

Report on the 2019 NVOAD Conference

May 6-9, 2019

On May 5, 2019, Joe Sciandra, Steve Michelone (PEMA VAL), and I began the drive to Nashville, TN to attend the 2019 NVOAD Conference – *“Together We Amplify.”* The week would prove to be enlightening, productive, and very much worth the effort it took to get there. (Thanks to PEMA for providing the transportation.) It is said that we live in a “me” world, but the theme of this week was about making a difference in people’s lives by doing it together.

For the first time the UCC Disaster Ministries decided to have a display in the Exhibit Hall. Joe and I assisted the national staff in setting up this display, which was planned by Amanda Sheldon. Other activities included the Annual Meeting of NVOAD, where I presented for the Community Preparedness Committee. I was re-elected as the vice-chair, but since the new chair is out on maternity leave, I am the acting chair of the committee. The evening was spent in networking at the Committee Appreciation Reception.

Tuesday began early as I attended the Committee Chair meeting in preparation for our annual committee meeting later that day. Later that morning I attended the meet and greet with the FEMA Voluntary Agency Liaisons, which was very productive. NVOAD Board Chair John Ricketts presented the “State of NVOAD” at the welcome luncheon. The afternoon was spent in the Community Preparedness Committee meeting and follow-up. In our meeting we elected officers and set our work goals for the year.

On Tuesday night was the Awards Banquet. I was honored to receive the “Volunteer of the Year” award. I understand that I was nominated by my Lutheran colleague, Julia Menzo, my PSEC colleague, Joe Sciandra, Chester County VAL, Janet Zeis, and PEMA VAL, Steve Michelone.

Wednesday and Thursday were spent in workshops. The workshops I attended were:

1. New Directions for the Long Term Recovery Model
2. Supporting Rental Populations in Long Term Recovery
3. Everyone Comes Home Safe
4. Building Faith Sector Resilience
5. Fundraising for Disaster Preparedness and Resilience

Wednesday also had two well-done plenary speeches – one with Lisa Marsh Ryerson of the AARP Foundation about seniors and disasters, and Deke Arndt, a meteorologist, speaking about disasters and climate change. I also attended the FEMA Region III Partner Meeting and the UCC CDC dinner.

On Thursday Joe and I helped to pack up display. You will probably see most of it at General Synod. Friday was a travel day back to PA with much discussion in the car about the events of the week.

I come home convinced that as challenges continue to face our world, we must expand our capacity to respond and recover. The VOAD model works because together we can develop expertise and build sustainable programs to transform the lives of people who are survivors of disaster. Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this experience.

Shalom,

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