

Our HISTORY...

Throughout the early 1980s, a small group of Alexandria, Va., meeting planners were concerned about the need for professionals in their field to come together to discuss ideas for improvement in their profession, to exchange information on problems of common interest, and to give thought to better ways to meet and to network with peers. This was underscored by the acceleration of trade and other associations moving their headquarters to Alexandria, which some labeled a “mecca” for associations. Also, many industry-related activities were in the District of Columbia, which increased the difficulty in meeting fellow planners and others in the hospitality industry.

From April to July of 1982, several monthly “gatherings,” usually the third Thursday of each month, were held in individual’s offices. Concurrently, Dick Noble, who was at that time the director of sales for corporate accounts with Hilton Hotels Corporation, and Diane Adamson began to vigorously move ahead to formalize the monthly “gatherings” by arranging for the first organizational meeting at the former Ramada Inn in Alexandria. At that time, about 34 planners and eight suppliers were involved, along with three Alexandria-based hotels. The group formed the core of what became the Alexandria Meeting Planners. At the time, about 85 Alexandria-based organizations were on the mailing list. Several volunteer committees began to develop, including membership and programs, and monthly “gatherings” (what became known as bag lunches) were held in several board rooms of associations as well as in local hotels. Also recognized at this juncture, in the initiation of an active association focused on Northern Virginia, was the need to appeal to suppliers as well, many of whom had frequent contact with planners. Later, the group name was changed to the Alexandria Meeting Professionals.

The underlying philosophy and driving force was to provide “a place in our immediate geographical location” to get to “know each other,”

informally learn from each other, enhance “educational knowledge of the profession” in a convenient “local, intimate environment,” to try to develop a forum that would provide a good combination of information exchange coupled with a social period, and to encourage members to volunteer for committee work. Importantly, there was much emphasis on maintaining dues at a reasonable level. These factors, combined with the long hours, diligence, tenacity, and esprit de corps of the original group of “movers and shakers,” were essential to the initiation of today’s AMPs, and underscored the significance of volunteers for the life of the association.

On September 8, 1992, AMPs celebrated its 10th anniversary at the Old Town Holiday Inn with more than 200 in attendance. The theme was “The First Ten Years – The Vision Continues . . .” The first Dick Noble Distinguished Service Award was presented to Dick Noble for “his visionary leadership and outstanding contributions while conceiving, planning, and executing the formation of the Association Meeting Professionals.” Noble’s selfless devotion and high standards of excellence directly resulted in the founding of an organization that now includes more than 300 industry professionals.

At that time, the growth in size of the association and its scope required an infrastructure for the success to continue. This led to the first strategic Long Range Plan which served as a mission guide to provide “local, affordable opportunities to members” where they could meet to share information and to improve and strengthen their value to employers and to the overall profession. The decision was made to employ a management staff to bring stability to the operations side of AMPs. With that in mind, a management company was contracted to carry out specific administrative management duties.

The ongoing leadership of AMPs continues to make every effort to comply with the original vision for the association, which has made its presence felt throughout the regions, and especially in Northern Virginia,

and is recognized nationwide as a significant contributor to professional excellence in the meetings and hospitality industry.

AMPs relies heavily on its member-volunteers to keep its programs and committees both timely and dynamic. Each member and each prospective member brings unique ideas, strengths, and insights to AMPs, through involvement in the various opportunities for volunteerism. This spirit of volunteerism is the “lifeblood” of the association – it is what sustains it as a vigorous, active, and exciting professional organization. Each member should think seriously about what needs to be done and where he or she can “give back” to the association. Such volunteerism contributes to personal and professional growth, and is both a rewarding and an enriching experience. The association is continually seeking new talent for its leadership roles.

One of the most important aspects of AMPs is its dedication to maintain a 50/50 planner-to-supplier ratio in its membership, to allow for equal opportunities for interaction between segments of the industry. AMPs also has student members to help future meeting professionals get a jump start in the industry.

AMPs will continue to act as a forum for the exchange of information on changes in the industry and its dynamic work environment, and as a means of meeting individuals with similar interests and concerns.