

What IAHSST membership has meant to me

Paul M. Sarnese, CHPA and Michael S. D'Angelo, CHPA, CPP

The authors, frequent contributors to this journal, have been invited to relate how being members has affected their careers. Entering the field from different backgrounds, one from law enforcement and one direct from college, backgrounds which today are representative of those of many IAHSST members, they describe how IAHSST filled the gaps in their knowledge of and experience in healthcare security and safety, enabling them to advance in the profession.

(Paul M. Sarnese, CHPA, is a 1988 college graduate in criminal justice who has spent his entire career in healthcare and has attained Assistant VP status for Safety, Security and Emergency Management for a major health system, Virtua, Inc. in Marlton, NJ. Paul is also the President of the Delaware River Chapter of IAHSST and has been elected Member-at-Large of the 2018 IAHSST Board of Directors.)

(Michael S. D'Angelo, CPP, entered healthcare security after 20 years in law enforcement, last as Captain in the South Miami, FL, Police Department. In the past seven years, he became Security Manager of a major hospital system, Baptist Health South Florida. He currently serves as principal and lead consultant of Secure Direction Consulting, LLC, Miami.)

Paul Sarnese: I have been a member of IAHSST throughout my thirty-year career. I have seen the association grow and the publications and educational offerings consistently improve over that time period. Early in my career my role was focused on managing the security force and security systems. Over the years my role, like many others, expanded into being the Safety Officer tasked with ensuring my organization's compliance with the Life Safety Code and the Joint Commissions Environment of Care standards. Over the years our roles and titles also changed from Security Manager to the Safety and Security Manager. That trend became the norm in our industry as hospitals and healthcare systems attempted to consolidate responsibilities and comply with the ever changing and growing regulatory requirements.

I have witnessed IAHSST change as our profession has changed.

The membership of IAHS has also changed from primarily security professionals to safety experts and emergency management professionals. This combination of skill sets provides ample opportunities to share best practices and learn from each other. I have had the opportunity to work for several healthcare organizations and I can confidently tell you that we all have the same challenges we deal with on a daily basis. I believe the only difference may be the frequency of when we deal with these issues.

I have been blessed in my career to have been mentored by one of the true pioneers in this industry. Mr. Russell F. Jones. While working together I was amazed at his ideas and the passion he had to take our profession to the next level. He changed the image of our department from being the department that was a necessary expense to a department that was part of the customer's experience. He demonstrated the value we provided to the organization from a customer perspective. He was seen as a leader and a professional at the executive level. Our team of dedicated employees was no longer considered "guards," we

were now "security officers." I witnessed our department change from one that received very little training and education to one that had daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly education and training. When Russ moved on to a larger organization, I continued to observe him not only change the image of his new department but also the image of our profession. Russ was very active in the association and in 1997 he became the President of IAHS. At that moment I decided to dedicate myself to follow in his footsteps and change the image of our profession by demonstrating the value we bring to our organization.

THE OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN FROM OTHERS PLUS THE BENEFITS OF CERTIFICATION

I began to read everything about our chosen profession I could get my hands on. Russell Colling was a rock star in my mind. I would read everything he, Fredrick Roll, Bonnie Michelman, Tony York and others published. I aspired to be just like them. IAHS is what made that possible. The publications and educational offerings allowed me to learn from others.

As we all know, the healthcare industry is full of very intelligent, credentialed and well-educated individuals. IAHS's certifications, the Certified Healthcare Protection Administrator and the Healthcare Safety Certificate provide safety, security and emergency management professionals the opportunity to be credentialed by a well-established and credible organization. This certification demonstrates that we have the knowledge and expertise to be successful in our profession. This certification legitimizes our profession and the contributions we make to the business of healthcare. It proves to our leadership we are experts in our field. Having certified security officers and supervisors not only elevates staff knowledge, it also demonstrates our dedication to our profession and to our employers.

A ROADMAP TO SUCCESS

I would tell any person who is seeking a career in healthcare safety, security or emergency management the first thing they should do is join IAHS. The organization provides the road map to success. It provides education, training, industry guidelines, cer-

tification courses, and most importantly other members to speak to about issues that we face. I cannot stress enough how much my membership in IAHS has shaped my career. When I am challenged with a new threat or opportunity, the first thing I do is to go to the website to see if the guidelines can assist me. If the issue is not mentioned in the guidelines, I look for articles or research that was published. If I cannot find the answer there, I go to the discussion forum to see if it is mentioned there. If I cannot find the answer there, I pick up the phone and I call a fellow member who may be struggling with the same issue or I may send out an email to my chapter or regional members seeking help. **I have never been disappointed!** Someone has always come through and helped me out. That is one of the many benefits of being a member of IAHS. I always say, "why reinvent the wheel?"

Like anything in life, we get out what you put in. Being actively engaged in your local Chapter, attending the ACE and other educational opportunities pays off in dividends. The healthcare indus-

try is rapidly changing and our profession will keep pace with the change. We are asked to do more with less and wear many different hats. In order for us to survive and thrive, we must be willing to invest in ourselves. IAHSS provides that opportunity. Under strong leadership, the organization will continue to adapt to the changing times. The organization will grow in membership as the value of membership become evident to others. I believe we will see growth of chapters throughout the world as we continue to be more connected and interdependent upon each other for information sharing and talent. I am confident the IAHSS will provide our profession with the necessary information and skills to adapt to the changing marketplace. I am excited about our professions' future and the future of IAHSS.

Michael S. D'Angelo: In October of 2010, I made the life-altering decision to retire from a successful 20+ year law enforcement career. Not yet ready for fishing or front porch duty, I knew I wanted to continue working for some time to come. Like many before me, I assumed that private

sector security management was the natural transition. Also like my many predecessors, I quickly realized the two professions were much further apart and far less compatible than we believed. Of course, much of the law enforcement skillset was appealing in security management and the many hours of leadership training I had been fortunate to receive was helpful. However, in no time at all, I learned that private sector security management had long since matured into a career path of its own.

As I started to contemplate how and exactly where this career transition would take me, I recognized that starting with professional contacts and close friends was the best route to explore for potential employment. I was very fortunate that I had a good colleague who worked for one of the most reputable healthcare systems around. Timing gets a tremendous amount of credit here, but the company happened to have a leadership opening in security and emergency management. In a relatively short period of time, I was offered a great position which met all my professional requirements. My plan was

progressing at a great pace and yielding results far better than I had anticipated. In what seemed like overnight, I went from Police Captain to Director of Security, a transition that I was both comfortable with, and excited to be experiencing.

The honeymoon period lasted a week. The reality of transitioning from the public to private sector was hitting and hitting hard. I had been warned by many that there would be challenges. "Security departments do not function like police departments" some had commented. Others told me to prepare for the "real meaning of the bottom line." The inherent differences were becoming clear to me as I invested another day into my new career. Then one of my new colleagues, a veteran nursing manager, turned white as a ghost when she discovered this was my first position in healthcare. "The Joint Commission for what?" I asked. Sure, I was familiar with the accreditation process. In law enforcement we had both CALEA and state agencies that could issue them. However, when I learned that the repercussions of a deficient TJC survey could close your hospital's doors, I re-

alized I had a tremendous amount to learn. I had not only decided to transition into private sector, but I had chosen one of the most highly regulated industries to manage the security function in.

The Joint Commission, Agency for Healthcare Administration, The National Fire Protection Association, and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children join many other organizations that set standards, guidelines and recommendations hospitals are governed by. I had never seen so many acronyms in my entire professional life and was dumbfounded on where to begin. In law enforcement we spoke our own language. In healthcare, you had to learn several!

A NEW EDUCATION

The individual who I succeeded was thoughtful enough to leave behind a library of material pertaining to hospital security management. A voluminous collection of books, manuals and periodicals sat on the bookshelf staring at my ominously. A set of guide-sized journals; *Journal of Healthcare Protection Management*, stood apart from the others. As I glanced through them, I

noted a few points that really got my attention. There were no sponsored advertisements, every article pertained to a current issue in healthcare security, and most notably, all articles were authored by my peers who currently worked in healthcare security—many of whom I recognized (Karim Vellani, John White, Ben Scaglione, Bonnie Michaelman, Lisa Terry, Dan Yaross, and many more). These three points speak volumes to the quality of the writing in the *Journal*. The final thing I realized was that this periodical was a publication of the International Association of Healthcare Security & Safety. Action step #1: join IAHSSE immediately.

I literally spent three hours exploring the IAHSSE website for the first time. At my disposal, were answers to a multitude of questions I had about hospital security. Having been a member of ASIS International for some time, I was already familiar with the usefulness of professional security associations. Unlike ASIS International which covers the gamut of the security related industries, IAHSSE focus on healthcare provided exactly what I needed: a forum that would provide quick

and precise information for someone new to our industry.

A REAL MEMBERSHIP

The following year I had the opportunity to attend my first IAHSSE Annual Conference and Exhibits. Again, I had been to several ASIS International Annual Seminar and Exhibits. Although incredibly informative and of great value, as many would attest to, ASIS International's conference can be overwhelming. The IAHSSE conference provided a much more targeted audience and allowed me to truly make the most of the time I invested. Two of the most valuable takeaways: the opportunity to mingle with professional colleagues. In healthcare security, the adage of "I was not encountering an issue someone before me has not already encountered and successfully resolved" holds very true. Secondly, I discovered the IAHSSE Guidelines. This booklet surmised and brought down all the material I have in my library into one functional place. Besides being a key resource, you could literally build your department's standard operating procedures and your hospital's security re-

lated policies from this guide.

Membership in IAHS represents membership in a community. As I continued my education into healthcare security (several years down the road I was still learning), I wanted to participate in my community. I have had the wonderful opportunity to contribute about half a dozen articles to the *Journal*. I enthusiastically participated in every year's statistics survey. The IAHS polo shirt became a staple of my casual Friday wardrobe and on a few occasions, I convinced my employer to host the local chapter meetings. On the local level, our chapter became more than just an extension of the association. It became a true collaborative network. On one occasion, the sharing of BOLO information among the membership led to the apprehension of a couple suspected of targeting local hospitals for an infant abduction. Local law enforcement officials were amazed at the effective lines of communication that existed between hospital security teams.

MORE ACRONYMS

Comfortable that I achieved competency and proficiency in

my new profession, I wanted to excel and really advance my professionalism. The *Certified Healthcare Protection Administrator* designation was my goal for the year and I approached it with the same level of focus I did when pursuing the CPP. This certification is symbolic to becoming a consummate professional in your industry. Once successfully completed, the CHPA polo took top spot on casual Friday's rotation. I was so impressed with the content and materials that comprise the program, that I explored the other certification levels for my team members. Within a short period of time, we had all five of our supervisors through the IAHS program and used the models for the other levels as part of our initial and advanced training programs. This association provides industry-specific training. Not just making officers better security officers, but making them true healthcare security officers.

Participating in the IAHS is like any other membership into any other professional association; you get out what you put in. The organization is always there to support you. Having that pro-

fessional contact or that industry colleague to reach out to when you are facing a difficult regulatory issue is invaluable. Be there for them. You never know when you have encountered an issue in your hospital that may serve as a “lesson learned” for others in our industry. I recall attending a presentation at an ASIS conference put on by Bonnie Michelman regarding the aftermath of the Boston Marathon bombing. Her hospital was central to the recovery and response of this event. This isn’t a part of the story you will ever see on the news. These are not the teams you will ever see touted as heroes. Those of us in healthcare security realize that a secure hospital is vital to the recovery after a disaster. Here in South Florida, our hospital

community is integral to the before, during and after of a Hurricane strike. This community relies on hospitals during trying times and they take it for granted that they will be a place of safe and secure refuge.

These are the kind of articles, presentations, training programs and dialogues we are afforded as members of the IAHS. They all pertain to healthcare security specifically. They all go a long way to enhance your qualifications as a professional in our industry. Everyone in our industry works under the same budget challenges. Being frugal with your association membership dollars is tough, but when you make that call, make sure that joining the IAHS is top of the list.