

Affiliate Spotlight

Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Public Policy

Minnesota's Commissioner of Health Dr. Ed Ehlinger is known for saying "Public Policy is what we do together". The longer I'm involved with state policy initiatives, the truer this rings. Minnesota Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics (MAND) has approximately 1700 members in a state with roughly 2200 RDNs and 5.5 million people. Our state motto is L'Etoile du Nord or "Star of the North." Minnesota is known for Prince and Bob Dylan, the BWCA (Boundary Waters Canoe Area, as in Canadian border), the Mall of America, and the perpetually winning Lynx Women's Basketball team. Oh and let's not forget to mention U.S. Senator Al Franken's Congressional Hot Dish competitions. Over the years as MAND State Policy Rep, I have also learned that Minnesota is "above average" for state public policy initiatives. No apologies for borrowing "above average" from Prairie Home Companion radio show either. The real question was how to get MAND plugged into the well-established state policy sector.



MAND and MHK 2017 policy initiatives aligned and we knew we would have a bigger impact with our legislature as part of a bigger lobby day. MAND board approved a sponsorship contribution of \$3,500. As a co-sponsor there was no charge to our members for the April 6 2017 Day at the Capitol which include morning workshop, lunch, MAND visibility on all materials, legislator leave behinds, social media coverage, etc. Typical turnout is 90-110 members for a standalone MAND Day at the Capitol. This year as a co-sponsor with MHK, the turnout was over 400, with MAND members representing about a quarter of the group. Members enjoyed the added network opportunities with a bigger diverse group and the perks of a larger, better funded event. We will continue to reassess and evolve our approaches and strategies for state policy initiatives but for now MAND state public policy power is in partnerships. Dr. Ehlinger nailed it - "Public Policy is what we do together". Feel free to contact us if additional interest in the MAND experience with state level policy work. Ann Erickson, State Policy Rep ann.erickson75@gmail.com Jami Burbidge, Executive Director mand@eatrightmn.org

As with many state affiliates, MAND has neither the financial resources nor paid staff to lead a policy initiative that is typically a multi-year effort. As others hear repeatedly from me, "We aren't positioned to drive the bus, but we sure can help fill it." What MAND has to offer is a statewide organization and sizeable membership relative to other health professional organizations. Other policy groups and organizations are quick to recognize the merits of MAND's members. So we started getting acquainted with like-minded policy groups such as Hunger Solutions Minnesota, Statewide Health Improvement Partnerships, and Farm to School coalition.

Our relationship with Minnesotans for Healthy Kids (MHK) coalition has been our most enduring and effective. MHK coalition was founded in 2007 under the American Heart Association and consists of over 15 member groups. This year MAND was invited to co-sponsor our state Day at the Capitol with MHK.