

Annual Meeting Student Reflections

Angst, nervousness, excitement were all appropriate adjectives to describe how I felt a few weeks before the *DIA 2013 49th Annual Meeting*. As a first time student who had never attended any event as gargantuan as this, perhaps such emotions can and should be expected. Luckily, those emotions were quickly thwarted by the capable hands of two wonderful student coordinators, Donna Mayer and Lisa Palladino Kim. Not only did they answer all of my questions, they also provided me opportunity to fully participate in the event.

One such opportunity presented itself when Donna sent out an email announcing student volunteer opportunities. I decided to volunteer as a Press Room Liaison, where I assisted DIA's public relations team with press registration and monitoring the press room. Through this role, I developed insight into what goes on "behind the scenes" with the media.

Besides providing students with information and volunteer opportunities and information, DIA also caters to first-time student attendees with a diversified panel of events that range from *First Timer Orientation & Speed Networking* to a special *Student Wrap Up*. DIA truly understands how overwhelming the Annual Meeting may be, not only for first-time students but for first-time professionals as well.

During the *First Time Orientation & Speed Networking* session, we learned the Meeting "ins and outs" and were equipped with the information and tools we needed to successfully navigate and fully experience this Meeting. Among the many things it taught us, speed networking was the most impactful to me: During the speed networking, not only did I get to practice networking in a professional setting, I met many fascinating people. I met senior managers to doctors and even company

presidents. But the most powerful of all these encounters was when I met the President and Founder of the Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome Network, Donna Appell.

Donna Appell is a registered nurse and a loving mother and attended the speed networking event to spread the word about Hermansky-Pudlak Syndrome, a rare autosomal recessive disorder with which her daughter is stricken. Donna's charisma and poise convinced me to gather my colleagues to watch the documentary *RARE* at the DIA Movie Fest.

I am so profoundly glad that I went. *RARE* tells the story of Donna's race against time to find a treatment for her daughter. The intimate and intricate relationships between the research doctor and the research patients portrayed in this documentary were both a true eye opener and a reminder of why we all serve in the healthcare industry. If it was not for this speed networking event, me and my colleagues would have never known to go out of our way to attend this perspective-changing documentary.

While there are many informative sessions during the *DIA Annual Meeting*, the most beneficial ones for students were events that encouraged networking and promoted professional development. Informative sessions may help students decide which specific faction of the healthcare field we would like to pursue, even if most of the information seems beyond our current level of comprehension. The best way for students to optimize their *DIA Annual Meeting* experience is to go to events in moderation, network and look to continue their professional development.