

2022 WLA Conference Report

Jamie Matczak

1. What was the title of a session you attended?

"Everybody Dies, So Why Don't We Talk About It? Helping a Grieving Colleague"
Presenter: Kati Morley, UW-Eau Claire McIntyre Library

Description: Research shows that grief affects the body and brain in many ways, from changes in memory, behavior, body function and immune system. Grief also takes different forms. Grief is an individualistic journey, yet we tend to judge others based on our personal experiences, rather than taking a holistic, therapeutic approach. This presentation will explain how our brain, behaviors and emotions are all engaged during bereavement, and how to best help bereaved colleagues and customers. This presentation will demystify the concept and provide advice for working with a grieving employee/colleague, specific to the library setting.

• What two things are you taking away that you heard or do you think are most important?

Kati talked about her experiences with grief associated with losing her husband five years ago. After she told her story, she offered several pieces of advice for grieving colleagues. Here is what I took away:

- Create a private space for a grieving colleague once they are back at work, even if they don't officially have one.
- Managers should not tell a grieving colleague to "take all the time you need" if they don't mean it.
- Grieving colleagues need patience from co-workers. They don't need reminders that they are "not at their best." Grieving colleagues already know this and feel badly about it.
- Some days, the best thing a grieving colleague needs is a hug.
- Anticipate the needs of a grieving colleague. Kati said her neighbors took turns mowing her yard, so that she didn't have to worry or think about that.

• Were there any key websites the presenter shared or resources that people should check out?

"Welcome to the Grief Club: Because You Don't Have to Go Through it Alone," by Janine Kwoh (book)
[How Grief Affects Your Brain and What To Do About It](#) (YouTube video)

• What was the audience reaction to this session? What kinds of feedback was given?

Several audience members were crying and passing Kleenex when Kati talked about her experiences. It was an emotional and worthwhile session to attend. It appeared that the audience appreciated Kati's vulnerability and advice on grieving colleagues.

2. What did you enjoy most about the conference?

It was so great to be at a WLA Conference that had attendance numbers closer to those pre-pandemic. I enjoyed reconnecting with colleagues and meeting new people. Because I will be chairing the 2023 WLA Conference in Middleton, I took a lot of notes on what I thought went well and what could be implemented next year. I also had the chance to meet some of the conference committee volunteers for next year.

2022 WLA Conference Report

Name: Kris Adams Wendt

1. What was the title of a session you attended?

Former Lt. Governor Barbara Lawton (Thursday luncheon speaker): Rising to the Challenge: Designing Your Future, Personal and Professional, One Decision and One Step at a Time

- What two things are you taking away that you heard or do you think are most important?**

Barbara Lawton's talk was empowering – especially to women in the audience who were encouraged to accept nothing less than full respect and to the men who support them, as well as to library workers at all levels during challenging times.

Believe in yourself and the importance of your work; don't accept someone else's frame.

- Were there any key websites the presenter shared or resources that people should check out?**

No.

- What was the audience reaction to this session? What kinds of feedback was given?**

Cannot recall another luncheon speech where people put down their forks – despite there being an awesome dessert (caramel cheesecake) in front of them – and hung on every word.

2. What did you enjoy most about the conference?

Seeing old friends and making new ones. Talking myself hoarse.

2022 WLA Conference Report

Name: Brenda Walenton

1. What was the title of a session you attended?

The Art of the Midwest Nice Email

- What two things are you taking away that you heard, or do you think are most important?**

1. Knowing what everyone's animal (communication style) is will help you work better with your team.
2. Learning how to communicate with different types of animals and understanding how they may perceive/react to something that you say or do.

- Were there any key websites the presenter shared or resources that people should check out?**

Yes, but I am missing my notes from that session so hoping the presentation is posted to Whova because I would love to do this with our small group of WVLS staff so that I can better understand my co-workers.

- What was the audience reaction to this session? What kinds of feedback was given?**

Everyone was having fun figuring out what animal they were (I am a beaver) and enjoying the interactions. Even though this was a final session the audience was participating and having fun.

2. What did you enjoy most about the conference?

Though I enjoyed the sessions I think what I liked most was networking and getting to know the people from our member libraries – I was able to have one on one conversations and small group conversations that let me connect with them on a more personal level than when I am calling or emailing them about something.

2022 WLA Conference Report

Marla Sepnafski

1. What was the title of a session you attended?

"Strong & Energized Boards" with Rachel Arndt, Rachel Arndt Consulting

Description: Library boards and friends groups play important roles in guiding decision-making, providing fundraising and community support, and ensuring the long-term strength of their libraries. With the right volunteers, a successful board or friend group will have a passion for the library's mission, will provide resources to build capacity, and will be an ambassador for the library in the community. In this session, learn how to engage and energize board members, develop relationships between the board and the library, and succession plan for the future of the board.

2. What two things are you taking away that you heard or do you think are most important?

Ideas for **Onboarding – Follow Up and Follow Through** were shared:

- This should be a formal process
- Include introduction and a visit
- Provide a "Welcome Packet" that includes paperwork to sign up for a library card
- Assign a mentor/board buddy
- Review expectations of the trustee, and key areas of focus

Fostering **Board Education** and making it a priority was emphasized. It should be an ongoing effort. It could be an agenda item – example is "board shorts". A board short could include a one- to two-minute pre-read, followed by a two-minute presentation and 10-15 minute discussion at a board meeting. A variety of timely and relevant topics should be presented to the board.

3. Were there any key websites the presenter shared or resources that people should check out?

I do not recall that websites or resources were shared in this presentation. I would have shared Rachel's presentation with this report, but did not see it offered in the list of presentations in the Whova app.

4. What was the audience reaction to this session? What kind of feedback was given?

The audience was noticeably engaged, and asked questions and provided their experiences during the session. Comments heard as I left the session: "That was a great presentation!" "Lots for me to do when I go home." "I need to beef up my trustee orientation." "Giving new trustees their own pre-printed business cards is a great idea!"

5. What did you enjoy most about the conference?

The WLA fall conference is the premier opportunity to network with colleagues within the WVLS area and across the state. Historically, I leave conferences exhilarated, yet tired, and always wishing I had talked more with certain people and attended more sessions. This year's conference was no exception.

While last year's conference brought some people out, the cloud of COVID hung in the air, with people mostly maintaining social distancing and not gathering in large groups. COVID-related personal, library, staff and community challenges were frequent topics of conversations. This year's conference felt very different, and it was wonderful to see higher levels of attendance, engagement, and enthusiasm.