

# CERTIFIED ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVE PROFILE

By Molly Lopez, CAE



## 1. Tell us about your background. How long have you been in your current position? How long in association management?

I have been in the association industry for 18 years, serving in positions with the Iowa Association of Business and Industry (ABI), the Iowa Credit Union League (ICUL) and Association Management, Ltd. (AML). I bought Association Management, Ltd. (AML) in 1999. Prior to my work with associations, I was a career counselor at ISU. I graduated from ISU with a BS in Leisure Studies/Commercial

Recreation and MA in Higher Education/Professional Studies.

## 2. Tell us about your association management company. Who are your clients, services you provide, (anything else you want to brag about)?

AML is a 33-year-old association management company. AML is internationally accredited through the AMC Institute (one of only 50 world-wide) and nationally accredited through ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership. We currently partner with nine international, national, regional and state associations serving approximately 5,000 individual members and 500 company members from 47 countries. Our clients represent the following industries: image consulting, lighting management/maintenance, economic development, fundraising professionals, defense attorneys, business tax policy corporations, well drilling, and college/employer career services.

## 3. How long have you been certified?

Since 2002.

## 4. Why or how did you decide to become certified?

For me, this was a goal based on personal and professional development. The CAE study groups were an integral part of my successful certification. I appreciated Brenda Neville as a leader and the input from my classmates during our study courses.

## 5. How has certification helped your association and your career?

Internally:

- To lead by example in our association management company, I needed to achieve this goal.
- Three of our eight staff team members have earned their CAE designations. It is anticipated two more will achieve this goal.

Externally:

- This elevated our credentials with our client partners (especially those who have certification programs of their own).
- After earning my CAE, I became more actively involved in the AMC Institute (international trade association for association management companies) and ASAE & The Center for Association Leadership.

## 6. What tips would you give people considering the CAE exam?

Don't give up if you do not pass the exam the first time. I learned that life happens in the middle of work and the timing has to be right for this commitment to achieve success. Participate in the CAE study group because collaboration brings new perspectives.

## 7. Why do you belong to ISAE?

I believe that it is important to support our industry at the state level. Of my staff of eight, five team members belong to ISAE.

## 8. You have been involved in ASAE at the national level. What are the benefits you see from the national perspective and why would you encourage others to belong to ASAE and participate at that level?

Involvement at the national level through ASAE and at the international level through the AMC Institute have been beneficial to our company by broadening our professional community network, expanding our professional education and increasing AML's visibility. I have had the opportunity to serve as a speaker for both organizations and currently serve on the ASAE AMC Section Council.

## 9. Is there anyone who has served as a mentor to you in your career? If so, who and how have they impacted your life or career?

I have several mentors. My Dad was always entrepreneurial and passed that spirit on to me. Mark Douglas and Sheila Douglas were my mentors during my five years at ABI (and still are). They are great leaders in the association industry and taught me professionalism, time management, communication skills, relationship building and the value of working with teams (internally and externally). Pat Jury was my mentor at the ICUL and taught me patience, workflow prioritization and the art of appearing calm in any situation. Dennis Schneider was the former owner of AML and introduced me to the concept of "managing the business of associations" and the importance of a good sense of humor.

## 10. Has your association diversified or changed in any areas in the last few years?

The business of association management has become more credible and validated through the accreditation programs offered through ASAE and the AMC Institute. The recognition and visibility of association management companies continues to increase. More associations are looking to outsource full services or partial services to an association management company and this practice will continue.

## 11. Is there a hot button issue facing your association(s) or your business?

Global trends! We recognized that our association clients are progressive, growing and strategic and need to be aware of trends in the future global environment. AML uses ASAE's *Designing Your Future* research to provide critical perspectives on the future global environment. We use the socio-demographic, technology, environment, economic and political research found in this research as an overlay to our clients' strategic planning sessions. Our volunteer leaders are now beginning to understand the trends associations face and will be better equipped to capture opportunities and prepare for emerging threats in their organization and their businesses.

## 12. What do you think are challenges facing associations and association professionals today?

The "value of membership" in all of our associations continues to be a challenge, especially when money is tight. Dues revenue is important to sustainability. Reinforcing member benefits and confirming what is important for member retention is critical. We all need to consider focusing our associations' (or in our case association clients') core services, surround those areas of value with support first, and then look to alternatives for non-dues revenue and alternative activities.

## 13. How do you give back to the profession or to your community?

My husband is the Community Outreach Director for an inner city church in Des Moines. This has been a very eye-opening experience and has encompassed the majority of our non-work time over the past several years. There are so many people in need and we do our best to support those needs (coordinating donations for clothing, shelters, school supplies drives, increasing the food pantry, educating youth on the importance of giving back, transporting people to courts and counseling, etc.). I give back to the profession by sharing the information that I learn at the national level and supporting my staff team's involvement professionally.

## **MOLLY LOPEZ, CAE, RE-APPOINTED AMC SECTION COUNCIL MEMBER**

Association Management, Ltd. (AML) Owner/President Molly A. Lopez, CAE, has been re-appointed to the international Association Management Company (AMC) Section Council for the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) & The Center for Association Leadership. Lopez will continue to serve as Editor for the *AMC Connections* quarterly newsletter throughout the remainder of 2009 and will serve as the 2010 Program Committee Co-Chair for the AMC Pre-Conference Meeting at the ASAE Convention in Los Angeles, California, in August 2010.

ASAE & The Center serve approximately 10,000 associations that represent more than 287 million people and organizations worldwide. ASAE has 13 professional interest sections, providing a community for nearly every sub-specialty within association management. The AMC Section Council members are selected for their experience and leadership within the AMC community.

Lopez, a Certified Association Executive (CAE), owns Association Management, Ltd. (AML), an internationally accredited, 33-year old association management company. With a staff team of eight, the firm provides association leadership and manages the operations, membership services, education/meeting planning, certification programs, Web site maintenance, and Board/volunteer management for nine international, national, regional and state trade associations and professional societies with 5,000+ members in 57 countries.

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### **MEMBERSHIP MEETING REGISTRATION**

ISAE Members: (Membership in ISAE is by individual. Not by association or company.)

\$65 – ISAE Member - Lunch, Business Meeting & Breakout Session

\$75 – Non-Member - Lunch, Business Meeting & Breakout Session

\$30 – ISAE Member - Lunch & Business Meeting Only

\$40 – Non-Member - Lunch & Business Meeting Only

Name of organization \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Attendees Name	Fee	Identify which session attending
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_____	_____	_____
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Method of Payment: Check/Visa/MasterCard	<b>Return to:</b> Iowa Society of Association Executives 100 Court Avenue, Suite 203 Des Moines, Iowa 50309 (515) 284-7055 FAX: (515) 284-7301 admin@iowasae.org
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**Or register on-line at [www.iowasae.org](http://www.iowasae.org) under the calendar of events.**

# **IOWA SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES**