



## **PROUD PROFESSIONAL PROFILES**

Greetings IAWP members!

Here is our seventh monthly International Association of Workforce Professional (IAWP) **Proud Professional Profile**.

I contacted our active member **Sally Blonien**. She is currently working as a Program Coordinator 1. She first became a member of IAWP in 2010, when she started at the Shared Work program. Sally has held IAWP position as Membership Chair. She has also been a key helper for successful event with the IAWP.

### **Tell me how you first got involved with IAWP?**

I started working for the agency in 2010. I was hired into the Shared Work program and Cheryl Brown was my supervisor. Cheryl has been a long time member and has risen through the ranks to become the International President! Early on she started talking to me about the association and I signed up to become a member. I was her Administrative Assistant and so spent more time with her than most and the more I learned about the organization, the more impressed I became. The Membership Chair (who also worked in our unit) had to step down due to a job change. Cheryl asked if I would like to take over the membership duties. I enjoyed those duties and tried to beef up membership, making changes where I could. What was great about it was that I felt I had a voice in moving the organization forward. I also coordinated the silent auction at the Crabfeed for a couple years, expanding upon it. Since then, I've found more behind-the-scenes ways to get involved and help out. They include working on local fundraisers (like ice cream float sales and soup days) to raise money and awareness about IAWP and I always enjoy working on back-to-school drives and Christmas time adopt-a-family efforts. It feels good to do something for others less fortunate.

### **What was your first impression of IAWP?**

I was impressed with the passion members felt about the organization. The first event I went to had several retirees that traveled many miles to partake in the event. These same retirees were very active and mentored the younger, newer members educating them about the history of IAWP and the importance of belonging and having a voice. The networking possibilities and the chance to learn more about the important work we do on all sides of the agency was impressive. These same retirees showed up at every event – wow! As Membership Chair for the Washington State IAWP Chapter, I was able to see up close and personally the dedication of these Board members and how important IAWP was to them.

### **What do you wish other people knew about IAWP?**

It's a great group of people from all over the agency! It's an awesome way to get to know people from around the state and from different programs/divisions within the agency that maybe you aren't familiar with. Ever work with some people in the agency by email or phone only? At IAWP events you might actually get to meet them! I loved that. The educational conferences are great to see what other divisions/programs are doing around the agency. Maybe they are doing something you are passionate about! Now you get a chance to meet them, learn more and maybe apply for a job doing just that. Maybe you got transferred to another location around the state; you always have your IAWP contacts to help you get settled in and comfortable. People from all levels of the agency belong to IAWP. Where else might you get the chance to rub elbows with them and see how approachable they are? Supervisors and managers are encouraged to allow attendance at conferences/trainings put on by IAWP, so don't feel shy about getting their permission to attend. It's a win-win for everyone. Scholarships are also available to help defray costs if needed.

**The interest in IAWP is growing. Why do you think that is?**

I think it is growing due to the membership/interest of senior leadership. Our Washington State Board is very good about reaching out to senior leadership making sure they understand the importance of the organization to them and all the employees that work here. Some have joined and taken a leadership role. It is so important for employees to see that even the Executive Leadership Team has active members. If someone that busy cares enough to give valuable time to the organization, it must be a pretty good and valuable organization to be a member of. I have seen this trend happening for the past year or two and I only see it improving. Each event I attend seems to get bigger and encompass more of the agency rather than just those in the Olympia area. It's very exciting to see.

**What do you do when you aren't working/volunteering?**

My husband and I moved to 5 acres outside of Tenino in 2010. That was new to us city-folk! We now have 6 sheep (3 of which were born this spring)! And 13 chickens and 2 dogs with lots of fruit trees, grapes, veggies and herbs. I do the flowers out there. My daughter Cassie and her husband and 3 kids live in Olympia. They have Olive who is 4 and Sullivan and Pearl who are twins not yet 2 years old! They are so fun and we feel lucky to have them close by. They love coming out to the "farm". We also have a son Clayton who lives in Seattle.