

# Increasing our reach

**One of the best ways that people in our industry can advance and achieve success is by making connections and seizing learning opportunities outside the strict boundaries of their business or employer.**

Our members bring an extensive range of interests to the table. The association looks for ways that we can leverage these connections. The members of the OAN staff, likewise, are encouraged to develop interests outside our office doors, both within the green industry and out in their respective communities.

We have staff members who volunteer for school bond measures, participate in gardening clubs, coach youth sports teams, help lead their chamber of commerce and organize a community concert series. These service opportunities provide our employees with professional development and the chance to build connections, which ultimately pays off for us, the OAN. We're able to utilize their strengthened abilities in accounting, fiscal management, event collaboration and education, to name just a few areas.

As just one example, we've been able to make our scholarship program more attractive to future growers thanks to the knowledge one staffer gained by working with college access experts.

Just as I encourage OAN staff to give their time, I too take advantage of service opportunities. There are three organizations where I have spent time in order to extend my knowledge and expertise over the past few years: the Oregon Society of Association Management (OSAM), the Nursery and Landscape Association Executives (NLAE) and the State Accident and Insurance Fund (SAIF) Corporation.

## OSAM

This active organization gives members the opportunity to network with other association professionals who serve different industries. We discuss common challenges and work toward solutions that help build their organizations and their staff.

I initially joined this organization to get access to their network for hiring qualified staff. Geoff Horning, a past OAN staffer and now executive director of Oregon Aglink, then talked me into joining the OSAM board. I now serve as its president.

Continuing education for staff is a primary driver of what OSAM offers. It also provides a forum for my colleagues at the executive level to get together and resolve issues that confront our memberships.

## NLAE

Founded in 1947, the Nursery and Landscape Association Executives (NLAE) is a professional society dedicated to supporting the professional needs of the chief staff executives (and their staff) of North America's green industry organizations.

The nursery industry is tight knit, and so are the association executives. Through NLAE, we work together to help each nursery association prosper. We share notes on member leader development, legislative issues, staff development, association financial strategies, event and trade show development and management, engaging future generations and general association management techniques.

The western states also gather once a year with our volunteer leaders to discuss relevant issues and create remedies. I am proud that I am the president of NLAE for the next two years and can serve our association and the industry.

## SAIF

When then-governor John Kitzhaber called me to ask me if I wanted to be nominated to the board of the SAIF Corporation, I asked him if he had the wrong list. I knew SAIF had recently parted ways with their CEO on messy terms, and I thought he wanted a CEO panel to review the process SAIF had utilized.

No. The governor wanted me on the board to change it.

I was nominated by the governor and confirmed by the Oregon State Senate to serve as a board member of a not-for-profit, state-chartered workers' compensation company.



Jeff Stone  
OAN EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The learning curve was high. I had a rough idea of how workers' compensation worked and knew this issue was important to businesses in the state, including our industry.

I am the de facto businessperson on the board and have served since 2014. The biggest culture shock I faced was SAIF's size. It is a \$4.6 billion corporation and the 21st largest issuer of workers' compensation policies in the United States, with 992 employees and a payroll of \$6 million a year.

For the business community, it's important to be at the table shaping policies. SAIF removes barriers so we as businesses can deal with injured workers and get them back on the job in a cost-effective manner. Serving on this board has made me a better executive director by exposing me to different ways of looking at information.

## Cumulative impact of involvement

My father, a longtime bank executive, doesn't quite understand what I do. I get that. My efforts on your behalf are about as varied as one can imagine.

He does understand that civic and professional involvement creates well-rounded leaders. So does our OAN Board of Directors. I am grateful they support our efforts to grow and expand our expertise so we can better serve the membership.

The time I give to OSAM, NLAE and SAIF makes up just a small fraction of my working day. However, these connections let me be the best executive director I can be, and a more effective servant for OAN members and the industry. ©