

Give Chapters a Hand: Awards of Excellence

Washington Chapter

PART 2: EXCELLENCE AND INNOVATION IN PROGRAMMATIC AREAS

Our AMTA Washington Chapter mission is to provide a forum for professional exchange, to actively support the growth of our profession, and to enhance public awareness of massage therapy. We provide our members with many tools to succeed professionally, both with continuing education and with business and legislative support. We also recognize the contributions of our volunteers, and assist them with the tremendous task of growing the largest chapter in the country.

Newsletter/Quarterly Journal

Our Washington Massage Journal is published four times a year for our nearly 5,000 members. The journal is loaded with vital information featuring technical articles, member spotlights, government relations, chapter news & events, etc.

The Winter issue is sent to all LMPs' in the State (approximately 12,000) to highlight and promote the upcoming spring convention.

In addition to our journal, members are provided information on upcoming events, etc. through mailings, emails, and our website (www.amta-wa.org).

Also, this past year, we implemented a WA Chapter Hotsheet which is sent bi-monthly to active volunteers. This has already proven effective, to keep leadership informed about events, legislation and other topical issues. Finally, several blogs are ongoing within the special interest groups of our chapter including WSMT (Washington Sports Massage Team) and MAIN (Massage Awareness & Involvement Network) groups.

Face-to Face Community Building Experience

Outreach

The Washington State Chapter has a very diverse geographic membership. Most of the nearly 5,000 members work in a west region of the state, while less than 20% work in rural areas covering the rest of the state. Outreach to all our members is important regardless of where they practice. One of our remedies to this is to rotate our open regular monthly board meetings all over the State to engage participation from all of our membership.

We also offer special trainings to all regions of the state. One training program is MERT (Massage Emergency Response Team) Responder Training and another is the WSMT Calibration. The trainings are available to all LMP's in an effort to build community and offer professional development opportunities.

Community Outreach Innovation

The AMTA Massage Emergency Response Team is committed to responding to emergencies with the power of compassionate, professional touch to promote the health and well being of humanity. Our MERT program offers two ways for therapists to volunteer. First, through Emergency Deployment to disaster sites to give massage to rescue and relief workers and second, through Community Outreach Programs during non-emergent times. This includes going to local law enforcement, fire and ambulance station to give complimentary massages to crews. These are pre-scheduled events 2-4 times a year.

Our three-time AMTA National award winning Washington Sports Massage Team (WSMT) is a great way to publically promote the massage profession in a effective positive way. With over 30 scheduled

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sporting events around the state annually, it provides several volunteer-based events for therapists to participate in and give back, such as the Special Olympics.

We regularly visit our State Massage Schools and attend Massage School Career Expos to share AMTA-WA information. We invite students to join our association and offer \$30 chapter fee waiver when they join while still a student.

Government Relations

The AMTA-WA Chapter lobbyist provides frequent legislative updates to members on relative issues such as healthcare and insurance.

For the last sixteen plus years, a group of volunteer massage therapists participate in Massage Awareness Days during the WA State Legislative Session. Volunteers provide chair massage to legislators and staff to promote the benefits of massage.

Fundraising

Our fundraising efforts have been very successful at bringing sponsorship revenue into the chapter. This money is used to provide many benefits to our members like convention discounts for students and the special training courses provided throughout the year.

Annual Convention

Our Annual Convention is an invigorating renewal of the devotion and energy that goes with our profession. We strive to make every part of the convention enriching, both personally and professionally. In addition to technical sessions, we have with over 40 massage-related vendors and several massage schools participate in giving chair massage during exhibit hours. Students are also invited at a significant discount and special events. The dance at the end of the convention, as well as the fun attendee packets and raffles, keep the atmosphere light and promote the building of new friendships around the state.

Member Recognition

We accomplish member recognition in several ways, through our newsletter, on our website, at meetings, volunteer gatherings and the annual convention. We honor members for their service, volunteerism and years of membership.

Service to Members

Quality Continuing Education

Our State licensure has continuing education (CE) requirements, making the need to provide quality educational programming a priority for our membership. Opportunities for CE is available in many ways throughout the year including; Unit and MAIN group meetings, volunteer gatherings, leadership trainings, conventions and special interest group trainings.

Professional, Legal & Business Advice

Our membership have ongoing questions about insurance contracts, billing, employment issues and other legal questions in the Healthcare field. In response to this growing need, our chapter has contracted with Peick/Connif P.S., a Pacific Northwest law firm specializing in insurance and health care regulations. This is an exclusive benefit provided to our members which allows access to a web-based tool providing up-to-date answers on their professional, legal and business questions.

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Volunteer Management

Administrative Director

Our single most effective asset to our Chapter is our Administrative Director, Cathy Olson. She provides the continuity that keeps us stable and assists the volunteer board in our goals of excellence. She has been with the AMTA-WA Chapter for 11 years and works at our central office location. The office location also provides a conference room that can be accessed for use by board and committee members.

Volunteer Leader Recognition

Acknowledgments of our volunteer leaders is an ongoing event throughout the year. Cards from the AMTA-WA Chapter are common with kind words of appreciation and sometimes a bonus Starbucks gift card. Our March 3rd annual Volunteer Gathering invited all current volunteers and interested future volunteers to an all day event including lunch and a three-hour seminar given by John Peick entitled, "Demystifying Massage Laws and Regulation". At our annual business meeting we acknowledged 40 volunteers in our chapter for service and leadership on the board, committees, Units and MAIN groups. We also use the meeting to present our prestigious State Meritorious Award. Other major awards are presented to the large assembly of members at the Convention. Finally, we have 2 internal awards that get passed around to deserving leaders at our BOD meetings. This debuted last year and has been a fun way to acknowledge and appreciate each other. "The Most Outstanding Volunteer" (MOV) and the "Finding Life's Understated Fantastic Frivolities" (FLUFF) award seems to be the most coveted. They are made of recycled bowling trophies we had refurbished with appropriate mention.

Website

The AMTA-WA Chapter has provided many new services in the past several years. Our chapter has been offering job posting opportunities and the ability to post classified ads with great feedback. We offer an active listserv that has over 120 Washington State only members (students and massage practitioners throughout WA State). The site has over 85 content filled pages and since February 2007, we have had over 13,200, an average of 1,100 unique visitors per month. When state and national conventions roll around, we offer (buddy list), a service to have members buddy up with other members to help with driving and hotel cost – this has show to help attract members to attending valuable AMTA events. We offer ease of access and information through various programs; MERT, Sports Massage Team, MAIN, in ways to get involved and sign up for the variety of events that are held throughout the year. Our chapter is proud to offer one of the largest link pages that provide great links to various massage related pages. We are easy to find. With the top search engines out on the market, our chapter is among the most noticeably found in search for AMTA.

Multiple Listserves: Communication tools to help maximize communication within our profession in our State.

Leadership Listserve for our Board Members

Executive Listserve: for our Executive Members

Chapter Listserve: For our Chapter Therapist

Audio and video clips adding a new service in providing content to our members.

- Convention Interviews

- Committee Chair video intros

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Through our website service provider, we send out E-Mail Blast newsletters and important updates to our members, over 4500 members.

Public posting pages where people can post Continue Education Classes.

I first started the AMTA-WA Chapters website back in 2000. I am self taught in web design and have done this solely do it out of personal interest/hobby. We have gone through 3 full site designs since starting back in 2000. Recently on our most current site design, we are utilizing help from an outside company to help with our content management system. We have grown so much and have so much content on our site, we had to grow to utilize outside technology to help keep our site up to date. We are a content driven site and I am proud of the content that we provide to our members. We may not have the fanciest site among the other chapters, but we easily have one of the most content oriented sites within the AMTA Association.

My personal belief is that our website is the hub of communication between the Board and the members, the members to members, and content information for other Allied Health Care providers within Washington State.

PART 3: OUTSTANDING SERVICE TO MEMBERS:

Our Chapter has many existing local and regional MAIN groups and many more becoming available all over the State. This is one of the most outstanding opportunities for LMP's, AMTA-WA members and non members to "get the most from" and "bring the most to" our profession. For the unlimited possibilities, go to page 18 in the Spring 2009 issue of the Washington Massage Journal.

For over the last fifteen years the Washington Chapter leaders have sought out advice an expertise in the best strategies for creating excellence toward our goals. David Matteson has served as this advisor keeping us focused on serving the members, while we raise the bar for our profession. David's consulting practice, has over the past 15years included organizational, strategic policy, and governmental affairs work with organizations and companies in both the natural health and natural products markets. He has long and intimate relationships with the chiropractic, massage, acupuncture, and naturopathic professions at both national and state levels.

Our Chapter has an amazing group of dedicated group of Chapter Leaders consistently volunteering outstanding service to our members.

WEBSITE ADDRESS: www.amta-wa.org

NEWSLETTER ADDRESS: paper copy included