



## What the Forum Means to Me

Can you remember the first Education Forum you attended? Do you remember what it felt like to be with PA educators from across the country who shared your passion for PA education, who were experiencing similar challenges and were interested in sharing solutions to those challenges?

I can remember mine most vividly. It was 2001, about a month after the devastating events of September 11, when I attended my first Education Forum in Albuquerque, N.M. There were machine-gunned armed Army reservists on duty in every airport in the country. There were concerns of *anthrax*-laced envelopes arriving in the mail, and there was a sadness and sense of disbelief that something so terrible had happened to our country. And yet, a dedicated group of PA educators came together to present scholarly work, share best practices and support one another as a PA community.

As I had only been in my position for a little over two weeks at that point, I remember trying to take in as many educational sessions as I could. I still joke about my confusion over how there were three presidents who were recognized at the business meeting along with a newly elected one, which only added to my puzzlement. I remember being encouraged by my program faculty to think about ways I could be involved in the Association in the future or getting a “pat on the back” for daring to be the reporter for our small group as part of a workshop activity.

There was a warmth and welcome that still exists even as the Education Forum has grown to include almost 1,000 participants. You see people sharing ideas, offering encouragement and feedback and lending support to one another as a community of PA educators. There are still three presidents and a new one to be elected at the business meeting. And, there continues to be new faculty making connections, getting ideas and support for the work we all cherish. With all the exciting PAEA learning opportunities ahead, the Forum remains the premier in-person learning event for our members to engage in learning and community. We look forward to seeing you in Washington next year. In the meantime, we look forward to hearing your stories about what the Education Forum means to you. *If you are interested in sharing what the Education Forum means to you—send your thoughts to [learning@paeaonline.org](mailto:learning@paeaonline.org)*

--Karen Hills