

I JUST KEPT COMING BACK!



**INTERFAITH
BULLYING
PREVENTION
SUMMIT**
HUMPHREY CENTER, UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
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Yes, I did. Year after year after year. The IBPA conference is celebrating its 16th year this year. I have attended 14 of the conferences. I missed the first one because I did not know about it. I missed the most recent Nashville conference because I was in Africa and could not get out of the country—though I tried. Why have I been such a faithful attendee?

Well, there are a number of reasons.

- 1.** This is my professional development as the bullying prevention coordinator for a school district. As my employer said, "You need to go to IBPA, because I have no other way of providing professional development for you." There were, and are, no sources for learning about the most recent research and recommendations in the realm of bullying prevention and intervention in my local community. In fact, I am that resource for my school district and larger community. In order for me to provide professional development for the school employees, parents, and community members, I need to be well versed on what bullying is and what the research indicates is the best way to prevent it and to intervene when it does happen.
- 2.** This is where I become acquainted with authors. Authors of research whose brains I can pick for information that is helpful to my school. And, authors of children and young adult literature. Not only do I become acquainted, I also join them for dinner, coffee, or informal chats. They become my friends. I buy their books. I write grants to bring them to my schools so that my students have an opportunity to meet them, to read their books, and to experience the awe of getting their very own copy of the book signed by the author.
- 3.** This is where I find resources. I know well the challenges my school administrators and teachers have. At IBPA, I can meander through the exhibit hall, and have long conversations with exhibitors finding out about resources I had no idea existed. I can then match these new resources to the needs of my school personnel back home. These are the things that keep our bullying prevention initiatives new and fresh.
- 4.** This is where I gather new ideas and wisdom. I listen to keynote speakers and get inspired. Every. Time. I attend breakout sessions and learn how other schools organize their prevention and intervention initiatives. I glean bits of information from each session that I can take back to my work, which most I can implement the day I get home. My toolbox fills with ideas and resources, and my contact list for who to call or email for advice grows every year.
- 5.** This is my heart. For six years I was on the board of IBPA. During this time, we hired our first Executive Director, established a web presence, created a journal, and began offering regional conferences. The IBPA board wants all the information gleaned to be available to as many people as possible. Realizing not everyone can make it to a national conference, we seek out funding to enable us to bring regional conferences closer to home.
- 6.** Lastly, and most importantly, this is my family. Every conference is like the best of family reunions—seeing people with whom I have a common bond. People who "speak my language" when I passionately talk about preventing bullying. We catch up on our work and learn from one another. These new colleagues have become friends, and we don't just catch up on what is happening in our school and work lives. We also catch up on what is happening with our families, our children, and our partners. We talk for hours, sleep very little, and still go home refreshed and ready to take on another year of challenges.



Mary Yoder Holsopple, Consultant, Past IBPA Board Member

Mary Yoder Holsopple recently retired from Elkhart Community Schools as the Bullying Prevention Coordinator. She completed two terms on the IBPA board and is a certified Olweus trainer/consultant.

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