Testimonial from a New Member:

What benefit is there for me to volunteer in my local NIGP Chapter?

by Carol McPatrick, Senior Buyer, City of Homestead

I was asked in an Interview: "What benefit is there for me to be a volunteer in my local NIGP Chapter?"

As a newcomer to the Public Procurement field, I felt lost, I had procurement experience but in the private sector, but I soon discovered I was dealing with a very different field. When I started in my new position I asked many questions to my supervisor and co-workers, and though they were insightful and helpful, I was not completely satisfied with the answers, not because I felt they were wrong, but because I needed more concrete information, both on how to proceed with my work and more importantly how to make sure that what I was doing would make a more efficient impact in the way I would tackle my duties.

In search of more knowledge I stumbled onto our local Chapter's website NIGP Greater Miami Chapter, where I found a link inviting volunteers. I clicked on the link which had me send my contact information. I received an invitation to attend a board meeting; curious (and I admit, uncertain of what I could do as a volunteer) I attended the meeting.

I am a strong believer in volunteer work and I have volunteered many times before for different organizations, but as soon as I walked into my first NIGP Greater Miami Chapter meeting, I quickly learned this one was going to be different. I was surrounded by a great number of Procurement Professionals, which all share a passion for their profession, a strong sense of ethics and an unselfish desire to share their knowledge by promoting the local chapter. As they went around the table asking each of us to introduce ourselves and share why we volunteered, my turn came and I, somewhat naively answered, a little intimidated by my surroundings, that I wanted to learn from the "professionals" and that I was not sure that I could do much for them but to offer some of my time. I was quickly put at ease by everyone's kindness and welcoming nature and they encouraged me to continue asking questions.

I've been a volunteer with my chapter for almost a year now and in that time I've gained a sense of obligation and responsibility to maintain and preserve the moral and ethical ways
that procurement is and continues to be. A desire to honor our craft by promoting the education of Professionals locally...

I've attended a couple of the NIGP courses, where I've been exposed to great information, and without diminishing their value, I feel that I have gained even more by continuously participating and therefore interacting with local Procurement professionals. Perhaps it should be a requirement for your certification to participate as a volunteer for your local chapter.

Procurement is often viewed by the other departments as an obstacle, and I find myself defending and justifying our processes and procedures. I feel we should be viewed as the fine filter whose goal is to keep the municipality transparent, which maintains a delicate balance between a major disaster with dire financial implications if not handle correctly and the successful completion of an order that is going to ultimately serve our community and the reflection of the efforts of all our city employees. In my local chapter I have found a support group that encourages you to stay focus on the ethics, and the value of doing your work with pride.

I answered the interview question by explaining, that I have gained one-on-one access to Procurement Professionals from local agencies that are unselfish in sharing their knowledge and experience, which will help me in gaining my CPPB certification.

In retrospect and a little more time I would have said: "In a world where idols are chosen by their popularity I have found mine in my local chapter. That I have gained access to a group with a real sense of belonging to the Procurement Community. They have taught me that there is nothing in it for them, except for the pride and satisfaction of belonging to a group of professionals whose only goal is to encourage other professionals to continue to perform by holding the NIGP code of Ethics to its highest standard."