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Being an Leader in the Profession Begins at Home

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Your involvement with NEMA has been long since you became a director. And even as a new director you jumped right in as a NEMA Region 7 Vice President (thank you!). As you grew in your career how did NEMA best help you?

For me, NEMA has always been a smorgasbord of ideas and best practices. The discussion with your counterparts always yields new ideas. It is so valuable to listen to other experiences and then cherry-pick the things that will work for your emergency management program. NEMA continually challenges me to evaluate what Iowa is doing and how can we make it better. One of our core focuses as employees of the department is to be leaders within Iowa government but also leaders in the emergency management community. NEMA helps me personally, and the department, meet that goal.

Now that you are about a year in as lead, what makes you the proudest of your department?

Every day I am reminded of how brilliant each team member of the department is. The last few years have presented a nonstop series of challenges. This has included the pandemic, derechos, tornados, floods, highly pathogenic avian influenza, and changing work environments while staff are still doing the day-to-day work. In each case, they have risen to meet the challenges and exceeded expectations. We have done so many odd jobs that are not directly related to emergency management that we jokingly refer to them as “opportunities to excel.” I could not be prouder of how the team members in the department have always met the challenges of these “opportunities to excel.”

What motivates you to succeed?

My primary motivation is seeing the department and its team members succeed. My job is to put both in positions to be successful. When it happens, and it does frequently, it gives a level of fulfillment I have never before had professionally. It makes me proud to see each success no matter how big or small. They all matter.

What is one unique thing your family does that has now turned into a tradition?

We have always had these rollicking family dinners. No topic is out of bounds. These have been such a wonderful way to learn about how my children see the world but also to learn new viewpoints. I remember my daughters’ friends sitting at the table and just being aghast at what was happening. “We don’t talk about these things at my house” was the usual statement. Even though my girls are scattering to the wind, we still make time for these dinners when we can.

When someone goes to Iowa, what is the ‘must see’?

As a big Iowa State Cyclone football fan, I want to say tailgating for their games, but the correct answer is the [Iowa State Fair](#). It is ten days of the most amazing cavalcade of humanity, food on a stick, beer, music, livestock, and machinery known to man. And, you get to hang out with a million of your best friends to boot!

Iowa State Fair Fun Fact:

The first [butter cow](#), an [Iowa State Fair](#) staple, was sculpted by J.K. Daniels in 1911.



Photo and fact courtesy of Wikipedia





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