

“ANCA is the network, we should never forget that!”

– Patty Weisse, Emeritus Executive Director at Baltimore Woods

ANCA: A Circle of Leadership and Service

Patty Weisse joined ANCA soon after becoming the Executive Director of Baltimore Woods Nature Center in Marcellus, New York. In 2004 she attended her first Summit and was, “blown away by the network and the collective passion and wisdom of the nature center leadership.” She was truly “awe struck.” At the Summit she met people with similar professional challenges and everyone was willing to share wisdom in a supportive way. Patty returned to her center with new ideas and energy.

At the following Summit she learned of the Professional Leadership Institute (PLI), co-sponsored and taught at the Delaware Nature Society. She attended PLI where she learned how to improve employee policies, an important step in building capacity. In addition, she decided to have an ANCA Peer Consult to aid with the redirecting of Baltimore Woods. When the consult team arrived, “over 100 years of nature center administration walked in the door.” The team provided Patty with a plan, including the idea to rebrand the center. Although the path was not easy, it was well worth it in the end.



At the next Summit Patty met Greta Bolger who led a session on branding and marketing and emphasized the need to utilize the best branding and marketing tools to promote her center. It was a “watershed moment” and inspired her to rebrand the center with a beautiful, nurturing, and meaningful brand. Recognizing that Baltimore Woods was central New York’s premier provider of place-based environmental learning, Patty blazed a new path forward to spread the word among her community.

When Patty applied for a month long sabbatical grant that required a research project, she chose to visit another ANCA member, Milwaukee’s Urban Ecology Center, to learn about their sustainable funding model for school outreach programs. When the sabbatical was over, a local foundation recruited Baltimore Woods as a pilot nonprofit for a three-year capacity building program. They were looking for organizations that demonstrated an ability to challenge assumptions, embrace best practices, and move forward with a bold vision. “If it were not for ANCA”, Patty says, “they never would have considered Baltimore Woods. It was a cathartic process where the center self-assessed, and recognized, and changed beliefs that were holding it back. It helped us understand what drives our economic engine, and empowered us to make high-level decisions to strengthen and protect key earned income drivers.”

After 15 years of successful leadership, Patty was happy to pass the executive director torch on to Mary Kate Intaglietta in July 2013. Patty is pleased with the accomplishments made during her tenure at Baltimore Woods and proud that the nature center continues to move forward.

Patty is now giving back as a member of the ANCA board, a presenter at Summits, an ANCA mentor, and through service on ANCA Peer Consult teams. ANCA Executive Director Jen Levy states, “Patty has been an extremely valuable board member and mentor. She is passionate about the mission of ANCA and the mission of our members and eager and available to share her success and lessons learned. I am extremely grateful for her service to ANCA and to the profession. She exemplifies the generosity of the ANCA network.”