

Building Bridges, Bridging Gaps: Bringing New Faces to AHIMA

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by Barbara Odom-Wesley, PhD, RHIA

The 19th century poet Will Allen Dromgoole was probably not thinking about HIM when she penned “The Bridge Builder.” Today, the poem is most often used in contexts like teaching, scouting, and volunteering, but its inspirational theme is also a perfect metaphor for AHIMA’s recently launched Member-Get-a-Member and Student-Get-a-Student programs.

Dromgoole wrote, “There followeth after me today a youth whose feet must pass this way...He too, must cross in the twilight dim; good friend, I am building the bridge for him.”

Dromgoole’s poem is about building each other up in order to reach our greatest potential. Similarly, these new programs encourage the building of professional relationships for the betterment of the individual and for the profession as a whole. As members of AHIMA, we have access to many benefits including knowledge, networking, and advocacy. Now we can become “bridge builders” by making these benefits available to others.

Building the Bridge

In the Member-Get-a-Member program, current AHIMA members are offered incentives to recruit new members. The current member receives credit for being a sponsor and wins valuable prizes. In turn, the new member receives all the AHIMA member benefits as well as Learning Dollars good for AHIMA product purchases.

Similarly, in the Student-Get-a-Student program, student members can introduce a student to AHIMA and receive prizes. That new student member then has access to student discounts and subscriptions to publications that can serve as valuable learning tools. The benefits of professional networking that are essential for a student’s career path are further incentives to offer other students when inviting them to cross over the bridge into AHIMA membership.

Helpful suggestions for identifying prospective members are available at www.ahima.org. Be creative and approach potential members with this wonderful opportunity to gain access to the expert resources at AHIMA. Invite colleagues in other professions who could benefit from the resources, including employers, consumers, and nurses and physicians. With the increased unemployment rate, you might know someone looking for a fresh start.

The Journey Across

We are facing an aging HIM work force. That, coupled with declining enrollments in educational programs, could lead to a crisis. The AHIMA Board of Directors, staff, and volunteer groups have identified this as a strategic priority. In addition to the Member-Get-a-Member and Student-Get-a-Student programs, AHIMA’s work force study, an ongoing image campaign, and a recruitment toolbox for access by schools and members are also in place.

Help Along the Way

It is important to remember that anyone can become an AHIMA member. Any individual interested in the purposes of AHIMA who does not meet the qualifications for active membership is eligible for associate membership. In fact, this membership category has experienced the greatest growth recently. As you consider getting involved in the Member-Get-a-Member or Student-Get-a-Student programs, keep in mind the lessons we can learn from Dromgoole’s idea of “The Bridge Builder.” It’s time to reach out, build bridges, and share the great news about the HIM profession and AHIMA.

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