

First Time Experience as a Speaker at PCMA Convening Leaders

Re-booting conferences and starting a new year strong starts with a strong and healthy self. This was the theme of the Wellness Theatre – a place for meeting planners to congregate, learn about personal and conference wellness, pick up wellness tip sheets, and participate in a superfoods menu planning competition and in live and video fitness breaks. I delivered 8 talks on 4 different topics: Taking Care of Yourself: Best Practices for Personal Health; Fitting Fitness into Your Busy Life; Fighting Event Fatigue with Superfood Energy and Brain Boosters; and Combatting Conference Fatigue with Fitness Energy Boosters. Sounds exhausting? I was invigorated.

There is nothing more rewarding than to see others share in my fitness/wellness passion. I am an academic/researcher (and former introvert) who is new to the meeting planner industry. I stumbled into my business by accident while presenting at a Business of Aging Summit. I am grateful to PCMA HQ for the opportunity to pilot test the idea of fitness and mind-body wellness at EdCon2014 in Toronto (my former hometown) last summer. The theme was so well received that I was invited to Convening Leaders and a wellness theatre was created.

This was the largest meeting planner conference I attended. The energy and enthusiasm were infectious. Wellness was a hit because it is topical for event planners (ranked among the top 10 most stressful jobs) and aging boomers, which make up the bulk of attendees.

The Learning Lounge provided a perfect open area conducive to hands-on, experiential learning. And we “walked the talk” of wellness with theraband workouts, hotel towel exercise demonstrations, video stretch breaks, strength training, yoga and mindfulness practices – all in business attire. This type of “active learning” attracted much attention and traffic at the Wellness Theatre. My sessions were packed, with standing room only. PCMA headquarters staff was receptive to my ideas for the theatre. And Freeman provided the signage and onsite AV support needed to keep my sessions running smoothly.

I talked about how “sitting is the new smoking” and how energy breaks are needed to combat sitting syndrome. After standing for 2.5 days, I experienced standing syndrome. Luckily, the BodyWorks massage station was right next-door and I was able to get a foot massage! I recently moved from Toronto to the Washington DC area and look forward to building new friendships and sharing my wellness passion in the U.S. and with the Capital Chapter. Feel free to contact me at kim@x-bytes.com to share your wellness ideas for PCMA 2016. •

— by Kim Bercovitz, Ph.D., President & Chief Exercise Officer, Exercise Bytes, Inc.

PCMA Deposits Pounds of Good Will

6:30 AM came really early in Chicago on Sunday, January 11, but still almost 130 PCMA attendees piled onto buses. First stop was the Renaissance Blackstone Chicago Hotel where the group checked in and received the “classic” white t-shirt stamping them as a participant of the Hospitality Helping Hands program. Even at this early hour, you heard individuals warmly greet each other and give big hugs. HHH provides PCMA members a great way to connect with one another and give back to the host city’s community.

The Renaissance graciously provided a tasty breakfast spread that everyone used to fuel up for the hard work ahead. Then back on to the buses. This time we were headed to the HHH project location, the Greater Chicago Food Depository, which is a nonprofit food distribution and training center that provides food for hungry people. Last year, the Food Depository distributed 67 million pounds of shelf-stable food, fresh produce, and dairy products and meat (the equivalent of 154,000 meals every day.)

At the Depository, we gathered in their training room where the staff shared their mission, and then we were divided up into groups to handle the three different projects - separating large quantities of dry pasta into smaller portions, sorting through bins of apples removing the rotten ones, and labelling unmarked cans of pork & beans. I am proud to report the PCMA group blew past the goals set forth including 2,744 bags of pasta (1,500 goal), 11,400 apples (goal 6,000), and 15,096 cans of pork & beans (8,000 goal). This resulted in 33,842 pounds of food for the Chicago community.

After all this hard work, the group reconvened at the Renaissance for a much needed hearty lunch. Still in their t-shirts, everyone bonded over the accomplishments of the day and the many lives our efforts would touch. HHH is a proud PCMA tradition for many. This was only my second outing, but I am a complete convert. Be sure to add HHH to your Convening Leaders schedule next year. •

— by Will Trokey, CMP, National Sales Manager, Visit Charlotte

