



2020 Winter Conference



Escaping the cold at the ACA Winter Conference in San Diego



This was one of the best and most exciting winter conferences in ACA history and set the tone for ACA as it goes forward in its 150th year.

The ACA Winter Conference in San Diego kicked off the new Roaring Twenties by returning back to the west coast for five days of informative workshops, accreditation hearings, eclectic exhibitors and the chance to reconnect with old friends and make new relationships. The five-day conference brought together the best and brightest in the field of corrections, both in the U.S. and from some of our international partners. Situated along 70 miles of Pacific coastline, this was one of the best and most exciting winter conferences in ACA history and set the tone for ACA as it goes forward in its 150th year.

The conference began on Jan. 9th with the traditional Committee on Performance-Based Standards hearing. It wasn't until the next day that

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the conference got into full swing, with the opening of registration and the first of several training sessions. Participants could take courses involving subjects like suicide prevention, medication assisted treatment, and ethical decision making in correctional health care. That evening saw the Health Care Network Reception, where guests dined on hors d'oeuvres and networked with corrections professionals from all over. The event was once again sponsored by Correct Rx and featured a speech by Correct Rx president and CEO Ellen Yankellow, who welcomed and thanked everyone for the work they do.

The conference continued on Saturday, Jan. 11th with the first round of workshops and committee meetings. Saturday was also the day of the Health Care Special Session and Luncheon. Health care professionals gathered for a wonderful lunch and heard a speech from Duane Slone, J.D. Slone, a Circuit Court Judge for the 4th Judicial District in the state of Tennessee, gave a presentation about opioid intervention courts and the work done in Tennessee to help those addicted to opioids, particularly pregnant women.



On Sunday, the workshops and panels continued. This day also included the important Board of Governors meeting, bringing members of ACA's leadership together to discuss a variety of subjects and programs going forward. Sunday also saw the opening of the Exhibit Hall. Here, attendees were able to tour the aisles for the best and newest in correctional materials and goods. They could learn about new self-defense items, anti-drone technology and new food and beverage options for commissaries and facility cafeterias. While they toured the aisles, they could also enter competitions at various booths to win iPads, gift cards and





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more by playing games such as virtual golf or testing their aim at a Nerf target range. It was also here that attendees could enter ACA's grand prize giveaway, entering for the chance to win airline tickets and enter the grand prize drawing that would be revealed on Tuesday.

Monday morning began with the highly anticipated ACA General Session. This event gathered all conference attendees for a presentation by Timothy Ballard. Ballard, a former special agent and the founder of Operation Underground Railroad, spoke about his organization's work breaking up human trafficking rings and how the corrections field plays a part in the process. He also spoke at length about his personal experience in adopting two trafficked children and shared a trailer for a film about his life that will be released later in 2020. This enlightening and heartbreaking presentation left many attendees considering it one of the best General Sessions in ACA history and made everyone more aware of the dangers of human trafficking and the need to bring these traffickers and trafficking groups to justice.

The conference came to an end on Tuesday, Jan. 14th with the final workshops and meetings. It was also here that the final contest drawings were held, with the big event being the grand prize giveaway.



One lucky participant was able to leave San Diego with a free, 10-day trip to Europe. This was also the day of the ACA Annual Luncheon, where attendees gathered for a nice lunch and heard a wonderful presentation from Shannon Huffman Polson, an author and motivational speaker who was the first woman to fly Apache helicopters for the U.S. armed forces. After her presentation, the ACA executive assembly presented its annual awards for innovative programs and those who showed courage within and outside their correctional facilities. The ACA conference came to an official end following the Delegate Assembly.

With the San Diego conference over, all the attendees returned to their homes ready to bring what they learned to their facilities. This excitement also helped bring attention to the upcoming 150th Congress of Correction in Cincinnati this summer. From August 6-10, ACA will be holding its biggest Congress of Correction to date, with many exciting events and programs already in the works. We hope you all care to join us in Ohio for what will surely be an unforgettable conference in a historic year for ACA and the field of corrections.

— ALEXANDER CARRIGAN

