



## A TIME TO BE THANKFUL

**THE HOLIDAY SEASON** is often a time for reflection, a time for friends and family and a time to be thankful as another year comes to a close. I reached out to some of our members and chapters to gain some perspective and, quite simply, was humbled after hearing from members who shared very touching and personal stories. Words like courage, service and compassion come to mind.

For example, several of our members have continued their commitment to their careers and their MPI chapters while battling cancer.

Jill D. VanderVeen (MPI Chicago Area Chapter) was serving as co-chair of the Education Programs Committee and soon after was diagnosed with an advanced stage of ovarian cancer. While making decisions on treatment, she was determined to continue her leadership role, all while going through chemotherapy. She has continued to deal with health challenges, but has a goal of returning to her chapter.

"I value my membership with MPI-CAC and I am grateful for the experience to have worked in a leadership capacity on the Education Programs Committee," she says. "I am certainly thankful for beating the odds, and because I am

doing so well and feeling great!"

Beverly Laing, president of the MPI Southern California Chapter, also refused to let her battle with melanoma prevent her from continuing her work with the chapter. With her cancer in remission, she led the chapter through many changes over the last three years. In October, the melanoma resurfaced as a Stage IV and had metastasized to her lung. She took a leave of absence for six weeks and is now recovering, but MPI is still on her mind.

"I have to say I have had so many well wishes, prayers, cards and gifts from my MPI friends—I feel so blessed being part of this organization," she says. "Here's to many more years working with MPI—God willing! But I will fight this all the way in whatever way I can."

Service to our communities is an important aspect for our members. The MPI Kansas City Chapter, for example, has incorporated the spirit of giving at each of its education programs, and has supported such local organizations as Charity Case for Kids, which provides luggage for kids in foster care who often have to move from one home to another with their belongings packed into garbage bags; the Rose Brooks Center, which provides emergency shelter to women and their children who have escaped life-threatening abuse and gives them the resources they need to begin rebuilding their lives; and Dressed for Success, which helps disadvantaged women trying to enter the workforce.

Brandon Hall, CMO and co-found-

er of ONEHOPE Wine, became a partner of the MPI Foundation affinity program (see Page 26). His business has funded meals for children, mammograms for women, tree plantings and pet adoptions.

Or consider the work being done by the MPI Gulf States Chapter, which has adopted NO KID HUNGRY New Orleans as its charity this year and raised funds at each monthly meeting while conducting a food drive, and the MPI South Florida Chapter, which launched MPI Has Heart and has supported such organizations as Florida Food Pantry, Dress for Success, Memorial Hospital for breast cancer awareness and Toys for Tots.

Here at *The Meeting Professional*, we are thankful for the many members who played a role in each month's issue of your magazine. Take a look at our Year in Review (Page 55) to see some familiar faces.

Our team here at MPI is also thankful for the leadership shown by outgoing COO Cindy D'Aoust (see Page 10). We will miss her and wish her well. We look forward to her continued involvement with MPI.

To our members, I say thanks for all your support. Best wishes to you this holiday season.

Until next time ...

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