

My APPA Journey to the Pacific Rim

By Mary S. Vosevich

We often talk about how technology is shrinking the world, and how quickly we are able to acquire information that we are seeking. More than ever we are blasted with the convenience of social media and find ourselves wanting—in fact needing—instant access to information. But every now and then, we have an opportunity to interact face to face with our colleagues, and benefit from the richness of these interactions.

I had such an opportunity when I travelled abroad as one of my duties as APPA President-Elect. I have to admit that I was somewhat apprehensive to take this journey, but it turned out to be not just a travel journey but a journey of profound experiences that will stay with me forever.

My journey took me to Singapore, Australia, and New Zealand. It is not the first time a member of my family had “visited” this part of the world. The first visit was experienced by my father over the Pacific in 1944 in a B-25! Obviously, he had incredible stories, but my journey had other lessons.

SINGAPORE

What a proud country. I was there for their independence day. The progress they have made over the years is extraordinary, and this was especially evident at the National University of Singapore (NUS.) There, I had the opportunity to present the APPA journey, as well as share the University of New Mexico’s sustainability program. What a contrast: Singapore, a port city in Asia, lush and green (and, I might add, a little humid), and New Mexico, Albuquerque—where I’m from—5000’ in altitude, and this

year’s rainfall of less than 2 inches. Geographically, a great contrast, but after meeting their facilities staff and discussing the issues, it appears that we are challenged by the same things. I was impressed by the planning that is taking place there, and the importance of funding life-cycle costs of the facilities on their campus. It was quite impressive, and results were obvious.

AUSTRALIA

From Singapore, I attended the TEMC conference in Gold Coast, Australia. What a wonderful place and conference. The conference was well attended by facilities professionals and business officers, with around 700 attendees. My gracious host, Dominic Marafioti, made sure that I met attendees from throughout the TEFMA organization. Australia has a quiet ruggedness and strong people. Everyone I met was committed to their organizations and determined to push the envelope and think outside the box.

The conference sessions were indicative of this: thought provoking and inspiring. I even connected with someone that I had met at APPA’s Leadership Academy many years ago! The world is indeed small. Not unlike our colleagues in North America, you could feel the warmth of relationships within TEFMA. After listening to the opening plenary on social media and how it is impacting higher education, I have a renewed interest and hope in exploring its potential and the value it can add to APPA.

NEW ZEALAND

The last leg of my journey took me to New Zealand, and while there I had the



opportunity to visit Auckland and Christchurch. The University of Auckland is a wonderful, vibrant, urban university with a diverse culture that is woven throughout its programs. While in Christchurch, I saw first-hand the devastation of the earthquakes, how impacted the city was, and how the universities are adapting. I actually think “adapting” is not a strong enough term for what I experienced. It was truly one of the most profound experiences that I have ever had.

The university had a well-planned emergency response program. As you may remember, Christchurch and the south island of New Zealand experienced two earthquakes within one year. Everywhere you visited, there was destruction. I spent a day at the University of Canterbury learning about their emergency response and recovery efforts. The damage was severe and their ability to continue their mission came to a halt when the earthquakes struck. But their recovery efforts were nothing short of extraordinary. The turnaround time to construct temporary facilities and get back to campus operations was unbelievably short. It was inspiring they were able

to make such huge strides under devastating circumstances in such a short period of time. Their facilities staff modeled all of the elements that make up a successful TEAM (Tenacity, Experience, Attitude, and Moxie!) TEAM success also requires commitment from each member, and the staff at Canterbury demonstrated this element, because most certainly, some were dealing with their own personal crises.

When I returned home I was researching more of their emergency response efforts and came upon the following statement from a speech by Kohan McNab, president of the University of Canterbury's student association. Following the university's commencement ceremony in temporary facilities, Kohan addressed his fellow graduates:

"This impact was not just from the event itself but from lessons I learned about other humans during this time. Having been involved with University's incident response management team

I will remember that teamwork and sacrifice are required to be able to act decisively. Having been a member of the core group of the Student Volunteer Army I will remember the importance of a strong emotional support group when you are in a high-stress situation. From my fellow Canterbury graduates I will remember the perseverance and commitment required to focus on exams whilst in the midst of a natural disaster. I will remember what was required, not only to carry on, but to succeed and enjoy life in the face adversity. I will remember that even in a time of extreme trial and great personal loss, a large number of people will still turn to help others. And I hope I will remember how this action can resonate across the community, the country, and the world...."

LESSONS LEARNED

Here are the lessons I came away with from my travels to our colleagues in the

Pacific Rim:

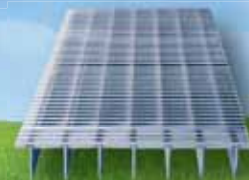
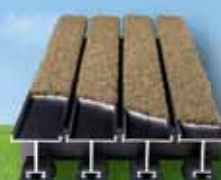
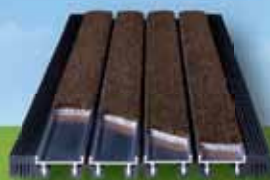
1. In the facilities profession around the world, we are experiencing similar issues, and we have colleagues that we can share and learn from our experiences.
2. That not only in our day-to-day activities, but in severe situations and events, the people in our organizations time and time again demonstrate their commitment to their institutions and fellow man—even when dealing with their own personal losses.
3. And finally, as Kohan McNab stated, that we carry on, succeed, and enjoy life in the face of adversity.

To everyone that was so gracious and took the time to meet with me during this journey, thank you. ☺

Mary Vosevich is director, physical plant department, at the University of New Mexico, Albuquerque, NM, and APPA's President-Elect. She can be reached at mvosevic@unm.edu.

Celebrating our expanded offering of Cradle to Cradle: Silver Certified Products

Contact our knowledgeable staff to learn more about our wide variety of custom solutions for any entrance condition! Keep your facility safe and clean with help from the entrance flooring experts at Construction Specialties.



Construction Specialties™
800-233-8493 • www.c-sgroup.com



Find us on:



www.howards-blog.com