

# UTAH NENA: THE LITTLE CHAPTER THAT COULD

In anticipation of hosting the 2000 National NENA Annual Conference in Salt Lake City, the Utah NENA chapter was established in 1999 with a strong core of dedicated leaders, sound bylaws, and a commitment to hold regular meetings. Even though membership numbers were small, Utah NENA met regularly for the next three years, but then it lapsed into a state of inactivity. In August of 2005, a group of NENA Members in good standing petitioned NENA to conduct an election of new state officers because the current Utah NENA Board of Officers had not kept the chapter in good standing. In 2007, Utah NENA launched a NENA's Back! campaign — with a new set of leaders in place, the Utah NENA website was created, committees were established, monthly meetings were held throughout the state, trainings were offered, and letters promoting participation in the reinvigorated chapter were sent to vendors, administrators, chiefs, and sheriffs.

In the first meeting of 2011, the Utah NENA Executive Board put their heads together to determine what NENA could really offer Members that they were not already getting through other industry organizations. They recognized that NENA has a reputation for offering extreme high-quality training and recommitted to continue that, but the Board felt that they had to do more. With unemployment levels reaching an all-time high, they reflected on how fortunate they were to have jobs in the 9-1-1 industry. Based on that good fortune, they decided to adopt a focus of giving back to the communities of Utah.

The Board did their research and found that many kids throughout the state only receive one good meal each day — the lunch provided at school — because the recent economic downturn left so many parents struggling to provide even the bare necessities. Utah NENA's inaugural program to give back to the community was a Quarters for Kids campaign. In an effort to create an opportunity for all dispatchers in the state to collectively make a difference in the lives of these hungry kids, donation jars were placed in every PSAP across the state and all PSAPs were encouraged to solicit donations from everyone within their organizations. Many vendors across the state joined in this fight against hunger as well and placed donation jars in their offices.

To foster some creative fundraising and friendly competition, all donation totals were posted on the Utah NENA website. One agency held a bake sale and raised more than \$156. Another center held a Penny War, where each shift was given a donation jar and received points for pennies but were docked points for



**TOP.** Utah NENA's new executive board.

**ABOVE.** NENA Utah donates \$2,872.13 to the Utah Food Bank.

other denominations. Opposing shifts would stuff quarters, dimes, and nickels in their opponents' jars and put pennies in their own to offset the funds contributed by the "enemy." This agency raised more than \$828! A different organization convinced their CEO to match the contributions of the employees, and thus were able to donate more than \$330.

At the end of the drive, PSAPs in the state of Utah donated more than \$2,717 to Utah NENA's Quarters for Kids campaign. This money was donated to the Utah Food Bank where they turn every \$1 donation into \$7 worth of food and services to feed hungry kids and their families. Thus, Utah NENA's \$2,717 donation equated to more than \$19,019 worth of food and services!

So, after a bit of a rough start, rest assured that the Utah NENA Chapter is alive and well! Here are some of the things they are doing that other chapters might want to consider:

- Hosting a statewide ENP study group.
- Offering a "Midnight Madness" training session from 8:00 p.m. to 4:00 a.m. to accommodate the often overlooked graveyard shifts.
- Opening Board Meetings up to all Members.
- Offering incentives for getting a coworker, colleague, or friend to join NENA.
- Organizing a fundraiser walk for the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI).
- Continuing their tradition of offering amazing training at affordable prices.