

A Special Thank You from President Judd Grafe

Dear members,

As I struggle to find words that adequately express my gratitude and joy over the success of the 2021 NAA Conference and Show and the MSAA's hosting of the Welcome Party, a quote comes to mind:

"The results you achieve will be in direct proportion to the effort you apply."
~David Waitley

Like true Minnesotans, we do not cower from effort.

The results were extraordinary! Congratulations! I cannot tell you how many Conference attendees and NAA staff continued to effusively thank MSAA members for hosting "the best welcome party they have ever attended." Our Purple People Greeters, with the assistance of the SKOL Drumline, set an energetic tone for NAA members as they entered US Bank stadium to raucous cheering. The event center opened onto the football field and allowed for all attendees to feel included, no matter the activity they were enjoying. MSAA members did a great job staffing each event and making sure everyone was engaged and having fun. From Cornhole to bouncy houses there were footballs flying and people laughing from end zone to end zone. The band did a wonderful job with the music and the catering staff had plenty of food and drinks for everyone. As a true blue Minnesotan, I was especially impressed with the tater tot hotdish and walleye cakes. A unique touch was a first-ever welcome party group photo.



Everyone was smiling when they arrived and still smiling when they left and I cannot think of any better validation to the success of our party.

The comments regarding the rest of the week continued, with thanks for the daily "slice of MN nice" (fresh daily apple pies) and a Friday IAC pizza party. The MSAA bid assistants did a phenomenal job overcoming a difficult auction arena and were instrumental for the success of both IJAC and IAC events. I was particularly pleased to hear comments about the spirit and energy that MSAA members and volunteers brought to the conference and how this energy set the tone for one of the most memorable C&S's in recent history. My favorite moment was following a couple in the hall and overhearing what a great time they were having in Minnesota:

"What a great state! Everyone has been awesome! I can't wait to come back."

If the comments we heard all week continue to ring true, I believe the MSAA and the state of Minnesota will be remembered well by all attending NAA members and staff.

I must have said this several hundred times during the week as people offered thanks and praise:

"It takes a village and we have an excellent village."

So finally I get to the most important part of this letter, you! This week was the culmination of efforts that began more than 10 years ago. Some of our members that helped begin this process have passed but have not been forgotten and I hope we did them proud as they watched the fruits of a tree planted long ago. We had MSAA members unable to attend the events due to family or work conflicts. Many of these members have been involved with this process and journey for years. We missed you and kept you in our thoughts as we did our best to represent the spirit of all MSAA members.

Thank you to our Purple People Greeters. I am so grateful for your energy and enthusiasm. You created a memory that will be talked about and cherished for many years. To our many volunteers and sponsors, thank you. This could not have been done without your thoughtful input and continued support.

To the MSAA board and NAA committee members, thank you for enduring the numerous phone calls and Zoom meetings necessary to iron out details. You all did a wonderful job.

Finally, a special shout out to John Schultz, as he chaired NAA's conference committee and had to deal with me as MSAA Chair daily at the office (poor fella); Kurt and Connie Johnson for their inspiration, great ideas, and constant support; Andy Imholte for the great job on PowerPoint and help with marketing; and lastly, Frank, for all he does and continues to do.

MSAA rocked this one



MSAA President Judd Grafe