

Member Services Update

By Laurie Klupacs, AMC Deputy Director

Thank you for attending the Association of Minnesota Counties 107th Annual Conference at the St. Cloud River's Edge on December 7-8, 2015. AMC was pleased to have gathered 555 attendees, from ALL 87 counties – "One Minnesota" was the theme. The post conference survey responses have been very positive.

Hotel Room Cancellation Policy a Success

I'm pleased to report that due to the newly implemented conference site hotel room cancellation policy (within one week prior to conference) every conference site hotel room was filled. As you may recall, the AMC Board supported the implementation of a \$100 cancellation fee to any member that cancelled their conference site hotel room within one week of the conference (on or before 11/30). AMC assessed only nine members the cancellation fee. This cancellation policy was successful and it truly worked in getting people on the waiting lists called back and into a conference site room. The policy worked so well that it will be continued in future years. In addition, the hotels will be promoting the use of this policy with their other clients that experience the difficulties that we have in the past.

The concurrent workshops were very well attended and received positive remarks, as did our conference keynote Thom Singer, whose appearance was generously sponsored by our partners at MCIT.

The Annual Conference Planning Committee members deserve credit for planning a successful conference and appreciation for their hard work! Members of the committee include: Chair Jack Swanson, Roseau County; Co-Chair Gary Hendrickx, Swift County;

Anne Marcotte, Aitkin County; Matt Dotta, Hubbard County; Darryl Tveitbakk, Pennington County; Grant Weyland, Clay County; Susan Morris, Isanti County; LaMont Jacobson, Renville County; Drew Campbell, Blue Earth County; Rosemary Schultz, Jackson County; Jerry Reinartz, Mower County; Liz Workman, Dakota County; Roxy Traxler, Mille Lacs County; Patty O'Connor, Blue Earth County; Allie Freidrichs, McLeod County; Julie Hanson, Mahnommen County; Tammy Bigelow, Sherburne County; Robyn Sykes, MCIT.

Last, but certainly not least, our conference was successful due to the dedication, involvement and financial support from AMC's vendors. The vendor fair was one of the best as our vendors were extremely happy and AMC raised \$2,200 on the silent auction, which will be added to AMC's Educational Scholarship Fund. AMC's Past President Christopher Shoff will award a student from his county with a \$3,000 scholarship.

Thank you to everyone that answered our post conference survey (32% response rate). All feedback is taken into consideration when planning and making alterations to future conferences. AMC 1st Vice President and Swift County Commissioner, Gary Hendrickx will chair the planning committee in 2016, if you're interested in serving on the committee, please inform Commissioner Hendrickx or myself. The committee will meet approximately three times.

Mark Your Calendars

Thank you all for a wonderful 2015! I look forward to seeing you at the following AMC events in 2016:

AMC Legislative Conference on March 10-11, 2016

Spring (June) & Fall (October/November) District Meetings

Policy Committee meetings on September 15-16, 2016

Annual Conference - Hyatt Regency in Minneapolis on December 5-6, 2016



Local Public Health Association 2016 Outlook

By Karen Moritz, 2016 LPHA Chair

My name is Karen Moritz. I am the Brown County Public Health Director and the Brown-Nicollet Community Health Board Administrator, and I have the privilege of serving as the 2016 chair of the Local Public Health Association (LPHA).

With a membership of more than 200 public health leaders from city, county and tribal health departments across our state, the LPHA strives to provide leadership, education, legislative influence and creative problem resolution to advance the public health practice and promote the health of all Minnesotans.

2015 brought us many successes: We secured a slight increase in appropriations to the Local Public Health Grant; maintained funding for the Statewide Health Improvement Program (SHIP) and family home visiting programs; protected local control of immunization programs; made progress in reviewing food, pools and lodging evaluations; and much more. As we move into 2016, we are excited to build upon our past achievements and further strengthen our association, so it is timely that we are now in the midst of updating LPHA's strategic plan.

We launched our strategic planning process at LPHA's November annual meeting, with an engaging, statewide discussion that allowed members to identify four goals for our association:

1. Actively and creatively engage LPHA members
2. Grow and strengthen the future public health leadership
3. Integrate a public health perspective in all policy discussions
4. Promote the public health brand

Over the next couple of months, we'll be working with the LPHA committees, our general membership and our partners to identify specific strategies to implement in the next two to three years that will help us meet these goals. We welcome your ideas!

In addition to strategic planning activities, a key aspect of our work in 2016 will continue to be working with our members and partners to engage elected officials at the state legislature in furthering public health policy and practice throughout Minnesota. Our 2016 legislative platform includes:

- Restoring funding to the Local Public Health Grant: This Grant is the state's main investment in our public health system and services mandated by the Local Public Health Act to protect and promote the public's health and safety. It provides flexible funding to use at the local level, based on community needs, and its restoration remains LPHA's top priority.
- Maintaining funding for SHIP: SHIP supports local efforts to reduce health care costs and chronic disease rates by creating more opportunities for people of all ages to eat healthy, be active and live tobacco-free. It's been good for health and also helped create more vibrant communities.
- Increasing MA reimbursements for family home visits: Targeted family home visits are an effective way to prevent child maltreatment, promote healthy childhood development and foster self-sufficient families—all of which help to reduce health care and other public program costs. Current MA reimbursements fall far short of covering the cost of services, leaving counties to rely heavily on local tax dollars to fill the gaps.
- Establish an MA benefit for asthma care services: Asthma is the leading cause of missed school days in our state and contributes to higher use of urgent care, ER visits and hospitalizations. An MA benefit would make resources available to educate and assist individuals in addressing asthma triggers, leading to better health and academic outcomes and lower health care costs.

Public health is hard at work in your local jurisdictions, and the activities of 2016 will come with many opportunities to continue collaborating with partners across sectors. The LPHA, local public health directors and staff look forward to continuing to work with AMC and our county officials to better serve our communities throughout the coming year. ■

Karen Moritz, PHN, is the Brown County Public Health Director for Brown County and the CHS Administrator for the Brown-Nicollet CHB.

4-H Position Hiring Process Improved With LEAN Kaizen Effort



4-H program coordinators serve an important frontline role, delivering Extension's 4-H youth development programs in Minnesota counties. Those positions are good investments, but county and Extension partners were spending a significant amount of time and effort hiring new staff when someone left a position.

In 2016, Extension is launching a new 4-H position hiring process that reduces the hiring time from 13 weeks to nine weeks or less.

"It's important to work together to hire 4-H staff who create learning experiences for 4-H youth, but we definitely needed a better process," says Bob Byrnes, Extension director of field operations.

The new hiring process is the result of a Kaizen work session facilitated by Toni Smith, AMC educator director and Kim Boyce, former Extension regional director. To address the situation, Extension educators, staff and administrators participated in the Kaizen event to examine the entire process - from the time a program coordinator resigns to when a new hire is announced. Through that in-depth review they discovered the long process involved touchpoints for 17 individuals.

The group made recommendations that, along with other changes, will bring significant improvements and time saving to counties and Extension. Recommendations that include naming one key employee to lead a process that was previously distributed among several people, and a new hiring process that occurs three times a year, reduces the overall time committed to hiring as well as the number of people involved. Hiring will now be led by individuals who have the passion and skill-set to effectively lead the process from beginning to end.

The new hiring process was piloted in fall 2015 for several new hires, including a position in Lyon County.

"I had gone through the long process of hiring a program coordinator before," says Rick Anderson, a Lyon County commissioner. "I was a little skeptical at first and I thought the interviews were still a little too long. But in the end, all of the candidates were high quality and I appreciated the shortened process."

In addition to simplifying and shortening the hiring process, the changes clarify and increase the role of the County Extension Committee, generate a stronger and more diverse candidate pool and create the opportunity to onboard new employees together.

"It's an ongoing transformation," says Tamie Bremseth, Extension director of youth development operations, "but the way it's going so far is very promising with very positive comments from candidates, staff and county partners."

The group Kaizen is a Japanese word meaning improvement. A "Lean" organization focuses its key processes to continuously increase value while producing zero waste. To learn more about the Kaizen process, contact Toni Smith. ■