



The Refill

An e-letter for alumni and friends
of the ISU College of Pharmacy
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Tressa Rockwood,
Director of Development
Campus Box 8288
Pocatello, Idaho 83209
208 / 282-3655
tressa@pharmacy.isu.edu

How to ensure legislators are working for you



Editor's note: The following editorial, written by ISU College of Pharmacy fourth-year student Jen Athay, was originally published in the November/December edition of Pharmacy Student and is reprinted in the Refill with permission of the Pharmacy Student editor.

by Jen Athay

Have you ever thought that yours is just one voice and that no one else is really going to hear what you have to say? Or that your one vote is not going to make a difference? I have learned through past presidential elections and my experience with my school's APhA-ASP chapter that one voice and one vote can make a difference. Student pharmacists need to stand up and make their voices heard so that legislators know what is important to us as their constituents. And what better way to be heard than to speak with the collective voice of APhA-ASP chapters.

This past year at the APhA Annual Meeting in New Orleans, my chapter, the Idaho State University (ISU) College of Pharmacy, won the APhA-ASP Policy and Legislative Award. This was exciting because ISU's APhA-ASP chapter had never won a national award before. The main reason the chapter achieved this honor was because members became involved with legislators and in the state pharmacy



association. We had a great Student Political Information Network (SPIN) coordinator, an executive committee with a lot of ambition, and members who were willing to stand up for what they believed was best for the pharmacy profession.

Gaining the ear of state and national leaders

During the 2001-2002 school year, the Idaho State Pharmacy Association (ISPA) was considering making a proposal to the Idaho State Board of Pharmacy for increasing the pharmacist to technician ratio from 2:1 to unlimited technicians per pharmacist. Student members of the ISPA disagreed with this proposal. They felt supervising several techs would put excessive strain on a pharmacist, who would ultimately be responsible for each technician's work. The ISPA student representative and APhA-ASP chapter president forwarded a formal position statement to all interested parties. Also, student pharmacists, members of APhA-ASP, and nonmembers were encouraged to send letters and e-mails to the ISPA executive director expressing their opinion on the proposal.

The proposal failed.

The ISU chapter also helped ISPA host a Legislative Day at the state capitol building. Chapter members made their own arrangements

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and traveled to Boise to participate. APhA-ASP members went to the capitol to promote pharmaceutical care. Chapter members, along with several pharmacists and ISPA members performed blood pressure screenings, administered immunizations, and answered questions from the legislators.

Kevin Cleveland, the chapter's SPIN coordinator, was active in keeping contact with legislators. Last year, U.S. Rep. Mike Simpson (R-Idaho) came to ISU and met with student pharmacists, faculty, and staff to discuss pharmacy issues. Cleveland kept in contact with Simpson's staff to be sure that he knew the chapter's position on pharmacy-friendly bills and encouraged his support. Cleveland also put together a newsletter to keep the chapter's members apprised on national issues.

By being active in the state pharmacy-association, chapter members were allowed to participate in discussions of legislative issues concerning the profession. In 2002, ISPA brought before the Idaho State Senate Health and Welfare Committee a proposed bill favoring a universal insurance card. This type of card would make adjudication of prescriptions more efficient for staff at community pharmacies. APhA-ASP members sat in on and provided testimony at a hearing on the proposal. Unfortunately, the bill was defeated in committee. ISPA also campaigned for provider status under Idaho state law this year. Student pharmacists sent e-mails and letters to state senators and representatives regarding the matter. This campaign also failed, but the issue of pharmacists as Medicare providers will be revised in future legislative sessions.

Also, chapter member Robin Chase led a campaign to increase voter registration and political participation among ISU students. She assisted several students in the registration process, and, along with other chapter members, went door-to-door around campus promoting participation in an

upcoming city election.

Toolkit provides the framework

Before you take the first step toward legislative activity, refer to the Legislative Toolkit in chapter 9 of the *Chapter Operations Manual*. The toolkit includes many great ideas on how to get involved. It also provides a framework for Legislative Day activities and presents helpful hints for letter-writing campaigns and sample letters.

Also, elect a SPIN coordinator if your chapter does not already have one. Be sure that the member elected is responsible and will follow through to keep the chapter up-to-date on the issues. Possible projects for the SPIN coordinator include organizing letter-writing campaigns and acting as a liaison to state legislators.

Building a working relationship between an APhA-ASP chapter and a state association takes time and requires some hard work. But the effort is worthwhile and will be invaluable for furthering the profession. If your state pharmacy association's leadership does not include a student pharmacist representative, contact the association to find out how students can serve as a member of the board or on committees.

Take the lead

All it takes to bring about positive changes for the pharmacy profession is one person to be excited about what he or she can do to make policy and legislative changes happen. The excitement is contagious. You can be the person in your chapter who builds the fire. Use teamwork to fan the flames. Then, let's see if we can have each chapter pushing for needed change, so that, state by state, the voices of student pharmacists are heard.

Jen Athay is a fourth-year PharmD candidate at the Idaho State University College of Pharmacy and a member of the 2003-2004 Pharmacy Student Editorial Advisory Board.

***Happy New Year from the
ISU College of Pharmacy!***

