

Membership Matters

Membership Really Does Matter

by Brooks H. Baker III

While my son Hop was in school at Auburn, he would often come home and help me around the farm getting hay cut and baled and tending to our herd of cattle. Hop graduated this past summer with a degree in horticulture. He hopes that he can continue some sort of career in agriculture.

One particular evening after working all day in the fields, we came in for our evening meal that my wife Virginia had prepared. Some of you may wonder why I call it the evening meal, but I said it that way to avoid confusion. Those of us in the deep south still use the term “supper” as the evening meal and “dinner” for the noon meal. That is when the dinner bell rings, and we can’t figure out why other areas of the country remain confused and call the evening meal dinner.

It was unseasonably cool that night, so we decided to eat our meal on the front porch. We all joined Clyde, Hop’s dog, on the front porch in the porch swing and in the rocking chairs to enjoy our meal. While sitting there, I remembered that I had a problem with a piece of equipment during the day and needed some advice. I rudely dialed the telephone while everyone else was eating and called my friend Max, who has a farm nearby, to ask him a question about the problem we were having with our round hay baler. Max and I talked for a while and I got the information that we needed and quickly went back to

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enjoy the meal that Clyde was coveting.

By now some of you are probably wondering, “Why is Brooks wasting my time with stories about his farm when he is supposed to be writing about ‘membership matters?’” I’m sharing this story because that particular experience while eating our supper that night reminded me of one of the most important values that we can receive from APPA—the ability to collaborate with others when needing advice or counsel. Max was able to help me with information that I needed to do my job better on the farm, and many of you have been able to help me gain the information and insights needed to do my job better at UAB.

Whenever I have a question about a technology that is being touted (remember the guy who wants to sell you the magnets for the cooling tower?), I can pick up the phone and call you and ask about your experience with that technology. The answers will be from people whom I can trust and who have similar work experiences to mine. For that reason I value their advice and count on it to be reliable. Sometimes it is just nice to have a friend in business who we can call to bemoan the fact that budget

cuts are once again coming our way and who can provide guidance regarding modifications to our service and delivery in order to accommodate those cuts.

There are a lot of people who have cattle farms and hay baling operations similar to mine, but I chose to call Max. Why? Well, I see Max periodically at church or around the community and we run into each other at the cattleman’s meetings, and we have built a relationship over the years.

In order to be able to take advantage of APPA membership to its fullest extent, we need to build relationships by attending the tremendous educational programs that APPA offers, such as the Institute, the Academy, regional meetings, and chapter meetings. Not only do we gain valuable information from attending these meetings, but we build relationships which will enable us to pick up the phone and call someone who may have seen the same problem that we are currently having and provide that sage advice that we need.

While you are reading this article, think of others in your organization at work that could benefit from the collaboration with others outside your institution. Those who are working in educational facilities operations or planning, design, and construction can all benefit from the network of peers who have the same experiences every day during the course of their work. If you could benefit from membership at APPA, think about how they could also benefit from an APPA membership. The price to become an APPA member is not costly when considering the benefits that abound. 🏢