

**Overeaters Anonymous Booth at FNCE (Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo)  
Philadelphia, PA Oct. 27-29, 2019**

November 25, 2019

The Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, founded 1917, is the United States' largest organization of food and nutrition professionals, and represents over 100,000 credentialed practitioners, registered dietitian nutritionists as well as researchers, educators, students, nurses, physicians, pharmacists, clinical and community professionals, consultants and food service managers. The Academy holds an annual Food and Nutrition Conference and Expo in different locations each year. The FNCE contacted Overeaters Anonymous Philadelphia Area Intergroup (PAIG) to invite us to participate, offering us a booth for non-profit organizations. (the exhibitors are primarily for-profit entities)

PAIG received enthusiastic and generous support from South Jersey IG, Central Jersey IG, Brandywine IG, South Central PA IG, Region 7, and World Service Office Professional Exhibits Fund.

Our booth ran for the 3 days of the Expo. We had 3 to 5 volunteers at the booth throughout, 13 OA members altogether. There was great interest in our booth and a steady stream of visitors. Gauging from the amount of literature we handed out, there were about 500 visitors. Many, especially students had never heard of OA. Many were well acquainted with OA and regularly send their patients to us. A few Expo attendees were themselves OA members. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Many thanked us for exhibiting and told us that we are a good asset to the Expo.

I wondered how OA might fit into the mix. The majority of the 400 plus exhibitors were promoting and sampling food offerings. There were giant corporations, specialty brands and services, also educational institutions and non-profits. I was frequently asked if OA is a non-profit. That got me reflecting that OA differs from other non-profits which often rely on outside funding and grants. Tradition 7 states that "Every OA group ought to be fully self supporting, declining outside contributions". Visitors to our booth met OA members, contrasting the paid staff at the other exhibits. There was direct access to our message when we OA's shared our passion for the recovery we've found in OA. I believe this made our booth unique and attractive. This message of attraction broke through the atmosphere of promotion. Many visitors spoke quite unguardedly about their own experiences, their concerns for their patients, and of issues around compulsive eating. It turned out to be an excellent opportunity to carry the OA message to Health Care Professionals. We hope that OA can exhibit at the FNCE in the future.

**Recorded the occupations and locales of 278 visitors.**

Top occupations: Dietician (RLD Registered Licensed Dietician), Nutritionist, Educators, Health Care or Nutrition Students, Bariatric, Diabetes, Renal, Therapist, Public Health, Community Health

Visitors from outside U.S.: Peru, Malawi, Turkey, Korea, Qatar, Puerto Rico, Honduras, Bahamas, Barbados, Mexico, Canada

**Literature and give aways**

Distributed 446 OA Professional Presentation Folders. The novelty OA fork pens were a hit, very attractive, we gave out nearly 600 of those and ran out of supplies. We had local OA pens to give out as well. Also distributed other pamphlets, OA Courier, meeting lists, business cards, etc. We could have doubled our stock of 200 copies of "15 Questions".





### **Booth appearance**

The booth was 10' x 10', "in-line" (not a corner, which costs more). Booth was set up with two "shades", they are super portable and look very professional. We had 3 tables with OA table cloths, a tri-fold display, and several plastic stands for pamphlets. The royal blue and white color scheme happened to match the backdrop curtains installed at the Expo. We had folding chairs providing comfort, and a few of our visitors sat down with us in conversation. Mostly we engaged people in the area in front of our booth. The fork pens really caught people's eye and started many encounters.

### **Monday morning quarterback**

- The FNCE were helpful answering questions about reserving and contracting for the exhibit booth. When it came to the logistics setting up the booth, I continued to ask the FNCE, but better would have been to ask GES (Global Experience Services), the company contracted to manage the physical requirements such as when and how to set up our booth.
- The prices to rent furnishings were dauntingly high (\$281 for the mandatory carpet, \$233 for an 8' table). However, the hope to save money by providing our own carpet, tables, and



chairs ended up futile as we ended up paying a \$589 bill to the GES for their handlers to cart our furnishings in and out. Besides the bill, there was much time and effort borrowing and transporting our furnishings. In retrospect, my opinion is that it is worthwhile to rent booth furnishings, unless we could provide our own furnishings that are very portable, such as light folding tables and chairs. Keep it simple.

#### **Ideas for future FNCE:**

- FNCE October 17-2, 2020 Indiana Convention Center, Indianapolis, Indiana.
- Display a laptop or Ipad showing the [oa.org](http://oa.org) website. There were many questions about how to find meetings, and also how to find more information and literature for potential OA members or for Professionals. It would be helpful to be able to show and tell using oa.org.
- There are numerous presentations, speakers, and topic sessions. Consult (early) with the Academy FNCE planners on the possibility of OA participating in an educational session.
- We should have a total of four members at the Expo at all times. Two members working the booth and two working the other exhibitors on the floor. The two members working the floor can discuss the program and follow up with the exhibitors with an interest in the program..eg. schools or universities that have nutrition or health programs, counseling offices, etc. (note: exhibitors are not permitted to distribute literature outside of their booth)
- Besides fun giveaway stuff we should have an item to give away to the professional (who will use it in their practice) such as the pen Mikey J ordered but did not receive until after the event.
- We need to improve the items on the Tri-fold display to also include items from the Courier (addressing both why and when should I refer someone to OA) enlarged so it can be read from the front of the booth.

#### **Thank you**

Grateful for this opportunity to help carry our OA message with the service, contributions, and well wishes of so many in our Fellowship. Thank you Andrea B, Anita L, Barbara H, Carolyn M, Charna F, Chris N, Deedy D, Doris W, Irene C, Jeff S, Jennica N, Laura W, Mary Esther, Mark L, Mikey J, Sarah V, Steve T, Toni Ann T, Wendy K for your service!