

Experienced Leader Meet Donna Smiley

“Others asked, and I said yes” and “I don’t enjoy working in a leaderless group” are two phrases that probably best describe my leadership journey or at least what started my journey. In the early days of my career, I was asked by others to volunteer and lead in various ways – and I said yes. One of the members of my “professional family tree” (Dr. Martha Anderson) encouraged me as an undergraduate student in CSD to always support my state association. I have been a member of my state association since that time and have volunteered and subsequently been asked to serve in various leadership roles over the last 28 years. By being involved at the state level, some opportunities for participating in national leadership roles arose – such as serving as a Legislative Councilor to ASHA from Arkansas. By being an active and engaged member of the ASHA LC, I was asked to serve in other roles (ASHA PAC board for example). I have been active in smaller groups such as the ASHA SIG related to hearing loss in children and the Educational Audiology Association. I have contributed to discussion groups and email listservs. Back in the early 1990’s I was asked to be the products manager for the Educational Audiology Association. This all happened because I attend a conference that included about 25-30 other audiologists who worked in schools. I was a new face and wanted to be connected to these other likeminded professionals. At the time, EAA did not have an association management company. It was STRICLY volunteers. EAA had several products (e.g. checklists, books, and handouts) that I had to store in my office and I had to fill the orders as they came in from members. It wasn’t a glamorous job and took more time than I expected. BUT the reward for doing this job was that for years I would meet people in the profession and they would say, “Hey you were the person that I sent my EAA order to”! It was truly a breakthrough role in my leadership journey.

In late 2011, I was asked to consider running for the ASHA Board of Directors. I talked with my family and my work team and decided that I could make it work I were elected. The experiences that I had and the relationships that I developed as ASHA VP for Audiology Practices (2013-2015) were invaluable. I worked hard but I learned so many important lessons about our professions and about working with others. It was well worth it. Currently, I am excited to be serving on the ASHA Committee on Leadership Cultivation and to be able to participate in developing future leaders of ASHA.