there’s a flight department job that requires knowledge of airports and fixed-base operations, general aviation rules and regulations, aviation weather, Customs and TSA regulations, fuel prices and analysis, aircraft maintenance scheduling, flight log entries and another four or five dozen specialized tasks. It’s not that of chief pilot but it describes schedulers and dispatchers (S&Ds), whose daily responsibilities include many tasks similar to those of pilots and duties as diverse as driving airport shuttles, arranging catering, planning meetings and handling department accounting.

From January 15 through 18 in San Diego, NBAA hosted the 23rd annual Schedulers & Dispatchers Conference, providing a venue in which schedulers and dispatchers, veterans and beginners alike, could gain a fuller understanding of their jobs. At the same time they met face-to-face with the vendors and service providers upon whom they depend when planning and conducting their trips.

“We don’t fly it and we don’t fix it, but we do everything else,” said Holly Pendleton, flight operations coordinator at insurance provider Aflac. “I have been on this job for 25 years and it’s still difficult to define all the duties and responsibilities of the scheduler and dispatcher.”

To educate flight department and human resource managers, Anne-Marie Smith, aviation administration supervisor at Steelcase Aviation, compiled a list of 80 scheduler and dispatcher responsibilities. Most schedulers and dispatchers perform at least some of these, and some do even more, she said. Needless to say, “An extreme level of organization and high ability to multi-task, as well as to clarify processes, really helps,” said Smith.

Few are aware of the scheduler/dispatcher career path until they “fall” into the job from elsewhere in the same company, or get hired and then begin on-the-job training. At a few companies such as Jet Aviation, people selected for the job are mentored for about nine to 12 months before they assume the full responsibilities of the position, said George Kythereos, v-p of human resources.

Peter Wood, general manager of charter operator Caliber Jet, said that even after more than 30 years in the business he is still “always learning.” Scheduler/dispatchers have been given “more and more responsibility over the years,” he noted.

This year’s S&D Conference drew a record 407 exhibitors, besting the previous record of 391 set in 2008. The 2,563 registered attendees made for a second all-time record. Recurrent training and workshops designed for schedulers and dispatchers are a key feature of S&D Conferences.

At this year’s conference a series of six sessions earned schedulers and dispatchers proof of recurrent training toward International Standard for Business Aircraft Operations (IS-BAO) certification. NBAA is looking at extending the learning year-round with a “virtual study group” for schedulers and dispatchers.

Fred Barth Honored

The NBAA recognized Fred Barth, a past chairman and founding member of the NBAA Schedulers & Dispatchers Committee, with the 2012 Schedulers & Dispatchers Outstanding Achievement & Leadership Award. Created in 2008, the award recognizes people who have shared their outstanding business aviation industry expertise, provided extraordinary service, exhibited leadership and made significant contributions to scheduling and dispatching. Barth, best remembered in the industry as the longtime flight operations control manager of AT&T’s Aviation Division, resides in Vernon, N.J., with his wife, Janice.

Fred Barth

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Worldwide Support Expands

ExecuJet Aviation Group widened its world presence last year by opening 10 new FBOs throughout Europe, the Middle East and Australasia, ending the year with 16 bases worldwide. “We have seized the opportunity while business aviation is in recovery mode,” said Mark Abbott, group FBO director. “We are currently evaluating further opportunities in Africa, Spain, China, South America and the Middle East.”

Despite a challenging economy, Global Aviation continues to expand. Its Portland, Ore., location is an international gateway and scheduling international trips is a growing portion of Global’s business.

Signature Flight Support, the world’s largest FBO and distribution network for business aviation with more than 100 locations in the United States, Europe, South America, Africa and Asia, at S&D 2012 rolled out its TailWins loyalty program for pilots, crew, schedulers and dispatchers and corporate flight and travel departments, offering one of the highest rates of rewards currently available in the industry. (See article on page 12)

Another incentive program unveiled in San Diego was the World Fuel Services Air Elite FBO network’s Triple FlyBuys points program. Paying with a World Fuel Services AvCard qualifies operators for fuel rebates, gift card awards or charitable donations.

Rockwell Collins announced a new function on its Ascend Flight Manager app that furs paperless operations and also introduced improvements to the Collins regional trip planning for European operators. —H.W.