



Membership Participation DOES Matter!

By Arthur Chonko

Two months into my first facilities job in the fall of 1984, I attended my first APPA conference as “Bill”—a fellow employee who became ill and couldn’t attend, so I went in his place. I’ve been a member ever since.

membership *participation* does matter, in three important ways:

First, I would not be here without the support and mentoring of many others.

Second, the professional and personal growth opportunities provided through APPA have been critical to my development.

Third, while I’m a pretty strong “I” at times (“Introvert” according to Myers-Briggs), it has been fun meeting people and talking about a job I love!

GIVING CREDIT

I’ve had the opportunity to work with many wonderful, committed, and intelligent people over the years, but I would like to specifically recognize three of them: Chuck Culp, PT Farley, and Seth Patton. They supported and mentored me, and provided the base for my development and growth by fostering lots of dialogue and leading through their personal and organizational integrity.

They showed commitment to individual and organizational improvement, and they always did the right thing for the university—especially the staff—even when there may have been easier paths. They made a conscious effort to utilize available resources in the most

efficient and sustainable manner possible, and they showed me that in a true service organization, there is no place for ego, political grandstanding, or empire building. Like so many that I have met through my involvement in APPA, these individuals exemplified what it means to be true facilities professionals, and they supported me and allowed me the opportunity to participate and grow.

GROWING AND EVOLVING

Just as I have grown in my career, APPA has grown from an Association of “Physical Plant” Administrators into “The Association for Educational Facilities Officers”—the preeminent source of professional education, credentialing, and information related to the stewardship of educational facilities. A quick look at APPA’s website will reveal a multitude of opportunities for personal improvement and resources for benchmarking and organizational growth.

Whether you are an emerging professional or a seasoned veteran working at a small private college, community college, or large research institution, you provide many of the same services and share many of the same challenges. The resources that APPA International and its chapters and regions provide strengthen all of us. Opportunities abound for participation in educational programs, research, benchmarking, and in APPA itself.

In addition to attending MAPPA and APPA annual meetings, I have been



For many years, I just attended the conferences and listened—I did a LOT of listening. As I learned more, I began to ask questions and participate in discussions. Thanks to a MAPPA scholarship, I also had the opportunity to attend one of the early Institutes. As I got more involved it became clear to me that

fortunate to have had the opportunity to attend many of the APPA educational programs. Having served on the MAPP Conference Educational Program Committee for a number of years, as MAPP's Treasurer for the last four years, and now starting in my role as MAPP's Membership Chair, I have had the opportunity to meet many wonderful and committed individuals and to see the dedication and hard work that goes into making this association what it is.

THE TRUE RESOURCE—PEOPLE

Just as in our own organizations, the people involved in APPA—the professionals in the APPA office and the many volunteers across the globe—are the true resource. They provide the ability to network with others, to hear how they have applied concepts and ideas (what

worked and what didn't), benchmark best practices, to meet business partners with new or innovative technologies and processes. They also make it possible for us to attend educational sessions in areas outside of our own expertise, build professional and personal relationships with colleagues, and ask questions and get real, proven answers to them. And at times, just being able to get away from the day-to-day grind and commiserate—to know that we are not alone in our particular struggle or frustration—makes it well worth the cost of membership.

APPA started out more than 100 years ago as an organization of like-minded people, working toward the betterment of their educational facilities. Today's APPA has evolved into a diverse professional organization dedicated to supporting the educational mission of

our organizations and, ultimately, the students who will be our future. We wouldn't be the organization that we are without the many volunteers who serve on the regional and international boards and committees and those who support the many educational and outreach programs for our membership.

We the members *are* APPA; we make this organization what it is. So, yes, membership *participation* does matter! If you have the interest or opportunity to help, please take it. You will help make our organization stronger, and just maybe, you'll learn something and have some fun along the way. I know I have. ☺

Art Chonko is director of physical facilities at Denison University in Granville, OH. You can reach him at chonko@denison.edu. This is his first article for *Facilities Manager*.

Helping Schools Create Ideal Learning Environments

SSC | services for education | EXPERTISE COMMITMENT VALUE

SSC partners with educational institutions to further the success and well-being of students, staff, and faculty by delivering quality integrated facilities programs. For more information visit sscserv.com.