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From cyber-security to hoarding, IIAO solicits relevant educational issues from members

by Michelle Leach

Boasting upwards of 125 members across 25-plus agencies, the Independent Insurance Agents of Omaha is focused on growing that membership — notably, the next generation of younger agents — while providing quality continuing education, legislative advocacy, and opportunities for networking and leadership development.

“The Association sponsors seven luncheon programs each year beginning in September; each providing one hour of continuing education,” said Rod Muench, CPCU and president-elect, when asked about the strategies propelling these priorities forward. “These are attended by an average of 75 members and guests.”

Founded in 1940, the IIAO represents the Omaha arm of The Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America, a national alliance that reportedly spans 300,000 business owners and employees representing all types of insurance and financial services products offerings.

Further, Muench noted the Omaha chapter co-sponsors a three-hour continuing education insurance ethics seminar annually, and supports the Independent Insurance Agents of Nebraska by allowing members to speak at each meeting and encouraging participation in the IIAN Legislative Advisory Council & Ambassadors, which reportedly provides feedback to the legislative committee to guide the organization’s activity and position on multiple issues.

“We also dedicate one meeting to hear about local and national legislative issues that impact the



Rod Muench, president-elect of the Independent Insurance Agents of Omaha.

industry and the agents working in the profession,” Muench said.

It supports the IIAO Young Agents both financially and administratively; the group is geared toward new industry entrants and has its own separate meetings designed to aid in younger agents reaching their unique professional development goals.

“As part of leadership development, the majority of our board is under the age of 40,” he said.

Muench indicated progress on these priority areas starts with listening to members and planning accordingly.

“The nine-member board, based on input from the membership, works hard to arrange for relevant education topics,” he said.

Recent topics spanned everything from homeowner policy issues (associated with short-term rental arrangement) and the poten-

tial impact of climate change on the insurance industry, to potential hoarding-related challenges for agents.

“The 2016 to ‘17 year will likely include topics [such as] ‘fire public protection classes,’ ‘texting while driving,’ ‘cyber security,’ and ‘insurance fraud,’” he said.

Community service strides are represented by each of its seven luncheon programs featuring a local charitable organization.

This charity is invited to make a brief presentation.

“We receive suggestions from our members on this as well, and try to locate groups that have lesser visibility than others,” Muench said. “The Association makes a monetary

contribution at each luncheon, and allows members to make their own contributions.”

IIAO supports and promotes two different programs that provide \$1,000 scholarships for high school and college students interested in an insurance career.

“The last two years we’ve partnered with two other local insurance agent associations in co-sponsoring an annual golf tournament that generates revenue for the Food Bank of the Heartland,” he said.

A roughly 20-year industry veteran, Muench became involved with IIAO around 2000.

At the time he had been in Omaha for 10 years, having relocated after a decade in the industry in Iowa to manage a wholesale agency branch office that served the commercial non-standard marketplace.

“I decided to invest more of my time in getting to know local insurance professionals better, and to come alongside them in their efforts to further the mission of our Association,” he said. “Attending meetings on a regular basis and helping the board in the coordination of the continuing education and community service projects has allowed me to learn more about the community and the people that have chosen the insurance profession as their vocation.”

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