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 935 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

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 1/10). 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 Hendricks, Swift County; Anne Marcotte, Aitkin County; Matt Dotta, Hubbard County; Darrel Teethak, 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 Trauger, Mille Lacs County; Patty O’Connor, Blue Earth County; Alie Friedrichs, McLeod County; Julie Hanson, Mahnomen County; Tammy Riglow, Sherburne County; Robyn Sykes, MCT.

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, while reporting that he added to the AMC’s Educational Scholarship Fund. AMC’s Past President Christopher Shoff will award a student from his county with a $5,000 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 Hendricks will chair the planning committee in 2016, if you’re interested in serving on the committee, please inform Commissioner Hendricks 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

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 Roys, 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 several touchpoints for 7 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. “It 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 help Extension partners be more effective in their hiring process.

“The changes clarify and increase the role of the County Extension Committee, generate a stronger and more diverse candidate pool and help Extension partners be more effective in their hiring process.” says Tamie Bremseth, Extension director of human resources.

“4-H programs are an important part of youth development in our communities. It’s an ongoing transformation,” says Tamie Bremseth, Extension director of human resources. "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.

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