A Tale of Two Young Professionals and the AHLA Annual Meeting

Stephanie’s Story:
“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...” But it jump-started my health law career.
My first Annual Meeting was in 2009 in Washington, DC, when the legal job market was at or still-near rock bottom. My refusal to accept a bad job market drove me to go to AHLA’s Annual Meeting with a stack of homemade business cards, and I have thought of even more reasons to go every year since. By the end of the Annual Meeting, I had a one-inch pile of business cards, multiple new mentors to shepherd me through my career, and friends who have brought me to where I am now.

What I love most about the Annual Meeting is being able to go beyond the rote biographies and static pictures on firm and in-house websites. From the engaging “Year in Review” to the lively networking receptions each night, there were endless opportunities to meet and learn from experts in the industry and to connect with my peers.

But more than anything, the Annual Meeting showed me that AHLA is an association of people—people who care about the practice of health law on a daily basis and care about making sure that others succeed in their practices as well. The Annual Meeting is the culmination of this—and it gets even better every time I attend.

Stephanie Willis (swillis@crowell.com), an associate with Crowell Moring in Washington, DC, currently serves as the Young Professional Delegate to the AHLA Board of Directors.

Jennifer’s Story:
I first attended the Annual Meeting in 2014. I had previously attended some of the other AHLA in-person programs, like AHLA Fundamentals of Health Law Program, but not the Annual Meeting. Admittedly, I was a little nervous about finding ‘my way’ at the big-time Annual Meeting!

I was wrong! At the Annual Meeting, I had many opportunities to network with both seasoned and new lawyers to the practice of health care law. I also really enjoyed the educational sessions. And I loved coming back to my hometown with lots of CLE credits!

AHLA cares so much about supporting its members, especially young professionals. AHLA’s Practice Groups and staff work extremely hard to plan the Annual Meeting to make it valuable for all attorneys who attend. Moreover, they also realize that the Annual Meeting is where new attorneys to the field can get a broad introduction to the key issues and where newly-minted lawyers can mingle with the best in the business.

In my two years as YPC Chair, the AHLA has helped me make some of the most important professional connections in my career. I am looking forward to what’s to come!

Jennifer Hutchens (jhutchens@robinsonbradshaw.com), a partner with Robinson, Bradshaw and Hinson PA in Charlotte, NC, currently serves as the Chair of the AHLA Young Professionals Council.

We know of so many stories that begin, “This happened because I met so-and-so at the Annual Meeting...” Those stories are why the Young Professionals Council (YPC) encourages anyone who is new to the practice of health law, or to the law more generally, to attend the Annual Meeting. Check out more information about the Annual Meeting beginning on page 8 of this issue or go to www.healthlawyers.org/Annual2016.

Need help showing your employer why you should go? Check out our online Justification Toolkit (www.healthlawyers.org/justify) that can help to show the great return on investment that you can get out of attendance. Also, feel free to reach out to any of our current YPC members (listed on page 27) who come from a variety of practice settings and locations nationwide to answer any questions you have about the benefits of AHLA membership.

Want to learn more about the YPC? Visit us at www.healthlawyers.org/yp. We look forward to hearing from you and to seeing you at this year’s Annual Meeting!