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88th Annual Georgia Public Health Association Meeting & Conference Report

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Conference Report

88th Annual Georgia Public Health Association Meeting & Conference Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 88th Annual Meeting of the Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA) was held in Atlanta, Georgia, on April 11-12, 2017, with pre-conference (April 10th) and post-conference (April 12th) Executive Board meetings. As Georgia's leading forum for public health researchers, practitioners, and students, the annual meeting of the GPHA brings together participants from across the state to explore recent developments in the field and to exchange techniques, tools, and experiences. In recent years the venue for the GPHA annual conference has been Atlanta, but in an effort to expand participation across the state the 2018 GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference is scheduled to be held on Jekyll Island, GA (April 4-6, 2018).

This conference built on the successes of the previous years' conferences. These included the continuation of offering three pre-conference workshops, an expansion of sponsorships, more poster sessions, more CEU-certified workshops, and the expansion of dedicated tracks for administration, accreditation, and boards of health training.

The theme for the 2017 conference was *People, Providers, Professionals, and Partners*, which reflects an understanding of the all-encompassing nature of *who* is part of public health in Georgia. Public Health in Georgia includes all individuals who live, work, and play in Georgia, not just those who provide public health services through government agencies. It includes those in education, public safety, and emergency services. It includes those in private industry as well as public. It includes those working for foundations, non-profit, and non-governmental organizations who are working for the health of all Georgians. All of these individuals have a role in Georgia's public health, and, therefore, a reason to be at the GPHA annual conference. One hundred and thirty-three (133) abstracts were submitted for peer review; 52 were accepted for poster (41 by students) and 62 for workshop presentations. Four plenary sessions with keynote speakers covered the international, national, and local response to the Zika pandemic, and setting the stage for further discussions on the future workforce education and training challenges for public health in Georgia. Concurrent workshops focused on board of health training, public health accreditation, genomics, environmental health regulations, continuing education of nurses, best practices learned from natural disasters, community capacity building, and lessons learned from other surveillance activities in dealing with the emerging Zika disease crisis, and the implementation of policies and regulations.

Seventeen (17) GPHA awards were presented at the conference, including Legislator of the Year Award to State Senator Renee Untermann (a two-time award winner) for her legislative efforts critical to the success of public health initiatives in Georgia. These efforts included working tirelessly to keep the Department of Public Health funded and increase "hold harmless" funding for county boards of health, push through funding to make public health nursing salaries competitive, and a host of other issues. The Sellers-McCroan Award went to the Gwinnett, Newton, and Rockdale Health District Epidemiology Team (Brittany Carter, MPH; Catherine Clark, RN, MPH, CIC; and Modu Feyistitan, MPH) for their tireless work in keeping the people of their health district safe. The Gwinnett, Newton, and Rockdale Epidemiology Team has consistently investigated more outbreaks than any other health district and has excelled in their targeted approaches to education and disease control. The conference attracted 534 registrants (491 one- or two-day attendees, 26 luncheon-only, and 10 President's Reception only). This was a 12.4% increase over the previous year. Additionally, there was a 55% increase in the number of workshops offered (n=62), and a 15.6% increase in the number of poster presentations (n=52). The number of exhibitors decreased by 13.9% (n=31), but the number of sponsors increased, by 46.7% (n=22) compared to 2016. Conference sponsorships brought in \$82,850, a 14.1% increase over the previous year, but still 2.5% shy of the conference sponsorship goal of \$85,000. Of registrants reporting GPHA section participation, representation included: Academic (6.4%); Administration (15.7%); Behavioral Health (0.3%); Boards of Health (9.3%); Career Development (6.1%); Safety and Health Preparedness (0.3%); Environmental Health (5.5%); Epidemiology (7.4%); Health Education and Promotion (15.7%); Information Technology (2.2%); Maternal and Child Health (5.5%); Medical/Dental (2.2%); Nursing (13.8%); Nutrition (8.0%); and Primary Care (0.6%). Yvette Daniels, JD, of the Department of Public Health was

instrumental in working to revitalize the Nutrition Section participation at the Annual Meeting and Conference. There was 100% participation in the conference from the state's 18 public health districts again this year. The online conference evaluation completed by a representative sample of registrants indicated areas of potential improvement as: include all speakers in handbook, handouts available, diversity in concurrent sessions, better scheduling of poster sessions, use of technology and social media for changes in programming and locations, avoid Holy Week and/or Passover, conference date earlier in calendar year or during summer would bring more county-level participation. Over 90 percent rated the conference as "good" or "excellent."

Overview

Purpose

The Georgia Public Health Association (GPHA), established in 1928, is the largest body of public health professionals in the southeastern U.S. As one of 54 state and regional affiliates of the American Public Health Association (APHA), GPHA supports the mission of APHA: to improve the health of the public and achieve equity in health status. The 2017 GPHA strategic priorities are to: advocate for the development of policies that positively impact the health of communities; promote excellence in public health practice; strengthen, advance and support the activities; and provide membership benefits, services and opportunities. GPHA's Annual Meeting and Conference presents the opportunity for public health researchers, practitioners, and students to exchange techniques, tools and experiences and recent developments in the field.

History

Historically, the GPHA conference has been held in various locations across the state: Savannah (n=24); Jekyll Island (n=20); Atlanta (n=18); Augusta (n=4), and Gainesville (n=1). In recent years the venue for the GPHA A Conference has been Atlanta, however, the 2018 GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference is scheduled to be held on Jekyll Island, GA (April 4-6, 2018).

Theme

The 2017 GPHA theme was selected by President Selina Smith, presented to the Conference and Executive Committees, and approved by the Executive Board. This year's meeting theme, "*People, Providers, Professionals, and Partners*" encourages the coordination and collaboration necessary from among all those who are touched by public health in Georgia, to work together for the betterment of the entire population. One person or group is not responsible for Georgia's public health, and it requires the concerted efforts of all, working collaboratively, to promote and enhance the health of all Georgians.

Content

The conference included plenary sessions, luncheons, workshops, posters and exhibits:

1. Plenary Sessions

Sonja A. Rasmussen, MD, MS, Director, Division of Public Health, Information Dissemination, and Editor-in-Chief, Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR), Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: "*Zika Virus: Update on a New Cause of Birth Defects*"

José F. Cordero, MD, MPH, Patel Distinguished Professor of Public Health, Department Head, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, College of Public Health, University of Georgia: "*Zika: A Wake Up Call for Public Health*"

The closing session roundtable "*Discussion of Public Health Education and Training, and the Needs of the Future Public Health Workforce*", moderated by Gary Nelson, PhD, President, Healthcare Georgia Foundation, included on the panel: Tom Quade, MA, MPH, President, American Public Health Association; Judy Monroe, MD, FAAFP, President and CEO, CDC Foundation; Brenda Fitzgerald, MD, Commissioner, Georgia Department of Public Health; and Rodney Lyn, PhD, Associate Dean of Academic Affairs [in-place of Michael Eriksen, ScD, Dean], Georgia State University School of Public Health.

The Sellers-McCroan Lecture keynote speakers were Cherie Drenzek, DVM, MS, State Epidemiologist and Director of the Epidemiology Program, GA Dept. of Public Health; and Elizabeth Franko, DrPH in PH Lab Practice, Director of the Public Health Laboratory, GA Dept. of Public Health. The topic of their joint presentation was "Epidemiology and the Laboratory: The Heart and Soul of Public Health Practice." Drs. Drenzek and Frank are both previous recipients of the Sellers-McCroan Award.

2. Luncheons, Workshops and Posters

The Sellers-McCroan Award Lecture and Luncheon was offered on Day 1, while the GPHA Awards Luncheon took place on Day 2. Concurrent workshops focused on training for members of local boards of health, public health accreditation, administration, genomics, environmental health regulations, continuing education of nurses, best practices learned from natural disasters, community capacity building, and lessons learned from other surveillance activities in dealing with the emerging Zika disease crisis, and the implementation of policies and regulations. Posters and exhibitors were distributed along the route between the plenary sessions and the workshop break-out session

rooms. This, along with the holding of the beverage break and President's reception increased the exposure and foot traffic participation.

Pre-Conference Workshops and Section Meetings

GPHA continues to provide value-added events as part of its annual meeting and conference. This year the pre-conference workshops were attended by a total of 77 participants, many of them conference registrants, who made use of the additional training time to accumulate additional knowledge, skills, and abilities as well as CEUs. The three (3) pre-conference workshops for the 2017 GPHA conference were:

"jGPHA Scientific Writing Workshop." Presented by GPHA President Dr. Selina Smith, on behalf of the Augusta University, Institute of Public & Preventative Health;

"Introduction to Epidemiology in Public Health." Presented by Dr. Jodie Guest, on behalf of the Region IV Public Health Training Center; and

"Community Assessment: Making Data Count." Presented by Dr. Kirsten Rodgers, on behalf of the Region IV Public Health Training Center.

In addition to the pre-conference workshops, the individual sections had the opportunity to invite speakers into their section meetings. This was possible, and was made practical, by splitting the section meeting up into two separate blocks. This strategy was last used by GPHA in 2006, and its revival met with a favorable reception because it allowed many GPHA participants who were members of multiple sections to attend both meetings.

The Epidemiology Section invited Dr. Betsy Kagey of the Georgia Department of Public Health to give a presentation entitled, *"A Unified Integrated Public Health Approach: Zika Response."*

The Accreditation Track (one of three dedicated tracks at the 2017 GPHA conference), used their "section meeting" slot to add additional presentations to their already dedicated program. These included *"A Multi-County HDs Journey to Accreditation: The Challenges and Benefits."* by Tara Echols, and *"After Initial Accreditation: The PHAB Annual Report"* by Gurleen Roberts.

Conference Workshops and Tracks

The 88th Annual meeting once again had dedicated tracks for the local Board of Health (BOH) section (formerly the Governance section), the Administration section (in its second year), and the Public Health Accreditation and learning track. These three dedicated

tracks combined accounted for 21 of the 57 (36.84%) CEU-certified workshops (36.84%) presented at the conference. The remaining 36 workshops (63.16%) were filled through the competitive scientific review peer process conducted under the leadership Dr. Nancy Webb of the Augusta University Institute of Public and Preventative Health (IPPH).

The breakdown of those workshops by primary section track focus was as follows:

Accreditation – 8 (14.04%)
Administration – 7 (12.28%)
Behavioral Health – 4 (7.02%)
Boards of Health – 6 (10.53%)
Environmental Health – 8 (14.04%)
Epidemiology – 6 (10.53%)
Health Education & Promotion – 5 (8.77%)
Health Information & Information Technology – 2 (3.51%)
Laboratory – 1 (1.75%)
Maternal & Child Health – 3 (5.26%)
Nursing – 1 (1.75%)
Safety & Health Preparedness – 3 (5.26%)
Nutrition – 2 (3.51%)*
Primary Care – 1 (1.75%)*

*reactivated section

As previously mentioned, the Accreditation, Administration, and BOH tracks occupied a significant (36.84%) portion of the dedicated conference workshops for 2-17. However, Environmental Health, which did not have its own dedicated track, also contributed a significant portion (14.04%), as did Epidemiology (10.54%). This can most likely be associated with the number of good quality and topical presentations related to Georgia's experience dealing with the Zika pandemic (the topic of both of the plenary session presentation). In addition, this year showed the return of participation by the recently reactivated Nutrition and Primary Care sections, who contributed 3.51% and 1.75% of the workshops, respectively.

Poster Sessions

This year's GPHA conference poster session was a first with the majority, 41 of 52 (78.8%), of the accepted posters being from student presenters. This was because of the efforts of Dr. Selina Smith, GPHA President, who worked, with the Career Development Section, to promote student involvement in the conference. President Selina Smith sponsored student post sessions awards (1st prize \$250, 2nd prize \$150, and 3rd prize \$100) to encourage participation and encourage further participation.

GPHA President-Elect Dr. Colin Smith has agreed to continue this effort and to fund the student poster session awards for the 2018 conference.

3. *Exhibits*

As the premier meeting place for organizations committed to improving the health of all Georgians, the GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference provides networking opportunities and access to conference participants (**Table 1**). Since the posters and exhibitors were more centrally located this year, more contact was facilitated over previous years where the vendors and poster sessions were in separate sections away from the conference participants.

Sponsorship

Each year, the GPHA Conference Committee establishes a sponsorship goal to offset costs associated with a quality and affordable annual meeting. Conference sponsors (e.g., academic institutions, corporations, community-based organizations, and individuals) gain access to a broad community of professionals representing various public health disciplines: academic, research, practice, policy, and administration.

For the 2017 conference, an initial goal of \$75,000 was set, and an updated prospectus outlining sponsorship levels was distributed to past and potential sponsors between June - December 2016, with follow-up by the GPHA President, Vice President, Executive Services Provider, or other designees. Due to the conference being held at a larger (and more expensive) hotel and conference venue for 2017, an extended sponsorship goal of \$85,000 was initiated midway through the conference planning process.

For the 2017 GPHA conference the sponsorship committee restructured the previous sponsorship levels, reducing the threshold level for some, and adding new benefits to others,

compared to the previous years. The sponsorship levels for the 2017 conference were:

- Diamond Sponsor (\$20,000)
- Gold Sponsor (\$15,000)
- Silver Sponsor (\$10,000)
- Bronze Sponsor (\$5,000)
- Supporter Sponsor (\$1,000)
- Friend Sponsor (\$500)

A limited number of special PLUS sponsorship packages were available at the Diamond, Gold, Silver, and Bronze sponsorship levels (with extra incentives) to encourage early commitments by sponsors. These proved popular, with the Gold PLUS sponsorship level “selling out.”

The sponsorship committee worked with potential sponsors to create custom “co-sponsorships” or particular events (like plenary sessions or lunches) as necessary.

While the number of sponsorships for the 2017 conference increased by 46.7% over 2017, the dollar amount per contribution was not as larger. The 2017 conference combined sponsorship and exhibitor contributions were \$96,610, a 32.5% increase over the 2016 conference, but still 6.6% shy of the extended goal that was set. Though the 2017 conference failed to meet its exhibitor and sponsorship goals (falling short by 25.67% and 2.53%, respectively), the conference exceeded its conference registrations goals by 18.93%, resulting in the conference exceeding its fundraising goals by 7.28%. Since the annual meeting and conference is the primary means that the association obtains operations funds to sustain our public health outreach and education activities the rest of the year, the fact that the conference reached its lofty goals speaks well for a fiscal change of direction for the association.

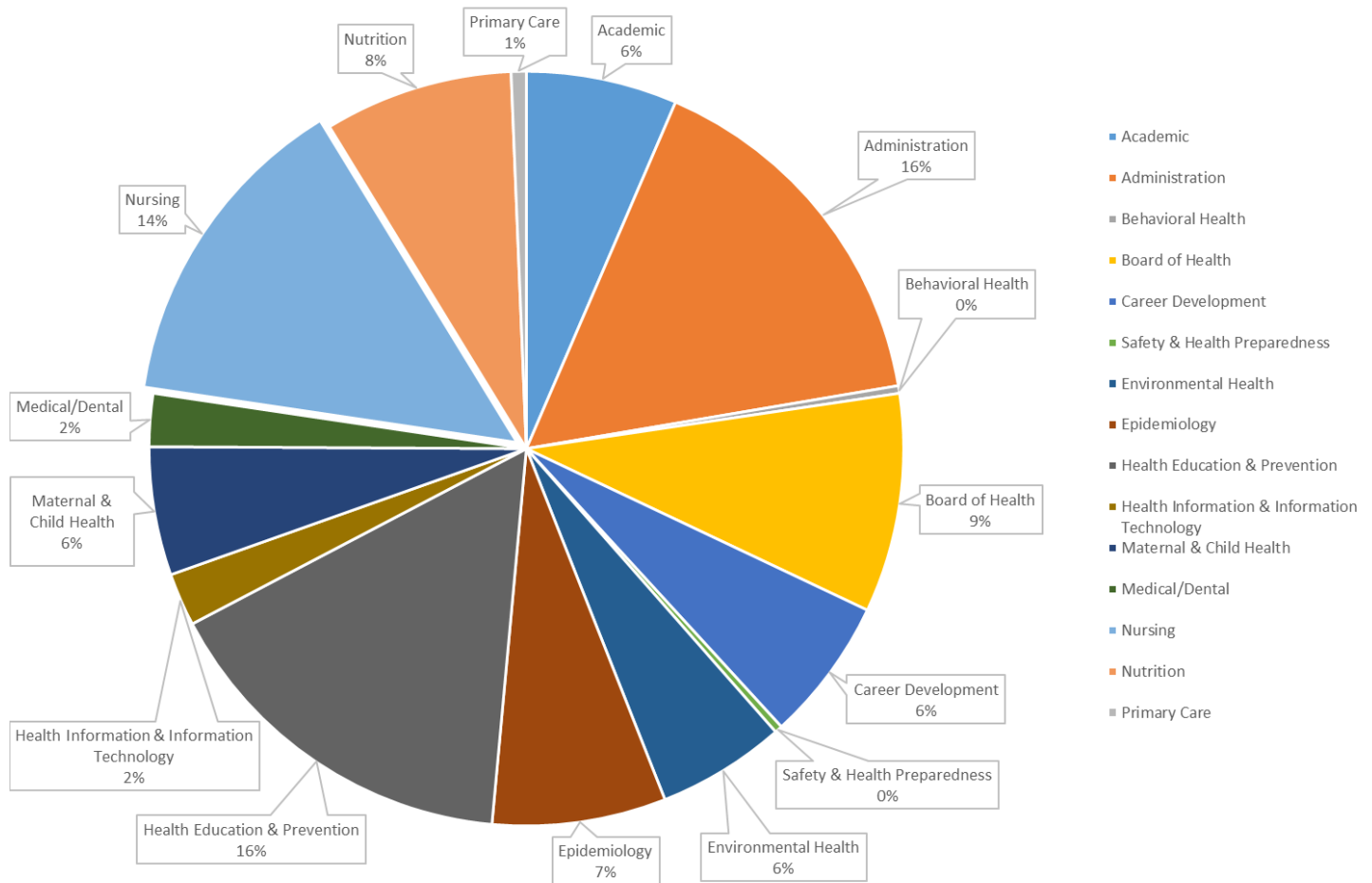
Table 3 presents sponsorship for this year’s conference.

Table 1. Conference Exhibitors

Exhibitors
Amerigroup Community Care
Atlanta Postal Credit Union
Augusta University Institute of Public and Preventative Health
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Eggland's Best / Specialty Eggs
Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
Fort Valley State University Department of Veterinary Science and Public Health
Georgia Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics
Georgia Department of Community Health
Georgia Department of Public Health Early Brain Development
Georgia Department of Public Health Georgia Shape
Georgia Department of Public Health Immunization Program
Georgia Department of Public Health Injury Program
Georgia Department of Public Health Maternal Child Health Section

Exhibitors
Georgia Department of Public Online Analytical Statistical Information System (OASIS)
Georgia Department of Public Health Tuberculosis Program
Georgia Department of Public Health Women, Infants, Children Program
Georgia Southern University Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health
Georgia State University School of Public Health
Georgia Transit Authority
Harris Public Health Solutions
HealthPatadigm
Hologic
Horizons Community Solutions, Inc.
Morehouse School of Medicine Master of Public Health Program
Patagonia Health, Inc.
Peach State Health Plan / Centene Corporation
Region IV Public Health Training center at Emory University Rollins School of Public Health
Sanofi Pasteur
The Instrument House
University of Georgia College of Public Health

Figure 1: 2017 GPHA Conference Registration by Section



Conference Registration

As units of the GPHA, sections provide opportunities for member involvement, social networking, professional

development, and mentoring. GPHA has 16 sections representing public health disciplines or programs. **Figure 1** outlines section representation for the 2017 conference.

Table 2 provides a breakdown of the conference registration.

Table 2. Registration Breakdown

Registration Type	Total (n)
Full Conference	379
One-day Conference	74
Sellers-McCroan Luncheon	12
GPHA Awards Luncheon	20
Sponsor	46
Speakers	3
Total Registrations	534

Participation by registrants whose primary section affiliation was Health Education & Promotion (+8%) and Nutrition (+8%) increased significantly over the 2016 conference. Nursing (+4%) also saw a strong increase. Career Development, Medical/Dental, and Primary Care (+1% each) saw slight increases. Epidemiology, Maternal & Child Health, and Safety & Health Preparedness membership participation saw no real change, and Health Information & Information Technology saw a modest decline (-1%). Though the number of section-related workshops increased, both the Board of Health and Environmental Health section participants declined slightly (-2% each) compared to the previous year. Lastly, participation from those associated with the Administration (-9%), Academic (-7%), and Behavioral Health (-4%) was significantly lower, but it

should be noted that the previous conference saw a large increase in their attendance.

The big news for the 2017 conference was the reactivation of the dormant Nutrition section. Yvette Daniel, JD, of the Department of Public Health, worked to revitalize this and the Primary Care sections this year, much as she had done for Maternal & Child Health, and Safety & Health Preparedness last year.

One of the major initiatives of the 2017 GPHA annual conference is to continue review and analyze the 88th Annual Meeting and Conference evaluation responses in support of planning future conference workshops and sessions that meet the needs of the membership.

Table 3. Conference Sponsorships

Sponsorship Level	Organization	Amount
Diamond Sponsor	None	\$20,000
Gold Sponsor	Augusta University IPPH (+\$5K in-kind) Georgia Department of Public Health Emory University Rollins School of Public Health Healthcare Georgia Foundation Harris Public Health Solutions (co-sponsor)	15,000
Silver Sponsor	None	10,000
Bronze Sponsor	American Public Health Association Georgia Department of Public Health Maternal Child Health Section	5,000
Supporter Sponsor	Georgia State University School of Public Health Morehouse School of Medicine Master of Public Health Program Horizon Community Solutions Amerigroup RealSolutions in Healthcare University of Georgia College of Public Health	1,000
Friend Sponsor	Vector Change Consulting LLC Selina A. Smith Alpha2 Omega Center for Organizational Excellence Region IV Public Health Training Center at Emory University Rollins School of Public Health	500
Supporter	Diane Weems Tony Clark Christy L. Sims Johanna Hinman Yvette Daniel Lisa Carlson	Variable

The 2015 GPHA annual conference was a joint conference with the Southern Health Association (SHA) resulting in a slightly higher attendance than the 2017 annual conference. Of the 569 attendees in 2015, 28 were SHA attendees. The registration for the 2017 annual conference reflects a

registration increase of 11.7% over 2016 and is only 6.2% shy of what was achieved in 2015. The 2017 conference surpassed the records set by the 2015 conference in all categories (including posters, workshops, and sponsors) except total registrants and number of exhibitors (Table 4).

Table 4. GPHA Conference Data (2012-2017)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Registrants	483	313	417	569	478	534
Posters	15	18	24	36	45	52
Workshops	32	26	32	40	40	62
Exhibitors	36	17	14	42	36	31
Sponsors	7	7	10	11	17	22

From 2016 to 2017, the number of exhibitors decreased by 5 compared to the 2016 conference.

Abstract Submission and Acceptance Process

The conference committee invited public health practitioners, researchers, educators, and students with expertise/experience in public health to serve as abstract reviewers. A total of 38 abstract reviewers, under the leadership of Dr. Nancy Webb, representing academic institutions (Armstrong University, Emory University, and Augusta University); local health districts; Georgia Department of Public Health; and the Centers for and Disease Control and Prevention served as reviewers. Reviewers used a numerical rating to judge abstracts as: a) 9-10 (definitely accept); b) 6-8 (accept); c) 4-5 (borderline accept); d) 1-3 (not acceptable). Reviewers submitted reviews to the conference committee on December 1, 2016, and authors were informed of decisions during January 2017. A total of 133 abstracts were submitted, with accepted based on a rating of ≥ 6.00 . 114 abstracts (85.7%) were accepted for either a workshop or poster session.

James W. Alley Memorial Fund /Silent Auction History and Process

The James W. Alley Memorial Fund was established to honor James W. Alley, MD, MPH, who served as Director of the Georgia Division of Public Health for 17 years. In the 1970's during his tenure as State Health Director, Dr. Alley focused the attention of public health on chronic diseases that could be amenable to public health interventions and education. As a former GPHA president and as a medical missionary to Bolivia, Dr. Alley helped establish a local Board of Health in the city of Montero to remediate some of the health issues of the indigent and medically needy. He continued to visit and work in this eastern area of Bolivia for over a decade and left the region with the most respected medical service in that country. The fund was first proposed to the GPHA members at the annual meeting in 2001. The original intent of the memorial was to raise enough funds through silent auctions at the annual meetings to sponsor a three-week "summer break" for two people, an MPH student and a public health professional, to visit Bolivia and work in the health services that Dr. Alley helped establish. The first award was aborted due to unstable political conditions in Bolivia. In December 2013, the Past President's Council was tasked with overseeing the annual silent auction, but deferred the auction pending a final determination of the utilization of funds raised. In 2014, the Executive Board approved use of resources from the James W. Alley Memorial Fund to support a limited number of registration scholarships for the upcoming Annual Meeting.

distribution of scholarships. In 2017, 11 conference registration scholarships were awarded to students representing the various schools and programs of public health in Georgia.

Annual Awards

A call for award nominations was released to the membership on October 17, 2016 and extended to December 1, 2016. The Awards Committee reviewed nominations and selected the recipient for the Jules S. Terry Memorial Award. GPHA sections reviewed remaining nominations and selected recipients based on discipline. The annual association Awards Luncheon, which recognizes outstanding service of individuals in the field of public health, included presentation of 13 section awards.

Sellers-McCroan Award/Luncheon History and Process

During the 56th conference in 1985, a resolution was presented and approved for establishment of an annual lecture honoring the memory of Thomas Fort Sellers, Sr., MD, and John Edgar McCroan, Jr., PhD. This year's call for nominations was issued in October 17, 2016. The award recognizes outstanding achievement and service in epidemiology and/or laboratory professionals in Georgia and may be given to an individual or team whose work has had substantial impact at the state, district, or county levels, in academia or in hospitals. Applications were received by the GPHA President-Elect and the Sellers-McCroan Award committee. The 2017 Sellers-McCroan Award was given to the Gwinett, Newton, and Rockdale Health District Epidemiology Team (Brittany Carter, MPH; Catherine Clark, RN, MPH, CIC; and Modu Feyistitan, MPH) for their tireless work in keeping the people of their health district safe. The Gwinett, Newton, and Rockdale Epidemiology Team has consistently investigated more outbreaks than any other health district and has excelled in their targeted approaches to education and disease control.

Legislator of the Year Award

The Legislator of the Year Award is recommended and approved by the Executive Board and awarded for special support of health care and public health issues during the most recent General Assembly. State Senator Renee Unterman was selected to receive the "Legislator of the Year" Award, for the second time, due to her having worked tirelessly to keep the Department of Public Health adequately funded and to actually obtain new "hold harmless" funding for county health departments that would have otherwise lost money under a new distribution formula. More recently, she spent months prior to and during the 2016 General Assembly successfully laying the groundwork for a significant increase in salary levels for public health nurses. She worked to include \$100,000 in the FY 2017 budget for the DPH Biomedical Prevention Clinic and fought against elimination of funding for Medical College of Georgia's Sickle Cell Center.

Sen. Unterman has been previously recognized as GPHA's Legislator of the Year and also as the National Legislator of the Year for the National Association of Local Boards of Health.

GPHA President Selina Smith presented Senator Unterman with the Legislator of the Year Award to recognize her for her outstanding efforts on behalf of public health in Georgia.

Continuing Education

The Individual Educational Activity Applicant Eligibility Verification application for continuing education accreditation was submitted by GPHA to APHA in February 2017, for continuing medical education (CME), continuing nursing education (CNE), and certified health education specialist (CHES). APHA created accounts for each registrant and emailed a link to the online evaluation survey, which was completed by registrants prior to receipt of a continuing education certificate. The on-line survey closed on May 29. Evaluation surveys were forwarded to GPHA for review and use for future conference planning. GPHA extended the annual conference continuing education certification to include the Certified in Public Health (CPH) Continuing Education (CE). GPHA applied to the National Board for Public Health Examiners (NBPHE) to offer continuing education for a single event. GPHA provided NBPHE with a detailed description of activity for which CPH professionals will receive CPH CE credit hours that must be related to one of the following domain areas of competency: Biostatistics, Environmental Health Sciences, Epidemiology, Health Policy and Management, Social and Behavioral Sciences, Communication and Informatics, Diversity and Culture, Leadership, Public Health Biology, Professionalism, Program Planning and Systems Thinking. The CPHCE certification provided conference attendees additional opportunities to receive continuing education credits.

Evaluation

Exhibitor Responses

The post-conference evaluation for exhibitors was provided in an electronic format with a 40% response rate. Overall, 60% of the exhibitors indicated that the exhibit hall met their expectations. The exhibitors expressed the need to generate more traffic to the exhibit hall with the suggestion to serve the breaks in the exhibit hall. The exhibitor registration process received an excellent or good rating.

Eighty (80%) percent of the exhibitors planned to exhibit next year at the GPHA meeting and annual conference. The exhibitors liked the location and excellent customer service from the hotel staff.

Conference Registrant Responses

The post-conference evaluation for conference registrants was provided in an electronic format for the purpose of expanding participation in providing feedback for the Annual Conference which resulted in a significant increase in conference registrant feedback and input for future conference planning.

A total of 130 post-conference evaluations were received which reflects a representative sample of conference registrants. Fifty-Eight (58%) of the conference registrants indicated that they attended the Annual Meeting and Conference for professional development and to avail themselves of networking opportunities with other professionals in the field (33%). Ninety-One (91%) percent of the conference registrants rated the 88th GPHA meeting and conference as an overall "excellent" or "good." Conference participants also ranked the following aspects of the conference as "excellent" or "good": choice of venue (88%); registration process (87%); scheduling/timing (85%); food/beverage choices (77%); cost/price (69%); and parking/directions (62%). Fifty-Seven (57%) of the participants thought that the workshops were the most valuable part of the conference, while 18% thought the plenary sessions were.

Areas of potential improvement identified by conference evaluation comments reinforced what had been said at the previous year's conference. These included: a better alignment of the workshop session topics with conference theme; and the use of social media, and other technology for the conference agenda.

Half of the conference registrants expressed the desire to change the location of future GPHA Annual Meeting and Conference to other areas in the state. The Association has, therefore, made arrangements for the 2018 conference to be held on Jekyll Island.

The post-conference evaluations serve as a resource for the upcoming and future Conference Planning Committees as the GPHA Executive Board and committees strive to meet the needs of the GPHA members.

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