

Beginning My APPA Journey

By Miles Kelly, Seattle Central College

Two years ago, when I was 30, I attended my first APPA event. I did not know anything about APPA and only went because my director recommended I attend. I went with an open mind and I'm sure glad I did! I owe my director coffee and doughnuts until he retires! The things I have learned attending the Leadership Academy has completely altered my career trajectory. The value of being exposed to the highest practices that make facilities operate efficiently and harmoniously is captured in these programs. The things that can be learned at these conferences, regardless if you are new or old, has the potential to raise anyone's capacity and knowledge to the next level!

I have been working at Seattle Central College as a maintenance mechanic since I was a senior in high school (13 years ago). I never intended to work at a college long term but the few times I worked in the private sector I quickly realized the quality of environment a University atmosphere provides. Ok, I know the pay isn't always the highest but the satisfaction that comes from contributing to the betterment of society is worth a tremendous amount to me. While many of my friends have had ups and downs in their careers and have had many different jobs I have maintained a high level of satisfaction and consistent employment with Seattle Central. This is a very rare thing for people in my generation but it's important to know that it still exists.

One of the finest benefits of working at a University is the potential to continue learning. Whether its professional development, academic classes or trade skills there is a never ending possibility for growth. I have taken advantage of this over the years. I have taken dozens of classes and have gotten my degree for free, I have learned an abundance of skills in the varying trade fields: electrical, plumbing, carpentry, etc. and the latest are of growth for me has been the initiation into the skills and mindsets of leadership. This is where the story gets exciting for me.

I have always been a background, hardworking problem solver who respects and treats everyone well. I've minded my business maintaining this level of integrity and consistency of routine. Along with this, I have continued to grow my skills and knowledge so when the opportunity came to attend APPA's Leadership Academy I went for it. No one could have told me what was going to happen while attending this program. The high level of professionalism and quality of material engaged me deeply. The exercises, self-assessments, mechanics and mindsets were all incredibly useful and transformative. APPA combined with Franklin Covey to pull the highest materials, systems and practices for teaching this difficult subject. APPA exposed me to what a leader is and how a leader can inspire those around them. APPA cracked me open and like the movie 'Inception' a belief was supplanted in my psyche- I had a larger vision of myself!

In level two I learned how to communicate more effectively not only with others but with myself too. Learning the different dispositions from which people operate from was mind blowing. Up until this point, I struggled like most people getting frustrated thinking, "Why can't people just use their common sense?" After all, we often think everyone should know what we are talking about because it makes perfect sense to us but a real leader is able to communicate clearly because he/she knows how other people think and what is important to them. Learning this has not only improved my relationship with my coworkers but with friends and family too. It sounds simple but breaking down effective

communication and conflict resolution is no small feat. Thanks to APPA, I have gained practical and powerful strategies, tools and methods for relating to people who aren't just my peers.

One of the greatest things about these programs is the relationships you develop. Being one of the younger folks I felt fortunate to be able to ask my elders how they have solved facility related problems and what their best practices and methods are. I feel like I have gained many shortcuts because I don't have to learn these things the hard way. What value can be put on increasing your network? APPA is definitely one of the only places where you will meet thousands of facility related folks sharing innovative and sophisticated operating strategies to maximize resource availabilities!

Lastly, I just want to express my gratitude to the folks who are running APPA and to all its members. It is a top notch organization doing the work that will positively impact our planet from the inside out. The insights and skills I have gained over the past two years in APPA are now dominating my behaviors and decisions. I learned things about myself that I didn't know I had. I use to avoid presentations and believed I was not a good speaker but the exposure I had leading group reports and presentations in the Leadership Academy has not only given me confidence that I didn't have before but it opened the door for an incredibly sense of joy and passion for which now I am actively developing.

I look forward to continuing my development in becoming a positive and effective leader by attending more APPA events in the future. Thank you APPA for raising my game!!