

“Say ‘Yes’,” They Said

By Erin Marsh



When I first got involved with APPA, I was two years into a transition from the private sector construction industry in California to a position in higher education facilities management with the Design & Construction Department at the University of Iowa. I had heard about APPA from colleagues, but only enough to know that getting involved might be a good way to develop my career. I started looking at the APPA website to find out more about what

APPA does. Acronyms like “FPI,” “EFP,” and “CEFP” were flying in one ear and out the other, until I saw something about APPA’s upcoming Emerging Professionals Summit. This was something I could connect with. The Emerging Professionals group, now called APPA Young Professionals (AYP), was established to bridge the unprecedented challenges and uncertainties of today, which require us to remain flexible and adapt rapidly. It was intended for those who are fresh out of college and making a career shift, who are not held back by the status quo and not afraid to challenge it by asking “what if...?” This sounded like me. After sitting through the summit, I asked some of the more experienced APPA members how I could get involved. “Say ‘yes,’” they said. Before the end of the APPA Annual Conference, the sitting MAPPAs membership chair asked if I wanted to join the committee. I said “yes” and left the conference as the Iowa representative for the MAPPAs membership committee.

A BROAD SPECTRUM OF RESOURCES

I started my career in California working for general contractors. My experience was in the built environment for the private sector. I worked on a variety of projects, including K-12 schools, community centers, a museum, hospitals, universities, and laboratories. I was very comfortable being in the role of the builder and in managing the subcontractors. When I moved to Iowa, I made the jump from private sector to public sector, working as a construction manager for the University of Iowa. My role switched from builder to owner’s representative—a completely different mindset.

Becoming actively engaged in APPA was the best tool I could have ever received to help me navigate my new career. Having access to a network of experienced individuals with a wide range of expertise provided me with the resources I needed to tackle the issues I faced. I have been able to pick up the phone or send a quick email to someone at another institution who may have already overcome a par-


ticular challenge I am working through. Whether it is a technical construction question, or one regarding the needs of the departmental clients on a university campus, someone in APPA has experienced it, mastered it, and is willing to share what they have learned. And this is why membership matters: The wider the scope of APPA membership, the more resources are available to all of us.

After serving for a year or so as the Iowa representative for the MAPPAs membership committee, I was asked if I was interested in leading the committee. "Say 'yes'" rang in my ears—so I did. This role has challenged me to think outside of the box and come up with fresh recruitment and retention strategies and methods. Membership is really all about grabbing someone's attention and making a personal connection. So how do you get through to someone and help them understand the value APPA offers? For me, it's all about the relationships.

SAYING "YES" OPENS DOORS

By saying "yes" to opportunities that have been offered, I have been able to be engaged and active at both the regional and international level. Being a part of both APPA's Membership Committee and AYP has been a great opportunity for collaboration between the two groups. One of the membership committee's goals is to grow AYP by utilizing technology and social media. Each of us has the opportunity to engage this demographic at our own institutions: Facilities management departments can present their organization at career fairs on their campus, and they can increase their Facebook and Twitter presence. Some institutions have even started making short sound-bite videos highlighting the amazing work and special projects their facilities management departments are doing. The way we push membership is always evolving.

Five years later, I'm coming to the end of my term as the MAPPAs membership committee chair and am looking for someone to say "yes" to

the opportunity to lead the committee in continuing the growth of APPA and the great knowledge and resources it provides to its members. 

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