI**’s mission.

Mobley emphasized learning and mentoring as the key to professional success. “You never ever stop learning. There’s always a new sales person that has to be trained,” she said to audience laughter again. “Early on in my career, I believed in quality patient care. For us, that meant having the right item at the right time in the right place. That’s simply stated and so true. You just have to do that to be successful. We’ve come a long way since reprocessing surgeons’ gloves. We face so many challenges. But the staff are aware and ready. They know what do to. It takes a lot of people to get there, including vendors.”

Paul Powell attributed his healthcare career development to sales representatives along the way, sharing his award with them. “At this august point in my life it’s nice to be remembered,” he said. “If you’re going to accomplish great things, you need an interdisciplinary background to handle the multiple challenges [facing] a complete purchasing job. I want to thank all those salesmen who became great friends, worked with me, shared ideas and resources, and committed resources to create a coherent program. Without that we wouldn’t have the structure we do.”

**BLI** Secretary Robert P. “Bud” Bowen highlighted James Stover’s quality of character as a measure of his true leadership in industry. “The finest leaders may not be the ones with the highest profile or the fanciest titles,” Bowen said.

Upon receiving his award, Stover briefly reflected on his storied career, starting with the distribution company his father founded in 1939 and that he later led for more than two

**BLI** Board Member Larry Dickson introduced Warren Rhodes by remembering his own introduction to him early in his career when Rhodes' name came up at an American Hospital Supply Corporation sales meeting.

"[AHC President] Karl Bays was talking about how much he appreciated GPOs," Dickson said to howls of laughter in the audience, "and Warren Rhodes. Somebody in the back of the room asked what was so special about him. Bays responded that 'he was the best contract negotiator in the country, bar none.' Then someone asked if he had any special skills? Bays thought for a moment and then replied, 'He knows his business plan better than we know ours. He has absolute integrity and business ethics, complete support and commitment from all 15,000 beds in his organization and, most importantly, he has the trust and support of all 62 hospital administrators in his organization.'"

Rhodes marveled at how many of his fellow inductees in both the Bellwether Classes of 2008 and 2009 he either knew or worked with.

"Somewhere in my files I have one of the first contracts we signed with American Hospital Supply with [fellow Bellwether Class of 2009 Inductee Brien Laing's] signature on it," he recalled. Then he quipped, "I wish he were here so we could talk about that and how high his prices were."

After commending **BLI** for its mission, Rhodes expressed appreciation for his experience and for supply chain management. "As we move forward in healthcare there are so many uncertainties and more pressure," he said. "Supply chain is more important than ever before. We have to instill how important. I thank God every day that I had a career in healthcare."

As the last of those to be inducted and receive his award, Samuel Raudenbush expressed he was "supremely humbled and honored to be included in this class. During my 34 years in healthcare, I thought the [AHRMM] presidency in 1988 was as high as I could go. Then I received the George Gossett award. Standing here tonight and being included in this group is the top of the world for me."

## Spotlighting pioneers

Barlow introduced four honorees, all of whom were part of the industry's golden and silver ages. They included:

- The late George Ainsworth, a leading executive with the nation's first group purchasing organization, New York's Hospital Bureau Inc., who in the 1960s and 1970s advocated committed-volume contracting and vendor-paid GPO administrative fees
- The late Charles Auslander, a hospital supply chain manager-turned GPO leader who in the 1940s through the 1960s promoted product standardization. collective purchasing

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Although Laing was unable to attend the event, he provided a Barlow with an acceptance speech that reflected on his philosophy and his early career in healthcare distribution.

“I was blessed with the opportunity to work with so many wonderful people in healthcare over the years,” Laing stated. “I also overwhelmingly believed that we learn from listening to others. My dad reminded me that everyone had a message for me, and I learned to listen.”

Listening is one of the central tenets of being a bellwether and of leadership, Laing added. “Every successful team, company, industry, etc., needs a leader. Leaders point the way, and usually are blessed with insight needed to be a leader.”

The late Gordon Friesen was honored for his trail-blazing concepts in hospital design and healthcare supply chain operations that spanned more than five decades beginning in the mid-1930s. His ideas about personalized patient care, systematic planning fueled by technology and shared services are, by and large, standard operating procedure today and still discussed as part of ongoing healthcare reform efforts.

The late Lillian Matiska, who spent her entire career at a local hospital she also helped to found and staff, was spotlighted for her practical, no-nonsense leadership and management style as well as her passionate promotion of efficient supply chain operations and high-quality patient care. “She spoke her mind straight from the heart,” said BLI Board Member John Gaida as he introduced her.

“We characterize the contributions of those we are inducting, as well as those we inducted last year and those we will induct in years to come, as bellwether-class,” Barlow noted. “Our hope is that when someone identifies himself or herself as a bellwether-class supply chain executive that phrase and title will garner the admiration and respect it deserves ... just like the individual who holds it.

“We at BLI believe that supply chain management is the lifeblood of effective clinical service,” he continued, “and that high-quality patient care is fueled by top-of-the-line supply chain performance.”

Gaida then recognized and led the applause for BLI’s five Founding Sponsors – **Hospira, Kimberly-Clark Health Care, MedAssets, Owens & Minor and Premier Purchasing Partners** – for their continuing generous support.

He also acknowledged and thanked a host of additional BLI sponsors and donors, as well as the leadership of three associations and professional groups in attendance – the Health Industry Group Purchasing Association (HIGPA), National Distribution & Contracting Inc. (NDC) and Strategic Marketplace Initiative (SMI).

## New beginnings

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After graciously accepting his award, Dickson emphasized the need for **BLI** and its ongoing efforts to recognize and promote excellence in the profession. Dunbar, who was unable to attend the event, later reflected that “we who are still in the field are just honing what our predecessors began,” because “they were the true visionaries in the various sectors of the field of supply chain management and are too often forgotten.”

Following the recognition of Dickson and Dunbar, Kowalski and Barlow introduced the newest member of **BLI**'s Board of Directors, Vance B. Moore, president, Resource Optimization & Innovation, Sisters of Mercy Health System, Chesterfield, MO. Moore expressed his appreciation of and enthusiasm for the talent and history behind **BLI** and said he looked forward to helping the organization grow in the future.

## About Bellwether League Inc.

Launched in late July 2007 by a group of influential veterans in the healthcare supply chain industry, **Bellwether League Inc.** seeks to identify and honor individuals who have demonstrated significant leadership in and influence on and contributions to the healthcare supply chain, including professionals from hospitals, non-acute healthcare providers, manufacturers and distributors of healthcare products, group purchasing organizations, consulting firms and educational institutions.

**Bellwether League Inc.** plans to recognize its third group of honorees in April 2010, reveal their names at the annual AHRMM conference in early August in Denver and induct them in Chicago in early October.

**Bellwether League Inc.** selects individuals that meet its criteria to be publicly recognized and recorded in print and online media for their contributions in advancing and improving all segments of the healthcare supply chain. The criteria include ethics, innovation, integrity, leadership, longevity, mentoring, reputation, speaking, teaching, writing and volunteering.

The Board of Directors of **Bellwether League Inc.** includes a veteran group of industry advocates who have volunteered their time and expertise to create and continually develop the organization and its ongoing educational activities. The Board includes:

- Jamie C. Kowalski (co-founder and chairman), vice president of business development, Owens & Minor Inc., Milwaukee, WI
- Rick Dana Barlow (co-founder and executive director), president, Wingfoot Media Inc., Schaumburg, IL
- Robert P. “Bud” Bowen (secretary), retired CEO, Amerinet Inc., St. Charles, MO
- Patrick E. Carroll Jr. (treasurer), president, Patrick E. Carroll & Associates, Cypress, CA
- James F. Dickow, director of supply chain management, facilities and operations