

Professional Reflection Essay

We're pleased to receive permission to share this essay from a 2015 CVA Renewal, both as a sample as well as an inspirational testimonial for the value of the CVA credential.

How has earning the credential contributed to your success? What has happened during the past 5 years as a result of your achievement? What impact has certification had on your job or career?

I have given this topic a great deal of thought as I struggled with the decision of whether or not to renew my CVA one more time. The financial investment is significant for me and I wasn't sure if I was getting my money's worth from those three letters. I kept asking myself, "Did it *really* make a difference in my day to day work?"

As I have compiled the documentation for this submission, I have reassured myself that it does indeed make a difference to me. I reviewed the speaker's invitations I have received and reflected on some of the people I met and talked to at the workshops and conferences I attended. I was reminded that others with less experience in the field have come to me asking for my opinion on challenges they were facing; it feels good to be sought out and to hear that I was helpful. I was reminded me that the CVA requirements to keep on learning help to keep me motivated to stay on top of trends and to incorporate new methods and tools into my work. Taking advantage of meet and greet opportunities surrounding these experiences has helped me to meet other professionals that I might not have otherwise added to my network.

Last October at a national conference, my traveling partner commented that she wasn't seeing the "experts" in the field that she expected to see. Since there were a number of highly-skilled professionals there I asked her, "Do you mean you're not seeing the middle-aged ladies you're used to seeking out for their opinions?" She confirmed that was what she meant. I laughed and said, "I think *we* are the middle-aged ladies that others are seeking out for *our* opinions." It was a bit unsettling as well as comical when we realized we had each been cornered following sessions and/or invited to coffee by a new acquaintance who wanted to know more about what we had done or what suggestions we had for their challenges. Would this have happened without the "CVA" following my name? Well, maybe and maybe not, but the CVA seemed to draw in some attention and unspoken respect.

Another place in which I have noticed the credential has received attention is within my organization's staff. I work in an organization that highly values educational credentials. It's tough to get a master's degree in volunteer management, (Where would one go for that!?) but having some letters behind my name has given me some added credibility in my workplace. I think it has

accelerated the development of trust in new relationships and it has helped to legitimize volunteer management as a specialized skill in the eyes of some management staff.

Occasionally a volunteer applicant will comment that he or she clicked on the link to the CVA website to find out what the “CVA” after my name stood for. Each of those who mentioned it indicated they were impressed with the requirements and that they had no idea such a credential existed. I think those individuals came to their initial interview with a professional mindset and an expectation to find a well-run volunteer program. It appears the credential is reflecting on my organization as well as on me.

I had forgotten it, but having the “CVA” behind my name has given me a sense of confidence in my skills and kept me accountable to continue building my skills and to share my experience with others. Training is a special joy when you see light bulbs go on or you notice pencils scrambling to capture an applicable idea that you just shared.

One of my greatest pleasures is working in a profession that is collaborative instead of competitive. I appreciate the way the CVA certification requirements reinforce that collaboration through the exchange of information. So, now that I’ve thought about it I realize the CVA *does* make a positive difference in my daily work.

— *Karen Kendall, CVA (submitted in 2015)*