

# Young professionals take off at CNTA

BY LINDSEY KENNEDY

## Young Professionals' Committee Vision:

Engage young professionals and increase their awareness of nuclear technology and its benefits to the public to create advocacy and a sense of ownership of the perception of the nuclear industry.

## Committee Mission:

Advance CNTA's work by engaging young professionals and encouraging them to advocate for the benefits of nuclear technology.

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Since its founding less than a year ago the Young Professionals Committee of CNTA has create and participated in a number of firsts for the organization.

Two years ago, the idea was conceived to get young professionals together to come up with a fundraiser that would appeal to a younger crowd. The result was the 2017 Costume Ball.

Sunny Lunka, CNTA member and Young Professionals Committee Chair, explained, "We thought a social fundraiser would complement CNTA's already established fundraisers, which are the Edward Teller Lecture and annual golf tournament."

This event was successful in raising funds and, as of January 2018, members under 40 do not have to pay yearly membership dues. Of course, as our members climb their career ladders and leadership platforms, we'll



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## A group of volunteers with the Young Professional Committee at the 2017 Costume Ball.

be revisiting the no-dues benefit each year.

In 2017 we just had a fundraising committee, but as of January 2018 we have an official Young Professionals Committee that is responsible for fundraising as well as contributing to CNTA's educational mission and providing young professional members with professional development/mentoring opportunities.

The first Tap Into Nuclear event happened at Aiken Brewing Company in April. Tap

into Nuclear is a professional development event series targeting young professionals/prospective members.

Over 30 people came to the inaugural event, which focused on "Deciding Between a Technical or Management Career Path." Panelists included CNTA Director Jim Marra, retired Vice President of Parsons Corporation and CNTA Board of Director member Charlie Hansen and Savannah River Nuclear Solutions Deputy

Director of Environmental Stewardship and Safety and Health Mary Flora.

"I personally thought the inaugural "Tap into Nuclear" went very well," CNTA member Trey Black said. "My friends who came enjoyed it and the wealth of knowledge and experience gave some insight that was really beneficial."

In May, the Young Professionals participated in serving meals at Trio's restaurant in Aiken as part of Celebrity Waiter Night, a popular fundraiser for Children's Place. This was another event aimed at getting the Young Professionals involved in the community and CNTA.

In June, the group hit another milestone – over 100 members under 40. Currently, more than a quarter of all CNTA members are young professionals.

"When thinking about the future of this committee," Lunka said, "I'd like to see CNTA's young professionals continue to take on leadership roles within the organization and implement fresh ideas to increase CNTA's presence in the community."

Many organizations and companies have groups that cater to professionals that are under 40 years old. However, CNTA is set apart from the rest.

"CNTA is unique because it gives young professionals the opportunity to learn about the nuclear industry outside of their company," Lunka said.

The Young Professional Committee is looking to the future and setting more goals to complete.

# Initiatives encourage young professionals to get involved

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CNTA has recently taken a much more deliberate approach to engaging its young professionals and providing more means of involvement.

Since the 2017 Costume Ball, young professional membership has increased from about 20 young professionals to over 130, and the Young Professionals Committee has been formed. There is now a strong young professional presence on the board and on CNTA's committees and subcommittees.

Young professionals have been a part of CNTA's traditional events as well as with the planning and development of new ones. Tradi-

tional events include Earth Day, the annual golf tournament and educational outreach through teach-ins. At the Summer Southeastern Nuclear Institute, several young professionals were able to interact with educators and take part in the discussions related to how to promote STEM topics in their classrooms.

Juan Rios, a young professional with CNTA, is a member of the Education Committee and has taken part in several initiatives throughout the year.

"I've had the opportunity to work and learn alongside professionals with more experience, and we have worked in a variety of events that reach out to our community," Juan said. His experience with the education committee is

one he is excited to continue.

One event developed this year by the Young Professionals Committee is "Tap into Nuclear," which is a professional development event series targeting young professionals/prospective members.

Every other month experienced CNTA members are invited to be panelists and engage young professionals in a Q-and-A session geared toward a variety of topics. Topics have ranged from navigating generational diversity in the workplace to deciding between a technical or managerial career path.

The event is held at the Aiken Brewing Company which provides an atmosphere and some of the "taps" where young professionals can

both socialize and network with fellow peers and CNTA.

Hayley Williams echoes many of the sentiments other young professionals have had about the event.

"Tap into Nuclear has been a great networking opportunity because it has brought people together from across many disciplines, backgrounds, etc." Hayley said. "I've enjoyed the chance to ask those burning questions I've had and have those questions answered by more experienced people."

As more challenges are faced and the mission of CNTA is expanded, the Young Professionals of CNTA are sure to be involved for many years to come.