



Spring Exchange 2011- May 20th "Rigor and Relevance in Lean Times"

Join us on May 20th in Columbus, Ohio at the Quest Conference Center for the OPEG Spring Exchange of 2011. Our spring event is typically "hands on" and this year will be focused on real world evaluation.

Jim Rugh, this year's keynote, has been professionally involved in international development for 47 years; for the past 32 years as a specialist in program evaluation. He co-authored the popular and practical *RealWorld Evaluation* book (Sage, 2006) and has led numerous workshops on that topic for many organizations and networks in many countries. In recognition of his contributions to the evaluation profession AEA awarded him the 2010 Alva and Gunnar Myrdal Practice Award.

Registration begins April 11th- go to OPEG on the Web, www.opeg.org, for on-line registration. Presentation submissions will be due March 25th!

WWW.OPEG.ORG

Join the OPEG Board!

Five positions on the OPEG Board are open for nominations for terms commencing June 1: President, Vice President, and three Members at Large.

The Board meets quarterly, usually with one meeting being in person and the remaining via conference calls, to plan OPEG events, keep tabs on organizational financial management, and support membership activities.

Board membership offers a great opportunity to get involved with guiding OPEG, promote the field of program evaluation, and network with colleagues.

The OPEG Board is reviewing by-laws for pertinent updates given membership and scope changes over the years. Please look for an invitation this Spring to vote on their acceptance!

If you are interested in a position or would like to suggest someone for a position, please email Election Chair Brenda Peters at bkpeters@oh.rr.com by April 10. Include the following information:

- Name
- Employer
- Phone number
- Email address
- Position of interest (President, Vice President, or Member at Large)
- Bio (100 words or fewer)

OPEG Board Members

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Ex Officio/ Past President

Nancy Hood,
Ex Officio/ Past Vice

SAVE THE DATE!

The OPEG Fall Workshop will be held Thursday, October 13, 2011 at the Quest Center in Columbus OH. Look for details by email and the OPEG website.

AWARD NOMINATIONS

OPEG is currently seeking nominations for its 2011 awards, which will be presented at the upcoming Spring Exchange. OPEG gives out the **Roberta O'Keefe Recognition Award** to active OPEG members for serving and promoting OPEG in an exceptional manner. The **Evaluation Recognition Award** recognizes an individual and/or special body of evaluation work. If you wish to nominate some- one for one of the two awards, send the Award Nomination Form (available from the OPEG web- site), to Rob Fischer, fischer@case.edu. Nominations are due by April 10, 2011.

See additional criteria for each award: <http://www.opeg.org/>

Plan to attend the Annual Conference of the American Evaluation Association (AEA) in Anaheim, CA, November 2nd through 5th, 2011

AEA's annual meeting is expected to bring together nearly 3,000 evaluation practitioners and academics. This is an opportunity to gather with colleagues to discuss evaluation trends in the field. AEA provides opportunities to meet evaluation practitioners in other states.

OPEG is an AEA state affiliate

See AEA's website, <http://www.eval.org/>, for more information

Ohio Program Evaluators' Group Fall Workshop (2010) Reflections

Submitted by Sandra Ortega, OPEG Member

An opportunity, to share what we know and learn from our colleagues from across the state summarizes the OPEG Fall Workshop. The event offered plenty of options for those of us seeking to learn new skills and refresh our dusty memories of the myriad methods of our trade. From logic models to getting to know our data to ensure proper analysis to engaging stakeholders through the newest technology, the day was filled with information shared in a user-friendly manner representative of OPEG's members.

Nine workshops that focused on interactive skill refreshing and building facilitated by practitioners and academics from around the state made for a well-rounded exchange. Jerry Walker taught us how to dance with our data from his years of experience working with large data sets. Jan Noga provided us with her insights on matching systems ideas to evaluation practice and techniques to improve survey design. Ann McCracken shared her knowledge and some hands on instruction in developing logic models which is a must do these days for evaluators working with service providers. Brenda Peters focused on the much needed topic of training your interviewers to ensure the information you get is high quality. We were also introduced to some nifty gadgets by Joanne Pearsol that are sure to help us engage participants in the data collection process. Not only did the use of technology demonstrated by Pearsol engage us in the process, it also gave quick visual results that can be a real benefit to those of us working in participatory public settings.

Techniques for analyzing data are always hot topics for evaluators. This year, three workshops focused specifically on data analysis; two on quantitative analysis and one on qualitative analysis. Amy Ferketich introduced us to statistics using examples from her work to illustrate the analyses and Nancy Hood took us into the wonderful world of logistic regression and unpackaged the steps of it in an interesting and innovative manner. John Hitchcock rounded out the discussion with his workshop on integrating credibility techniques in qualitative evaluation work.

And of course, there was plenty of time built in to the day for networking with colleagues and sharing amongst ourselves. Congratulations to the program committee for bringing together a talented slate of informative workshops from which everyone could take home a nugget for their evaluator's toolbox!

OPEG MEMBER PROFILE: Jessica Foster, PhD Submitted by Joy Edington, OPEG Member

Jessica Foster is a Management Analyst at Franklin County Children Services, and has belonged to OPEG since she moved to Columbus in May, 2009. As an OPEG member, Jessica especially likes being part of a community of evaluators in Ohio, and enjoys the opportunity to share ideas and to learn from each other's skills and experiences.

In her role as Management Analyst, Jessica primarily conducts data collection, analysis, and reporting for various staff and departments within the agency, for the purpose of facilitating work with external researchers and evaluators.



Jessica Foster

She additionally provides feedback to agency management as to how well programs and services are working. She explains that, *"My understanding of evaluation helps me to find ways to explain findings to stakeholders in a way that is understandable and non-threatening. It also helps me to provide useful feedback to external evaluators on their evaluation plans and procedures."*

Jessica has a Ph.D. in Education from UCLA. She became involved with evaluation in graduate school, working as a researcher at UCLA's National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST). While working at CRESST, Jessica had the opportunity to observe classes and to converse with teachers, and subsequently decided to make a career out of evaluation, so that she would have the opportunity to help improve programs that directly impact children's lives.

Michael Quinn Patton's book, *Utilization-Focused Evaluation*, is Jessica's favorite reference for evaluation, because it helps her to remember that data cannot be useful unless it's user-friendly. She also likes the University of Wisconsin - Extension's Program Development and Evaluation website: <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/pdande/index.html>, because it's full of handy evaluation resources.

**MEMBERSHIP DUES- RENEW ON THE
OPEG WEBSITE!**

Please remember to keep your OPEG membership dues current. Although we have maintained our 1980 bargain rate—\$30 for professionals and \$20 for students—these fees are critical to our ability to bring in recognized experts.

See the OPEG website, www.opeg.org, to join or renew your membership (Membership page) on-line using the new PayPal and credit card features!

We'd love to hear your ideas for OPEG Newsletter content. Contact Julianne Manchester, OPEG Board Member and News-