

Industry Members Gather at HDMA Business and Leadership Conference

Nearly 750 industry members gathered at the HDMA Business and Leadership Conference held June 5-8, 2011 at the JW Marriott Desert Ridge in Phoenix, Arizona. Billed as the healthcare distribution industry's signature annual event, the conference brought attendees together to hear challenging speakers, recognize outstanding contributions through several awards, learn through the Health, Beauty, and Wellness Products Forum, interactive luncheons, and conduct one-on-one business meetings over the course of three days.

Networking kicked off at the event's Opening Reception on Sunday night and continued each day at meal events and day-end receptions. Whether in the hallways, at social events, or in the Business Conference Hall, trading partners took advantage of the Conference to discuss current and new business opportunities. Fifty distributors and service providers had meeting space in the Conference Hall where suppliers rotated through 20 minute appointments. The Hall was conducive to "between meeting" conversations with a center area with seating and refreshments as well as the HDMA Information Center where participants could check out the Association's latest products and services.

Monday's General Session kicked off the event's educational offerings and allowed HDMA President and CEO John M. Gray to provide a historical perspective on HDMA during the occasion of its 135th anniversary and put numerous industry achievements in context. Keynote speaker Jeb Bush opened his address, America's Promise in Uncertain Times, with a few humorous references to his famous family. He said all is "not as gloomy as it appears" in America, that the country's current situation is reversible, if its leaders focus on long-term economic growth in the 3-4% range and job creation. He outlined four issues that need to be addressed in order to accomplish this goal:

- Energy security policy innovation and strategy with a focus of creating jobs at home rather than purchasing oil from areas of repression, which also gets the country out of military action there.
- Immigration policy changes to secure America's borders yet embrace people worldwide to create an aggressive guest worker program with expanded quotas for high-achievers.
- Regulation reform to match the world's "warp speed" movement and focus on outcomes-based regulation with sunseting added to new rules and old to force review.
- Transforming education to close the gap between American and the rest of the world in terms of performance, with a focus on the fundamentals.

In a question and answer session that followed, moderator John Gray field audience questions for the former Governor, including his views on Medicare and Social Security reform, the upcoming election, and student loan policies. When queried about his plans for a possible presidential bid, Bush implied perhaps in six years.

Bush's address was followed by presidential historian Doris Kearns Goodwin's reflections on her latest work on Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Teddy Roosevelt. Through colorful storytelling, Goodwin outlined the leadership traits shared by great leaders, including the ability to withstand and overcome adversity, having a positive outlook, recognizing and seizing upon opportunities, and being dedicated to lifelong learning.

New this year was a half-day Health, Beauty, and Wellness Products Forum and luncheon on Monday afternoon designed to present education on front-of-store trends for independent pharmacies. The Forum, sponsored by Upshur-Smith Laboratories, Inc., was well received.

A number of industry members and companies were recognized for their achievements through several awards, including the Nexus Lifetime Achievement Award, the annual DIANA Awards, and the Americares Power of Partnership Award. (See separate stories.) HDMA's Chairman of the Board this year is David Moody of NC Mutual Drug Company, who actively participated throughout the Conference.

Wednesday evening's closing reception provided attendees with the chance to bid one another fond farewells until they meet again. Mark your calendars now for next year's HDMA Business & Leadership Conference to be held June 10-13, 2012 at the JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country resort in San Antonio, Texas.

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