The Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Prevention Authority (IFPA) is charged with supporting the prosecution and prevention of the crime of insurance fraud in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. If insurance fraud is to be defeated, a strong bridge of communication and cooperation between insurers and law enforcement must exist. Recognizing insurance fraud investigators as the keystone of that bridge, the IFPA has developed partnerships with the Pennsylvania Chapters of the International Association of Special Investigation Units (IASIU).

Annual conferences—at which fraud fighters may gather, network with colleagues, learn of fraud trends and new technologies, and receive recognition for their work—strengthen and advance our collective efforts. We trust that all who attended this year’s 2017 Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Conference at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania found it an enjoyable and rewarding experience.
WELCOMING LUNCHEON, OPENING REMARKS AND AWARDS

The Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Prevention Authority (IFPA), together with the Delaware Valley and Greater Pittsburgh Chapters of the International Association of Special Investigation Units (IASIU), jointly hosted the 2017 Pennsylvania Insurance Fraud Conference on April 6 – 7, 2017.

More than 500 professionals from 21 states attended the two-day event at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center in Hershey, Pennsylvania. The conference also featured the 2017 Pennsylvania Fraud Fighter Awards presented by IFPA Executive Director Tom Donahue.

On behalf of the IFPA’s Board of Directors and the officers and members of the conference co-host chapters of IASIU, IFPA Executive Director Tom Donahue thanked all attendees for their work during the past year and for their help in ensuring Pennsylvania’s continued success in the fight against insurance fraud.

After his opening remarks, Donahue introduced the keynote speaker, Pennsylvania Attorney General Josh Shapiro. Shapiro, who took office in January 2017 as the Commonwealth’s top lawyer and chief law enforcement officer, has made protecting Pennsylvanians from scams and fraud one of his top priorities. During his speech, Shapiro announced that charges have been filed against 28 individuals as a direct result of a March 2017 sweep conducted by the Insurance Fraud Section of the Office of Attorney General. The total potential fraud involved in these unrelated cases is more than $1.1 million.
"Insurance fraud impacts policyholders and consumers across Pennsylvania," Attorney General Shapiro said. "Insurance fraud is a serious crime that drives up costs and premiums for everyday Pennsylvanians."

"Our office’s Insurance Fraud Section has a strong track record of investigating and prosecuting these cases," he added. "We will aggressively prosecute anyone who breaks the law by providing false information to an insurance company."

Following Attorney General Shapiro, Donahue announced that Pennsylvania’s fraud fighters had nominated eight of their colleagues’ work for recognition and began presenting the awards.

This year’s Fraud Fighter Award winners included Senior Deputy Attorney General Eric Schoenberg, Insurance Fraud Section, PA Office of Attorney General; Special Agent Lawrence McGuffin, Insurance Fraud Section, PA Office of Attorney General; Senior Deputy Attorney General Kara Cotter, Insurance Fraud Section, PA Office of Attorney General; Supervisory Special Agent Robert Gift, Insurance Fraud Section, PA Office of Attorney General; Susan Collare, Senior Fraud Analyst, Highmark; Diane Svec, ISS Supervisor Northeast Region Zone I, Erie Insurance Group; Jeff Miller, former Vice President of Account Services, PPO&G; as well as Dawn Holtz, Assistant Chief – IFU, Philadelphia District Attorney’s Office who received the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud’s National Merit Award.
Schoenberg and McGuffin were recognized for successfully prosecuting the matter of Commonwealth v. Piccinini in a case that involved the financial abuse of two elderly sisters from Montgomery County. Piccinini, who sold annuities to the sisters, deceptively and repeatedly misled them by failing to disclose the nature of both annuities and the surrender penalties. The scheme drained more than $200,000 from the victims’ life savings while Piccinini took almost $200,000 in net commissions.

Cotter, Gift and Collare were recognized for their investigative work on the case known as Commonwealth v. Wally. Collare’s work identified numerous instances of billing by Wally for services that were not rendered. The case was later referred to Cotter and Gift of the PA Attorney General’s office. The investigation revealed that Wally billed a total of 9,746 office visits for 22 patients, when in fact she had only completed 1,987 office visits with 22 patients.

Svec was recognized for her strong commitment to fighting insurance fraud for the past 15 years at the Greater Pittsburgh IASIU Chapter. She has played a leadership role at the Greater Pittsburgh Chapter of IASIU since 2002, where she has served as a member of the board of directors, vice president, and as president from 2013 – 2016. Svec continues to support Greater Chapter IASIU activities and volunteers at IASIU International and IFPA seminars.
Miller, who retired in late 2016 from Harrisburg-based marketing communications firm PPO&S, began his involvement with the IFPA in 2009 when the PPO&S team began developing the IFPA’s “Know The Risks, Know The Penalties” education and prevention campaign. He played an integral role in the creation of this award-winning campaign, which has been modeled by other states, and had a strong presence at the past three PA Fraud conferences, lending his expertise to behind-the-scene details and attending to exhibitor needs.

Holtz has been dedicated to prosecuting criminals in the City of Philadelphia for over 28 years as an assistant district attorney and has spent the past four years in the insurance fraud unit where she currently serves as Assistant Unit Chief. She was recognized for the arrest of mob associate Ron Galati, Sr. and 40 of his co-conspirators including a Philadelphia police officer, a city official, insurance fraud adjusters and tow truck operators. The $5 million dollar insurance fraud scheme involved staging, inventing and enhancing automobile accidents and vandalisms in Galati’s family-owned auto body shop.
After the awards ceremony, Donahue introduced their general session speaker Michele Stuart, a licensed private investigator in Arizona with 20 years of experience specializing in the areas of financial, open source investigations (OSINT), corporate investigations, and intelligence/counter intelligence. She presented “Open Source and Social Media Investigations – Part 1 and Part 2.”

Stuart is also an adjunct professor with University of Virginia and an instructor at Quantico, providing presentations and private training to both federal and state levels of law enforcement agencies and military intelligence throughout the United States. She has also presented classes for RSIG, ARA, Allied Finance Adjusters, insurance special investigative units and numerous financial and state associations. Stuart has written and published several articles pertaining to her investigative methods in various investigative publications and journals and is a featured author of her own column in PI Magazine called “Internet FYI,” which focuses on internet profiling and OSINT.
Additionally, throughout the two-day conference, attendees benefited from 12 other educational breakout sessions that covered topics like workers’ comp fraud, misuse of medical records, using vehicle information for investigations, interviewing claimants, cell phone analysis and much, much more. Attendees also discovered many idea-sharing and new business opportunities as they visited with the 30-plus exhibitors on site.
The second annual Insurance Fraud Story Contest also took place where attendees were invited to submit stories of the most bizarre fraud schemes they had encountered during the course of their career. The top four submissions were then chosen and posted to the IFPA Facebook page. The contest winner was determined by the number of “likes” received during the conference from their fellow conference goers.

The 2017 contest winner was “Tears of Fraud,” submitted by Bo Barber, SIU Manager with CNA. His story recalled a massive health care fraud scheme that was uncovered by interviewing a patient of a doctor who was suspected of billing for services not rendered. Shortly into the interview, the patient “Sally” burst into tears, divulging that she just found out her boyfriend of seven years was cheating on her and then spent several hours explaining how he was one of two masterminds behind the massive scheme, and that the treating doctor in her claim was a participant. You can’t make this stuff up. Congratulations to Bo and thanks to all of our contest participants for sharing their stories!
CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR FRAUD FIGHTERS

Among the many benefits enjoyed by attendees at Pennsylvania’s annual conference is that of continuing education (CE). It’s important for both the knowledge gained and the CE credits needed to maintain professional designations, such as those awarded by IASIU, the Association of Certified Fraud Examiners, the National Healthcare Anti-Fraud Association, and the American Association of Professional Coders (AAPC). A general conference certificate of attendance was provided to all attendees to assist in claiming CE credits and an AAPC-required certificate was provided to medical coders to assist them in claiming 4.0 hours of CE units.

This year’s 12 breakout sessions were planned by the conference hosts to benefit all who investigate fraud affecting property and casualty, life and healthcare insurance.
Scott D. Storm, Esquire, Mura & Storm, PLLC presented “Smoking a Bone or Booting a Doojee – Unveiling the Opioid Epidemic’s Affinity for Insurance Claims.”

Robert Horst, Esquire and Partner, Timoney Knox, LLP presented “Can You Be Better? Of Course! Immediate Improvement for the SIU & You.”

Alex Young, Vice President of Risk Management, DRN presented "Using Vehicle Location Information for Fraud Analytics & Investigations."

Dan Bowerman, DC, Principal, Expert-Opinions presented "Misuse of Electronic Medical Records."

Christina Fiscella, SIU Manager, ProSight Specialty Insurance presented "Graying of America & Its Impact on Fraud."

Joseph Toscano, IAAI-CFI, CI, Owner, JToscano FIS presented "Out Of the Ashes (Collaboration in Large Fire Investigations.)"

Rick Wakefield, PA, DC, JD, President And Founder, International Healthcare Consultants, Inc. presented “Interviewing Claimants.”

Anna Kotsovos, Senior Tactical Analyst, National Insurance Crime Bureau presented “Historical Cellular Telephone Records in Fraud Analysis – Tactical Cell Phone Analysis.”
EXHIBITORS SHINE AT THIS YEAR’S CONFERENCE
With more than 500 people moving through the hallways between meeting rooms and breaks held in our exhibition area, business was brisk at the 30 exhibitors’ tables.

Click on the company’s name to visit the exhibitor’s website and explore their services.
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Titan Investigative Alliance, LLC

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For all who contributed to and participated in the 2017 conference – our attendees, exhibitors and presenters – thank you! If you have suggestions on topics, know presenters you’d like to see in 2018 or believe something at this year’s event could have been done better, we’d like to hear your thoughts.

If you’d like to be part of planning for next year’s conference (April 12 – 13, 2018) please let your IASIU Chapter Presidents, John McHale or Derek Davis, know of your interest, or contact the IFPA at 717-691-1828.