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Directly Speaking ***It's fun to bring a friend! (Or a co-worker!)***

by Scott A. Meyers, Executive Vice President

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When I took my first pharmacist job in a hospital pharmacy, I didn't know what ICHP was. Thank goodness for my assistant director and director of pharmacy! Both were active members of ICHP and the assistant director at Swedish American was the first to encourage me to join ICHP and start going to Rock Valley Society meetings. That was back in 1977! My Director was also encouraging and both of them made it a point to introduce me to many of the other members from surrounding hospitals in the Rockford area when I first started to attend. I think that's why I'm where I am today.

The point is, I joined because they asked and encouraged me to do so and then they made it a friendly place to go to. Once I began attending regularly, I built a network of friends, colleagues, and, several times, future co-workers. It didn't take me long to do the same, inviting my new co-workers to join ICHP and making sure they got introduced to our colleagues all around the Rockford area. And believe me, for a time in 1980 and 1981, I had new co-workers almost every month. But that's a story for another Directly Speaking column.

And you know, the same thing happened when I attended my first ICHP Annual Meeting. A couple of my colleagues and I were delegates to the ICHP House of Delegates in 1983 or 84 and while it was my first ICHP annual meeting it wasn't for the others. They knew many of the ICHP leaders and they made sure I was introduced to most of them. I remember sitting at the closing awards banquet and thinking that someday I would like to know the people sitting at the head table! Now I play a significant role in deciding who those people are!

It is truly amazing how friendly the members of ICHP can be and while I have heard stories of how "clicky" ICHP can be, I know that there have been very few ICHP members who wouldn't or won't talk to anybody if they just walk up and introduce themselves. And it is even easier to get a conversation going when a colleague introduces the newbie personally! You see, one of the many things I've learned about pharmacists while working for ICHP is that almost all of them are very friendly but even more of them are shy! I'm not sure why that is but maybe it is easier talking to a patient about their meds, something we know a lot more about than them, than meeting a new friend?

I think we've lost a little bit of the fun locally because many of the affiliate meetings have disappeared. The pharmaceutical companies can no longer bribe us with the fancy meals and hired gun speakers like they used to

do and several of the affiliates struggle to get volunteers to serve as officers to coordinate a scaled down dinner meeting. I think that's unfortunate for many who would feel comfortable sticking their toe in the water in a setting close to home. But a few of the affiliates are still successfully meeting in the evenings, learning about cutting edge practice, building networks and exchanging ideas. And it happens on a grand scale at both of ICHP's statewide meetings in the spring and fall! Speaking of which, this year's Spring Meeting registration is open! Hint, hint!

If you're an ICHP member, and I'm guessing most of you reading this are, think back to when you first joined ICHP. Did someone invite you to join or attend a meeting? What was your first experience with ICHP like? This year's Spring Meeting is centrally located in East Peoria on April 13-14th and offers great education, outstanding networking opportunities, a cutting edge exhibit program, the latest research from two poster sessions and a ICHP Pharmacy Action Fund "Fund Fair" on Friday night that will remind you of your elementary school Fun Fairs only with more fun, great food and adult beverages! This Spring Meeting will be a great place to bring a friend or two, introduce them to some of your friends from around Illinois and show them that ICHP is a fun place to be.

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