



Innovate to Motivate

The National Conference for Political Involvement Professionals

2011 February 8–11, 2011 San Antonio

www.InnovateToMotivate.com

Runner-Up - Grassroots 2011 Showalter Political Involvement Program Innovation Award

Nominated Organization:	American Academy of Neurology
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Name of Program Manager/Senior Administrator:	Melissa Larson
Is the nomination for grassroots, PAC or technology?:	Grassroots

What is the innovation?

The Donald M. Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum (Forum) is a leadership and advocacy skills development curriculum created by the American Academy of Neurology (AAN) with the mission of training AAN members to better advocate for their patients and the profession. Forum graduates have gone on to use their skills at the state, local, and national levels. The four-day program is highly interactive and offers challenging instruction in the areas of media relations and communication, legislative and grassroots advocacy, and advocacy action planning. Since its inception in 2003, the Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum has graduated 240 advocacy leaders who are working on critical issues throughout the United States and fifteen other countries (Austria, Australia, Belgium, Canada, China, Japan, Jamaica, Georgia, Guatemala, Ireland, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka). Palatucci Advocacy leaders have implemented their personal advocacy action plans and achieved success promoting state and federal legislation, working with the media, obtaining financial support for research, developing coalitions, organizing state neurological societies, lobbying for fair reimbursement, and helping the Academy draft position statements that affect future legislation.

The Forum has improved the Academy's™ relationships with its international members by providing them with a unique advocacy training opportunity. Just as importantly, their participation expands the Academy's advocacy awareness beyond the borders of the U.S. In 2009, we received more than 100 applications from around the world for the 30 available trainee positions. As the number and quality of applicants increases, we continue to evolve our screening and selection methods. In 2004, we began accepting only online applications and in 2008 the grading and selection process was also replaced with a web based tool which improved the efficiency of the application process for our members and the AAN staff.

In the spring of 2005 we launched the online Advocacy Blog. Its purpose is two fold. It allows advocates to both publicize their action plans and journal their advocacy activities - capturing and sharing their successes and challenges on a real-time basis. In addition, the tool provides AAN staff with a searchable database of advocacy experiences, which we can tap into for specific strategy and resource needs as they arise. (Please see the attached Executive Summary document for more Forum details.)



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What prompted this innovation?

As the Academy's dedication to patient advocacy grew we identified a need to train our members in the skills required to be effective advocates at the state level. This need is particularly significant at the AAN since we do not have state level chapters as a resource.

How is this innovation likely to change the way political involvement programs are conducted?

The Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum was designed to instill leadership and advocacy skills in Academy members who possess strong potential and a clear passion for their patients and professional advocacy. Graduates continue to remain engaged with the AAN after their training, and many become involved in volunteer leadership. The "immersion training" model is highly successful, and should be adopted by more membership associations.

What can public affairs professionals learn from your innovation?

As stated above, the Palatucci Forum is a tried and true training that receives very high evaluation marks from its attendees. The Forum's construction and concepts may be new to association professionals who could benefit from this example.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Based on the overwhelmingly positive response to the Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum, AAN leadership and staff are fully committed to the long-term future of the program. Surveys point to an eight year track record of above average graduate satisfaction. Based on the feedback we receive we continually refine the program's training design to optimize the experience for participants. The 2010 program model consisted of the following components:

- Opening reception with action plan poster presentations
- Dinner and award ceremony for the Advocate of the Year
- Media skills training sessions
- On camera skills development
- Social Media skills development
- Grassroots and legislative advocacy
- Mock Legislative visit and testimony training
- Advisor and Faculty workshops
- Action plan creation
- Action planning breakfasts
- Networking luncheons
- Social and networking receptions

The structure of the Palatucci Advocacy Leadership Forum is designed to instill leadership and advocacy skills in neurologists who possess strong potential and a clear passion for their patients and professional advocacy. Upon completion of the program graduates will have:



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- Developed advanced on camera and online communication and grassroots advocacy Skills
- A greater understanding of their role in the process for change
- Strategies to align, empower and motivate their peers to join in their advocacy efforts
- Sharpened leadership skills
- A mission to serve as key contacts for the AAN on vital issues
- Lessons from the field –learned advocacy experiences from previous participants

AAN staff continues to support our graduates throughout the year by fostering the advisor – advisee relationships, promoting communication via the listservs, the online blog, and in person at localized advocacy venues, and by contacting them directly by phone and e-mail. In 2010 we added financial support to the list with the Advocacy Action Plan Support Grant which allows Palatucci graduates to apply for up to \$1000 in funds to support the development of their action plan.