Massachusetts Conference Recipe for Fun, Appreciation, Membership, and Enthusiasm (F.A.M.E.)

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The Massachusetts Association of Occupational Health Nurses shares its recipe for an annual conference to show appreciation, inspire, and meet the needs of its membership. [Workplace Health Saf 2014;62(1):44.]

Current economic times impacting occupational health motivated the Massachusetts Association of Occupational Health Nurses (MaOHN) to demonstrate increased appreciation of our membership through a Professional Development Day centered around the ingredients of Fun, Appreciation, Membership, and Enthusiasm (F.A.M.E.). Our members had the opportunity to interact with their colleagues across the state, be enlightened by excellent educational content, and feel appreciated by their chapters. MaOHN was awarded the 2013 Short Activity Award for this conference.

The first ingredient is FUN. The conference space was decorated with stars and banners and a red carpet. Members received small buttons with inspirational words of appreciation, success, and self-esteem as they registered. At our second F.A.M.E. Conference, we distributed flexible stars with arms, legs, and a smile imprinted with “Exceeds Excellence” to add even more fun to everyone’s table!

APPRECIATION is the second ingredient. To recognize members who have actively participated in our organization, local chapters selected four members who embodied one facet of F.A.M.E. The recipients of each award were presented with an “Oscar” statuette and spotlighted on our newly redesigned website, which was coordinated to go live on the morning of the conference. At our second F.A.M.E. conference, each chapter selected one member who represented one aspect of the acronym and one member was chosen by the MaOHN President for exhibiting the true spirit of F.A.M.E.

The third ingredient is MEMBERSHIP. An informal needs assessment by our chapter presidents determined the following points were important to our members: a central location that offered easy access to our members across the state, a time that would meet the needs of members not able to attend activities during the week, and a high-quality, low-cost educational program. A festive atmosphere and catered lunch were equally important to create a celebratory feeling.

To ensure increased participation in this joint planning venture, chapter presidents met with their local boards and membership to each identify one topic and speaker for the conference. This presentation served as one of the local chapter educational commitments for the year. An added benefit to a joint chapter meeting was the opportunity to bring MaOHN members together across the state for networking and to unify our state members.

Vendor fees helped offset the cost of the conference to members and provided raffle gifts for our attendees. One-third of the MaOHN membership attended our first conference. Evaluations were positive and suggestions for the next conference were identified. Chapters voted individually to offset the cost of their members to attend with a full or partial stipend, making this a true appreciation for their membership. More than 50% of the members attended our second F.A.M.E. conference.

The final ingredient is ENTHUSIASM. Our first F.A.M.E. conference challenged us to provide our members with strategies to maintain passion in their work and life despite increased demands from employers, negative effects of the economy, and shrinking occupational health resources. Board members and representatives from all four state chapters served on the planning committee and carefully selected topics and speakers that reflected the first theme of “Keeping Passion in Your Life by Taking Care of Your Body, Mind, and Spirit.”

Our second F.A.M.E. conference addressed “Legal Needs and Questions for Nurses,” “How to Protect Your Nursing License,” “Balancing the Needs of the Organization While Maintaining Nursing Ethics and Legal Expectations,” and “Keeping an OSHA Log.” Using an audience response system, we were able to engage all attendees in a question and answer session for each presentation. This allowed the audience to share its experiences and thoughts with the speakers, who could elaborate on content and provide immediate feedback. Poster presentations also allowed members to share their knowledge and interact with their colleagues.

MaOHN accomplished our goals to support our membership through professional development, recognizing accomplishments of our members through our website, and honoring service to chapters through our F.A.M.E. awards. Members leave the F.A.M.E. conference energized. Beneficial lessons learned include seeking low-cost venues and keeping costs to a minimum through vendor support, and providing AAOHN continuing educational activities that support our national and local chapters.

The success of our recipe for F.A.M.E. was evident as we watched our members leave the conferences with smiles on their faces and recruited new volunteers who were re-energized and made to feel welcome and special. We challenge you to add to our recipe and create your own successful F.A.M.E. conference—and remember the best family recipes are even better when shared!