

What Being an ABA Member Means to Me

By Kim Grzywacz



What do you do when your husband calls from the road and asks you to leave your teaching career of 18 years to work

for his bus company, CIT Signature Transportation? You pause.

He sweetens the pot, saying you can work partly at home and at the office. You have a 1-year-old and four older children. You commute 70 miles each way to teach. Even though you have signed your contract, you call the superintendent and resign.

My initial tasks included accounts receivable, accounts payable, and payroll. Within three months I was overseeing our sales department, taking inbound sales calls, making outbound sales appointments, running our social media, and updating our website. Then, rather than be a guest at Spader Business Management events and insurance meetings run by National Interstate, I became an attendee and gained knowledge that I took back to the office. I also attended Marketplace in Charlotte, N.C., in 2013, as our company had never been before.

Five short months after I started, I traveled to Charlotte and met two wonderful women I'd known from Spader—Jodi Merritt and Elaine Fickett of H&L Charter in Rancho Cucamonga, Calif. They showed me the ropes and invited me to attend a Women in Buses

(WIB) social. While there, I ran into Mary Young of Capitol Tours in West Columbia, S.C., and Michelle Wiltgen from National Interstate. I already knew them from my participation in insurance meetings.

Last year, I decided I needed to be more involved. I volunteered at the Marketplace registration booth, attended the WIB meeting, and signed up for CTIS training. It has always been important for me to learn as much as I can so that I can be the best I can. The CTIS program along with the educational sessions at Marketplace greatly increased my sales knowledge.

In 2015, I upped the ante. At Marketplace in St. Louis, Mo., I added the CTIS booth to my volunteer duties. Attending the WIB meeting lit a new fire in me. WIB developed a plan to further its mission of recognizing and advancing the role of women in the motorcoach industry through networking, and it created three committees: Executive Management; Operations and Maintenance; and Travel, Tour, and Charter.

I began recruiting the wonderful women I knew in the industry to

join me on the council and to each select a committee to serve on. This effort led to my appointment as WIB's membership chair.

To continue my own thirst for knowledge, I became a member of the Marketplace Education Subcommittee and accepted the invitation to join the Motorcoach Marketing Council's board of directors.

You learn from others and by doing. There is no better way to learn this industry than to surround yourself with great industry professionals and get involved. I am doing both—not only to increase my knowledge, but to better my company.

Do I work from home? Yes, but only on nights, weekends, and when the kids are sick. Do I work part time? If less than 12 hours is half a day, then, yes, I work part time. Do I know everything I need to know? No. That's why I continue to be involved with industry organizations and take time to strengthen my relationships.

Though I do miss my teaching colleagues and students, through ABA I've found new colleagues and made new friends, two of whom received the first two WIB awards. I look forward to meeting and engaging with more women (and men) involved in this delightfully crazy business.

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