

Members: The Strength of an Association

By Charles Scott, CFP
 APPA President, 2016-17



I recently received a call from Louis Galante of the University of Iowa. Lou was inquiring about the process necessary to create an APPA chapter for facilities professionals in Iowa. He had learned that I created ILAPPA (Illinois APPA) a few years ago, and thought my experience could help to guide him along this journey. As we chatted, I couldn't help but think about the value of APPA's local chapters, and how they support our six regions—and APPA as a whole. I sent some materials to Lou, and he has discussed the concept of creating an Iowa chapter with his local peers. The idea was met with overwhelming enthusiasm. I think Lou is well on his way to creating a new chapter!

This recent call naturally caused my mind to wander back to the first few ILAPPA meetings I attended, my regional experiences, and certainly to my journey with APPA over the past three decades. My years with APPA have been extraordinary, providing me experiences and taking me to locations I only imagined early in my career as a facilities professional. I also recognize that all APPA members have their own unique journey to relate.

THE UNIQUE APPA MEMBER

The notion of unique journeys made me stop to ponder, "Why have nearly 14,000 facilities professionals taken this path themselves?" And that number increases significantly when considering previous members over APPA's 103-year history. Are we all just curious and hungry for knowledge? Do we have specific projects or concerns we need to research in order to better perform on the job? Is it because of the rich relationships we develop along the way? I suspect for all of us, the answer to these questions is "yes."

The facilities professional is indeed a unique person. Rarely have any of us entered into our work deliberately. I, for one, was a horticulture student who apparently did my job well and was in the right place at the right time to grow my career at Illinois

State University. Others in the field have had similar good fortune. But very few of us actually studied facilities management in our curriculum because it was simply not offered. I am continually encouraged when I read about universities that have expanded their educational offerings to include facilities management. I know that Lander Medlin, APPA Executive Vice President, hopes to have our major institutions recognize the industry by having a College of Facilities embedded into their academic arena. I am confident that one day, we will see just that!

Now I go back to the question above—why do we take this journey? APPA offers so much for so many in such a positive and professional manner. Along with its research and awards programs, some of APPA's hallmarks are the many professional development opportunities it provides. Through these programs, we satisfy our curiosity, are able to research solutions to our concerns, and find significant opportunities for networking and building rich relationships.

For Lou to create a new chapter in Iowa, the APPA offerings need to become readily available to a localized group of facilities professionals. But, why create a chapter for this purpose when that group already meets annually to discuss facilities topics? Because chapters support regional goals, and the attainment of these goals supports APPA. Our chapters, in many cases, are the lifeblood of this association. They engage the grassroots members of APPA and enlist new members. New members bring new perspectives, new curiosities, and new relationships.

Today my hat goes off to Lou Galante for his initiative and his push for a new chapter. Months ago, it was to Winnie Kwofie for creating the San Francisco Bay Area Chapter (BayAPPA). Before that, Tony Guerrero for building the Northwest APPA Chapter (NWAPPA). There are so many other examples of work being done by passionate people who want only the best for their facilities peers.



For those of you who are active with facilities groups in your local area, I encourage you to support APPA by stepping up, initiating the conversation, and considering the creation of yet another APPA chapter, if one does not yet exist. The strength of any association comes from its members. It is incumbent upon each of us to support this association; this happens to be just one method for doing so.

MY OWN APPA JOURNEY

To change gears a bit, I would like to comment on my year as your APPA President. The story mentioned above is but one small example of the many opportunities I have had in my APPA journey. This past year has truly been remarkable and has given back so much more to me than what I have given to the association. One of the many highlights for me is to have installed every new APPA Regional Board

of Directors. I am pleased to personally know each individual within these groups of highly dedicated professionals; knowing that they are in charge of our regions and supporting APPA is gratifying. I can be sure that APPA is in good hands.

It has also been good to work closely with the APPA Board, Executive Committee, APPA U Deans, and the Presidential Triad. Pete Strazdas built upon foundations established by previous APPA Presidents and left me with a good footing for my past year's theme, "Creating a New Normal." Chris Kopach will soon be putting his personal fingerprints on APPA's future. And congratulations to Don Guckert for being recently chosen as APPA President-Elect! The strengths, knowledge, and experience of these individuals and our respective APPA boards will launch us well into future successes.

On a final note, I firmly believe that the strength of any association lies in its members. Yet at the same time I can say that APPA's greatest strength is found in its exceptional staff. Lander has built a team that is above and beyond any group of individuals I have ever had the pleasure of working with. I want to thank every one of the APPA staff members for your dedication to the profession, your loyalty to the association, and your hard work on behalf of APPA members. You are what truly makes this association succeed. 🙏

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