

AKC Legislation Conference, Short Report

From the time I arrived at the Embassy Suites, Hanford Hotels in Raleigh, NC, last Friday (1/27). I knew I was at a special place at a special time. I ran up to my room, dropped my bags and headed back down to the informal Cocktails hour(s). No shrinking in the hotel room for me this time! Many will recognize the names. Many will be new to you AND to me, but all were welcoming and enthusiastic about the coming two days. And I know that I met with and talked with many more than I can remember here!

First off, Sharyn Hutchens and I found each other and both of us, almost at the same time, said "I've always wanted to meet you" (close enough words LOL) and my "Where's Walt?" question. (Walt stayed home to care for the pet-law list and their whippets :-). Sheila Goffe found us and welcomed both of us as we found a table and started comparing stories of legislation. Soon Sarah Sprouse and others joined us and it was over an hour gone by before we knew it. I was exhausted (West to East Coast flying can do that) so we promised to catch up the next day and off I went.

The next day was loaded with so much information that I filled 9 pages of a legal size pad with close writing. AKC had a big goodie bag (AKC logo) with a binder with tabbed conference presentations (with pages to jot notes, but I needed LOTS more), videos, pamphlets and flyers and a great water bottle) First it was Patti Strand of NAIA (with a informative presentation of the Ballot Initiative process and then, Humane Relocation. (This is the place that I'll let you know that I'll be writing a MUCH more detailed .pdf of the presentations... way too long for here). Jennifer Clark presented the Basics of Canine Legislation; Phil Guidry (poor guy was suffering with a bad cold) educated us about analyzing and understanding the technical language of bills; Senator David Rouzer (NC Senate) told us of the insider perception of getting to know your legislator, what to do and what NOT to do.

Then Advocacy 101 with Sarah Sprouse. (Sarah had been out to California a couple of times and had been extremely helpful with some of our local issues, giving her Advocacy presentation in a more casual setting. WHAT a gal... she can move right into the subject, moving us through some tough bills and legislation with professional, expert advice); Next, a HIGHLIGHT for me, Suzanne Anglewicz, NRA. She really excited me with a fantastic presentation of "Inspiring Your Grassroots." Finally, ending the first day, Lisa Peterson gave us a lot of pointers on media training... and another big binder full of tips and tools for "Spreading the Word."

You would think at that time that I would want to crawl up to my room... after all, we pushed into breaks and lunchtime as we kept the speakers on the podium with our questions and their expert answers. It was almost 9 hours of straight information input. But no, I (and a glass of wine) ended up in a circle of many of the presenters and others who were experts in their field. We all went in for dinner (too excited to eat, folks, I nibbled and listened! O.K., I talked some, too). It was a fantastic evening.

Early the next morning, we moved right into Margaret Poindexter, AKC Inspection program notes; Sheila then 'walked' us through the AKC site, showing us the tools available. My main 'go to' when I start to write to legislators IS the AKC site, so I'm pretty familiar with it, but more knowledge is more power.

Two lawyers, Sheila Kessler and Marty Greer, DVM, have been working with a sad seizure case in Wisconsin and their presentation of that case, the travel through the courts and the possible conclusion was riveting. I hope that they get out to California so that others can hear and learn from it.

Finally there was a panel, Linda Hart (COFED) Michele Kasten (IFDCO), Gail LaBerge (Georgia Canine Coalition) and Julian Prager (PFDC) talked about how their federations are involved, how they work, and their relationship with their legislatures/legislators. My main question? Were there varied and separate organizations when they formed their single state organization, and if so, how was that resolved? More on that in the .pdf report.

Around two p.m., we had the farewell remarks (1.5 hours after planned closing!:-), a lot of hugging, a lot of let's stay together and stay in touch. There was so much enthusiasm, so much energy in that conference room all weekend long (and at night:-), that the hours flew by. A special new friend, Judi McMahan and I made plans to get together again in California, Jay Kitchner was there with some wonderful questions. Elizabeth Brinkley was the star of the "media" run through, so many more... There was no room for 'tired.'" Because I was not leaving until the next day (East to West plus another 2.5 hours drive to my house), I had a lovely quiet dinner with a most gracious new friend, Connie James. We talked about how we "work" in our own organizations and, of course, other things.

I hope I get to see all of the friends again in November at the NAIA conference!!!!

For those who helped me get there.... THANK YOU!!!

Stormy