

# Crossing the Border: A Venture into Regional Collaboration

By James Barbush

As a member of APPA's Eastern Region and my home KAPPA Chapter (K for Keystone State of Pennsylvania), I have attended many conferences in my chapter and region. I have also attended APPA's Annual Conferences, most notably the 2006 collaborative venture of APPA/NACUBO/SCUP in Hawaii with over 4,000 attendees, and APPA 2007 in Baltimore.

This past year I decided to venture out of my home territory and "cross the border" into another region. So I did a virtual tour of APPA's regions in the United States and Canada, and arrived at SRAPPA, a region adjacent to my own. I found SRAPPA's Call for Presentations for their 2009 Annual Meeting. Since I have presented at numerous conferences over the past five years, I decided to respond to SRAPPA's call. I contacted SRAPPA's Host Committee Chair, and spoke to Joni Brown of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University. Joni enthusiastically requested that I submit my presentation, entitled "Sustaining Leadership through Difficult Times." The presentation was accepted and I was scheduled to attend SRAPPA 2009, their 58th Annual Meeting, *The Race To Green*, in Daytona Beach, Florida on October 3-6.

Never having been to another APPA region, I had no preconceived notions of what to expect. I was going to Florida to do a presentation, meet SRAPPA members, and take family along. I saw it as an opportunity to do something different. I had no notions of doing any particular business except attending educational sessions and doing the usual networking with business partners and facilities professionals.

As I explored this new territory, I began to see that this was going to be a significant event. At the opening reception, I immediately met and socialized with SRAPPA members and business partners. As the conference continued, and each event occurred, as education sessions and networking progressed, and as I met more SRAPPA members, APPA staff, and busi-

ness partners, I saw how this trip to another region, with "unknown" expectations, was developing into a significant opportunity for additional collaboration between APPA, its regions, and its chapters. SRAPPA's incoming president, John Malmrose, greeted me with a relational response to my attendance. Lander Medlin, APPA's executive vice president, and Polly Pinney, APPA's President, commented that this visit to another region will stir thoughts of how to further develop regional collaboration in APPA.

After returning from the SRAPPA conference, I talked to several colleagues about what collaboration between APPA regions could be and what its results could be. I learned that PCAPPA and RMA collaborated on the 2007 Regional Conference, as well as on an earlier conference. They reported that "One goal of the combined PCAPPA/RMA conference was sharing experiences from our two regions. The many and diverse sessions achieved this goal admirably by mixing presenters from across the western states and Canada."

Through collaboration, APPA has greatly enhanced our organizations efforts, increased our strength, and further unified by the following collaborative efforts:

- APPA's organizational collaboration with related organizations. One example being the APPA/NACUBO/SCUP 2006 in Hawaii.
- APPA's ongoing collaboration with each region by communicating with regional boards and chapters and attending their conferences has been fruitful. Our regions have gained greatly and solved problems by communicating with APPA at our Board meetings. As a result, APPA representatives have come to better understand our regions and our chapters, and vice-versa.
- APPA's current collaborative effort with the Southern New England Chapter in the planning of APPA 2010 in Boston in July. As a local chapter and partner, SNEAPPA is assisting in providing first-rate education, entertainment, and an awards program.

Because of APPA's effective collaboration with regions, problems that we may once had are gone because of the communications in the relationships we have developed.

At this time, you might be asking some questions about this notion of regional collaboration. What is it? What does it consist of? What are its goals? What will it cost in time and money? What could a region gain or lose because of it? These are good questions. But many of us may not have specific answers for those questions. We may not have yet collaboratively considered the notion to sufficiently determine its goals, actions, costs, and fruits. The best answer I can give right now is this: "Great things can happen when we are in relationship and collaborating. Not much happens outside of relationship and collaboration."

At ERAPPA 2009, attendees learned, as a result of the conference theme, "imag-

ine," and as quoted by George Lucas, "You can't do it unless you imagine it." Mirroring our theme, Monday's keynote speaker, Jeff Noel of the Disney Institute with 20 years of creative experience, presented an outstanding and inspirational keynote entitled *From Inspiration to Innovation*. Noel showed us how Walt Disney made dreams become reality, and therefore, assured us that we could imagine solutions and see our goals become reality in our facilities.

In closing, I offer these words: *Collaborative Independence*. That's a topic that I am thinking on and will continue to think on. To me, it means that we can build relationships, including those where people "cross the border" to another region in our organization or to another related organization. In those relationships we can collaborate to do small things (or big things) related to individual and corporate goals, and we can still remain independent in our operations.

It means that no central group dictates

what is to be, that "related groups" do not need to look and act the same. It means that we can have individual identity within a larger corporate identity. It means that our collaborative relationships will further strengthen and unify our chapters, regions, and APPA, individually and corporately.

I'm sure we will be hearing APPA continue a dialogue on various forms of collaboration. I invite you to consider the collaboration of your region with another region. Think about what you could do and how you could do it. It may be as simple as a board member from one region calling a board member from another. I am sure that that would only be the beginning of what you can *imagine*. ☺

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