

We've Got Our Professional Associations As Well

By Lynn Melby, CAE, Chairman of the Board

Garrison Keillor has been getting a lot of miles and laughs out of his fictitious Association of Associations, but the reality is that there is such an animal. It's the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE), which has in excess of 25,000 members, representing about 10,000 associations, representing nearly 300 million people and companies worldwide.

At this summer's ASAE Annual Meeting in Denver, MCH staffers served as faculty for three educational programs available to the 7,000 or so attendees. CEO Lynn Melby led a special session on "*Building a Resource Team*" that focused on how associations can build a portfolio of outside firms to expand their service capabilities. He also participated as part of a panel on how association executives can expand their career opportunities within an association management company. MCH President Donna Cameron led a presentation entitled "*What Works? What Doesn't?*" where she focused on board relations, tracking association success, and ownership transition strategies, using our firm as an example.

"We've been active in ASAE for all of the 24 years our company has been in existence," says Melby, "We rely on our professional society to provide us with a source of professional education, research and information, as well as providing advocacy for the nonprofit sector." In 1989, Melby was named a Fellow of the American Society of Association Executives. Both he and MCH President Donna Cameron hold the certified association executive (CAE) credential from ASAE. They have also assumed leadership positions in ASAE committees over the years. "Committee service not only helps us shape the future of the organization, it provides us with a true volunteer experience that is so important to those of us who work with volunteers," Cameron said. "We need to know what it feels like to fill the volunteer's shoes."

The company also has played a significant role in ASAE's state affiliate organization, the Washington Society of Association Executives (WSAE). Donna Cameron has served as the group's executive director for the past four years, a position held by Melby from 1981-1993. Both have been recognized as the state's Association Executive of the Year at different times in their careers, and both have served as presenters at the group's conferences and educational programs.

"Five of our staff hold membership in ASAE and seven are members of WSAE, serving as committee chairs, presenters and committee members," Cameron notes. "We think the ultimate hypocrisy would be to be in the association business and not participate in our professional organization."