

## **Matt Hobson - IPHA President - 2004**

As President of the Iowa Public Health Association (IPHA) from April 2004 to April 2005, I had one chief goal in mind...to finally make the jump to hiring a Coordinator. For years the Executive Committee of IPHA had discussed, debated, and strategized about the need for a Coordinator. The debate centered around the two major strategic choices: hire a Coordinator first, which would allow the group to devote more time for the true purpose of the association, public health advocacy, and thus gain membership (and funds) OR raise the funds needed to hire a Coordinator first in order to ensure the support for this position in the long run.



The problem was, we had discussed it over and over for years, with no end in sight for the debate. IPHA had enough money in savings to pay a part time salary for a few years at least, and many of us on the Executive Committee began to believe purchasing CDs with our funds was not serving public health in Iowa. So when I became President, I resolved to make the plunge, and I favored hiring the Coordinator first, hoping we would sustain it reliably later. It was my view that we simply had to improve what services we provided to local public health workers in Iowa in order to attract more members and interest.

Luckily, most of the Executive Committee ended up supporting my view, and we advertised for the position. We had a number of excellent applicants, but one rose to the top, due to her past service for the association. Jeneane Moody was hard to beat, and after interviews, we chose her to be our first Coordinator. Jeneane had shown us excellent organizational skills, an incredible willingness to work the details of a complicated organization like IPHA and was simply a pleasure to work with. In fact, Jeneane excelled at pointing out the little things I needed to get done as President, and did so in a way that made me think they were my ideas!

So I'm particularly proud of facilitating this move in IPHA. I knew we were ready to make the jump, and so far the organization has shown it is able to sustain the position. In fact I think it is clear that a Coordinator is necessary for the group to function as the premier public health agency in Iowa. There are certainly challenges, IPHA has such a large umbrella, it is difficult for many public health professionals to see IPHA as THEIR organization. Add in that the creation of other public health organizations has made it tougher for IPHA to be THE organization representing public health in Iowa, and one can see the struggle will be with us for a long time. And yet, I am confident IPHA will always be this important link for advocacy. It won't be easy, but in my view, would not be possible without a Coordinator. I am grateful to the Executive Committee for agreeing with this vision.

Matt Hobson  
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