



Kathy Buek, DAN Coordinator.

Just three short months ago, I joined ZPG as the District Activist Network (DAN) coordinator. At the time, I really didn't know what that meant, but to a recent college graduate, it sounded pretty important. Well, it turns out that it *is* important. The DAN is ZPG's grassroots arm—the part that reaches out to all of you issue-conscious, socially-aware individuals—and turns you into effective, hard-hitting lobbyists.

Let me explain. There are currently about 400 DAN members spread across 48 states (including Alaska and Hawaii). When important legislation needs the DAN's help to get through "the system," DAN members receive an Action Alert by mail or email. Every month, they receive a newsletter with the latest information on ZPG's issues and related legislation, with a specific "Action Assignment" for them to complete. The assignment might be to write a letter to their senator about supporting a specific piece of legislation. Or it could be another interesting task.

What makes the DAN different from other grassroots programs? DAN members can call me at any time during the working day and ask me questions such as, "What should I say to Representative So-and-So?" or "Who voted for this or that bill, and who voted against it?" They can call and ask for suggestions about working for the DAN. I'm sitting right here at my desk with all the latest information, the inside word, and the appropriate resources to answer those questions.

I work for the DAN members. If you're in the DAN—or if you join the DAN—I'll give you contact information for your congressional and state legislative representatives. I'll let you know about the status of specific legislation, and I'll tell you about workshops, conferences, lobby events, and meetings in your local areas. My full-time job is to help all DAN activists be the most informed and effective advocates they can be.

## The Few...The Proud...The District Activist Networkers!

by Kathy Buek,  
Legislative Action Coordinator

Technically speaking, we could hire a dozen professional lobbyists and have them wheeling and dealing, schmoozing and oozing all over Capitol Hill. But they won't be as effective as one persistent and informed voter from a legislator's district.

The key word here is *voter*. Legislators will care what you think, if for no other reason than because you have the power to vote for, or against, him or her. And legislators really do care about their constituents' opinions.

It's not just what I do that makes the DAN special. It's the activists themselves. The key to the DAN is that members are asked to represent ZPG for their congressional district, and to develop a rapport with their legislators, which allows for more effective lobbying on our issues. That rapport grows through regular communication by mail, email, phone calls, and visits to his or her district office.

Gradually, the legislator comes to recognize the activist's name, his or her face, the ZPG name and message, and (hopefully) is influenced by what that activist says. Legislators may come to rely on DAN members as sources of information on population issues and legislation. At the very least, legislators are reminded that their constituents—or at least the DAN activists—are aware of and interested in population, and are paying attention to their votes on those issues. That fact alone is something an elected official cannot ignore.

To sum up, the DAN is grassroots advocacy—streamlined, intensified, and consolidated. The DAN gives a name and face to our issues. It brings ZPG's often complicated issues down out of the clouds of mass communication and public debate, into the only medium that ever really makes a difference—personal relationships.

*If you are interested in joining the District Activist Network, please give me a call at 1-800-767-1956 or drop a line to kbuek@zpg.org.*

*In order to participate in the DAN, you must be registered to vote, and you will be working with the legislators from the district in which you are registered.*

