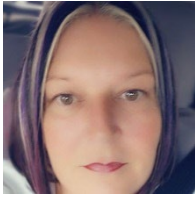




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Interview with Sherry LaFountain

ASAP Director of Events Management, Marketing and Development

Sherry is ASAP's longest serving staff member and one of the most hard-working professionals in the field. She is responsible for successfully guiding all ASAP conferences from the first planning committee meetings through running the event days. Covid was a special challenge as her world pivoted to digital, and systems adapted to massive change. For Sherry, it was a logistical blip not worth mentioning!

Sherry also manages every aspect of ASAP membership program, a key responsibility for the statewide association representing a wide range of professionals in the Prevention-Harm Reduction-Treatment-Recovery field.

We're in the middle of "Conference Season" (ASAP Annual Conference in September; ASAP Annual Veterans Summit on November 2). What does that mean for you?

We want to create an unforgettable experience for our attendees as well as achieving the goals of having all our conferences be successful. I am responsible for meeting each and every challenge with the expertise, skills, resources and know-how that will guarantee that each of our events will be dynamic, productive, interactive and engaging.

Yikes, Sherry – that sounds like a tall order!

The most interesting part of my job is being tasked with managing a million moving parts, learning stress management, maintaining work-life balance and getting opportunities to be creative. Conference season does take a tremendous amount of time, energy, and hard work for all the aspects of planning and execution including important logistics from setting goals to creating budgets, venue selection to supplier negotiation, decor to service suppliers, to securing and distributing CE credits for participants. And we've now embarked on putting our archived conferences online for greater access.

What is the most meaningful part of your job?

What I've found most valuable and meaningful experiences are the connections you make and the information you get while at a conference. I always leave these meetings having spoken to many professionals who filled me with new ideas and/or a fresh perspective. You never know whether the person you start chatting with over lunch might become a new peer mentor, colleague, friend — or all of the above!

You also manage ASAP's Membership program. Have ASAP's conferences impacted member engagement?

Because of the strength of ASAP's conferences, member engagement has exploded! ASAP is working hard to continue expanding our network by increasing the number of events for members – our annual calendar now includes the Prevention conference, JEDI Summit, Veterans Summit and, of course, our ASAP Annual Conference, now moving into its 24th year! ASAP remains dedicated to supporting our members, partners, staff and team.

You're the longest serving member of that team, second only to Executive Director, John Coppola. You must have stories! How did you get involved?

Prior to ASAP, I worked as a legal secretary for 10 years for a well-respected Albany-based law firm specializing in governmental relations, regulatory affairs, business and health law. ASAP was a client and how I met John Coppola.

The rest is history. The establishment of the New York Certification Board at ASAP, now celebrating its diamond anniversary, is part of that storied history. What can you tell us about the Board's beginnings?

Wow...10 years already! When the Certification Board started, this was an exciting endeavor for ASAP, providing high quality testing, credentialing, and technical assistance. The CARC Pilot Exam was developed in 2012 and I proctored four pilot sessions (Albany – 30 candidates, Buffalo – 9 candidates and two pilots in NYC – 90 candidates) used to review the exam performance. I began assisting individuals to make sure that they met the training requirements, processed all applications, meeting with the NYCB Board to get their approval, administering, proctoring and scoring all exams throughout New York State. [Editor's Note: The CARC exam is currently on hiatus for technical reasons.] At this time, I was the only staff person at NYCB and it was a gratifying experience to help those who were in recovery achieve this credential. I also encourage people to become familiar with our website and visit often. Nothing stays the same, and, like any other organization, we are growing and evolving.

Do you have time for extracurricular activities?

I enjoy spending time with my family, godchildren and honoring my late son to keep his legacy alive every day and, of course, my furbaby, Jasper!