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A Retrospective of Barron
Guss' Year as NAPEO Chair

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THIS WON'T BE THE LAST YOU SEE OF ME

BY BARRON L. GUSS

In my eyes, it seems my term as NAPEO chair has just begun and, yet, here I sit writing my last column. I truly appreciate the privilege of leading NAPEO this past year. I could not have made the desired impact if it wasn't for the support of my family, my employees, NAPEO staff, and the Board of Directors. With everyone's help, I think we will have left the place better than we found it!

If you have been following my column, you know that there were three initiatives I wanted to establish and complete.

ESO—EMPLOYER SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS

Although discomfiting to some, there is a shift in the HR outsourcing industry. No longer do PEOs and business process organizations (BPOs) enjoy exclusivity in the space. There are emerging players that say they do what PEOs do, only better or cheaper. We cannot take a wait-and-see attitude with these self-declared market disrupters. Through the strategic planning process, the Board has agreed to explore emerging challengers within the employer

services organization industry to ensure that PEOs are prepared to compete and NAPEO can appropriately serve its members well into the future.

THE POWER OF MANY

Our industry now serves more than 3.5 million employees. With this base, we are well-positioned to have a positive impact on their lives and even lead them to have an exponential effect on others in their communities. The revolution I am hoping for starts at home. Led by incoming NAPEO Vice Chair Lee Yarborough, we kicked off the NAPEO Gives Back initiative. The idea is to leave any town we visit better—beyond increasing hotel occupancy and the revenue of the local watering hole. At NAPEO's Annual Conference & Marketplace in Austin this month, we will be supporting a local charity called Anthropos Arts whose mission is to mentor underprivileged youth through music. NAPEO, as well as a number of PEO and associate members, will be supporting its mission through events and performances throughout the conference.

LEGACY OF LEADERSHIP

This is the initiative of which I am most proud. For too many years, board chairs would begin their terms with initiatives that, if not completed, walked out the door with them. Two years ago, I began working with Norman Paul to create a policy that the incoming chair would work with the outgoing chair to carry out these initiatives and, furthermore, get a head start on some of the emerging ideas that future leaders are planning for their terms. Today, we are carrying out the marketing initiative that was catalyzed by Greg Packer and Andy Lubash. We continue to have meaningful discussions and exploration



We continue to have meaningful discussions ... and we are well underway to execute the strategic plan and our NAPEO Gives Back initiative.

about self-insurance, initiated by Norman Paul, and we are well underway to execute the strategic plan and our NAPEO Gives Back initiative. I think you will agree that this collaborative approach makes sense and has merit.

Again, I want to thank everyone who has made this past year possible and so rewarding. I look forward to retired life as past chair and lending a hand when asked.

As someone once said, this won't be the last you see of me. ■



BARRON L. GUSS

2018-2019 NAPEO Chair
President and Chief
Executive Officer
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A RETROSPECTIVE: BARRON GUSS' YEAR AS NAPEO CHAIR

BY CHRIS CHANEY

Over the past 12 months, Barron Guss, president of SimplicityHR By ALTRES, has served as chair of NAPEO's Board of Directors. As chair, Barron encouraged fellow members to have meaningful, frank, and substantive discussions about the realities confronting the PEO industry and to explore ways the industry could respond. He also challenged colleagues to recognize the role PEOs play in communities and realize the potential they have to help others beyond delivering exceptional HR services.

"Barron is an 'outside the box' thinker," says NAPEO President and CEO Pat Cleary. "He brings his unique perspective to every issue, every problem. I could always count on him to see issues that no one else saw, and to always be looking around corners, identifying emerging issues.

"He is an entrepreneur with a true entrepreneur's spirit and outlook with 30 years of knowledge and history to apply to the chairmanship," Cleary adds. "The relationships he's built, the knowledge he's built over his time in this industry, is impressive."

As NAPEO prepares to embark on a new leadership chapter, here's a look back at some highlights of the past year.

NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING

Following an unofficial tradition of gathering in the newly elected chair's home town, the Board met in Honolulu, Hawaii, for its fourth-quarter meeting in November 2018. Right from the beginning, Barron embraced a willingness and desire for meaningful and healthy discourse. His first meeting as chair established a yearlong commitment to fostering relationships among members. The power of personal relationships is important to Barron, and a necessary component if the industry is to collectively tackle challenges and seize new opportunities.

During the meeting, Barron remarked on the broader employer services industry and how he sees PEOs fitting into that ecosystem. He shared how he sees that space evolving and noted his belief that PEOs cannot afford to sit idly by while market disruptors change the environment.

The subsequent debate and conversation resulted in Barron asking Steve Politis of Alcott HR to chair a task force dedicated to examining emerging markets and the role PEOs will play in the near future. Following the meeting, NAPEO members were surveyed about the services their companies provide and how they view PEOs in the broader employer services industry. Ultimately, this discussion and process culminated in one of the five goals of NAPEO's new strategic plan, i.e., to assess NAPEO's role in the broader employer services sector.

STRATEGIC PLAN: BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

Leaders from across the association along with the Board spent a few days in Arizona to craft a new strategic plan for the association. During this February retreat, the group pored over the results of NAPEO's member survey to assess the views of all members and how they see NAPEO best serving their businesses. By the end of the retreat, the group had settled on a draft strategic plan with five core goals:



Barron presides over the Board meeting during the strategic planning retreat in February.

- Strengthen PEO brand identity to increase awareness and grow the industry;
- Continue to create a favorable legal and regulatory environment;
- Contribute to the operational excellence of NAPEO members;
- Position NAPEO to operate, grow, and succeed in its mission; and
- Assess NAPEO's role in the broader employer services sector.

These goals directly address the key priorities and concerns of NAPEO members and position NAPEO and the industry to confront new challenges that lie on the horizon.

NAPEO GIVES BACK

Friends and colleagues of Barron know how generous he is and that he feels a genuine obligation to give back to his community. He's established his company as a role

model for how businesses can serve a larger purpose in their communities beyond serving customers. It's no surprise then that Barron made giving back a top priority while chair when he asked Lee Yarborough of Propel HR and NAPEO's 2018-2019 secretary-treasurer to spearhead a new initiative called NAPEO Gives Back.

"His theory is that the reach of the PEO industry is so immense that if all PEOs were more philanthropic and gave their employees, clients, and worksite employees different ways to give back to their own communities, then the PEO industry makes not only good business sense, but can be a vehicle for good," explains Yarborough.

The first NAPEO Gives Back activity took place during NAPEO's PEO Capitol Summit. Several Board members and staff visited a local Washington, D.C., shelter, So Others Might Eat (SOME), to serve breakfast to homeless individuals.



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"One of the most rewarding NAPEO events I've ever participated in was our morning of service when a group of us helped feed more than 400 men and women in need at the SOME shelter," says Norman

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Paul of SWBC PEO and a former NAPEO chair. “That morning of service was a direct result of Barron’s vision that when we all come together to meet in a particular city

for our annual or other meetings, we leave that place a little better than it was before our arrival; it is a vision for community service that I hope every chair continues and builds upon in the years ahead.”

NAPEO Gives Back officially rolls out on a grander scale this month during NAPEO’s Annual Conference & Marketplace in Austin, Texas. NAPEO is partnering with Anthropos Art, an Austin-based organization that connects at-risk youth with professional musicians to cultivate confidence, integrity, and life skills through musical instruction and mentorship.

“Barron’s vision concerning the positive impact that our industry can have on all communities is inspiring and will continue to lead us in years to come,” adds Yarborough. “I believe the NAPEO Gives Back initiative will continue to grow and transform into something that everyone will be proud of.”

“When you serve as NAPEO’s chair, you want to make a difference: to advocate for something that will help our industry continue its upward spiral, and Barron clearly helped lift us all by chartering the NAPEO Gives Back program,” Paul says.

While each of these initiatives will leave a positive mark on the association, perhaps Barron’s most lasting impact will be his commitment to a legacy of leadership. He remained focused throughout the year on carrying forward previous chairs’ priorities, while also looking ahead to jumpstart ideas of the future. Without a doubt, NAPEO is stronger and better positioned to serve its members because of it. ■



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