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YAN: Serving the Actuary of the Future

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The SOA provides a plethora of educational seminars and meetings for the seasoned actuary. Similarly, there is wide array of Career Days for want-to-be actuaries on college campuses across the globe. However, the networking and educational events for the pre-FSA professional and exam-taker are limited, as are the opportunities to meet and learn from FSAs who do not share one's place of employment.

Enter the Younger Actuaries Network (YAN), a special interest subgroup within the SOA's Actuary of the Future Section. YAN has aimed to fill a void for actuaries across experience levels, disciplines and employers by giving them a means of interacting and learning from one another. This past September, a full-room of attendees in New York came together for an event designed to offer something for everyone: networking, education (for which FSAs and ASAs could receive continuing education credit) and social programming.

The afternoon began with an interactive networking demonstration by former actuary, John West Hadley. Now a career counselor, Mr. Hadley showed how anyone can demonstrate their value by perfecting a personal mission statement and unique elevator pitch.

The next part of the program was an overview of ERM and the new CERA credential. Kathy Wong, vice president at AXA Equitable Life Insurance and long-time member of the SOA's Board of Directors, gave a compelling presentation which outlined the goals of CERA and the advantages of pursuing the credential for the actuary of the 21st century.

The evening portion of the program featured a party at Leisure Time Bowl where we were joined by Kelly Kulick, winner of The 2003 Women's U.S. Open and the first female professional bowler ever to earn a Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) Tour exemption. Kelly shared some fun "trick shots" with the group and then acted as both coach and cheerleader for the

amateurs in attendance. YouTube clips from the night's events can be viewed at <http://www.youtube.com/user/YActuariesNetwork>

"It was neat to have a chance to interact with others in the NYC area who are also going through the exam process and beginning their actuarial career," said Mary Risius, an actuarial assistant at AXA Equitable Life Insurance Company. "Everyone was really friendly, and it was fun to get to talk in a relaxed atmosphere."

Several FSAs were in attendance as well, including Bruce Schobel, past president of the Society of Actuaries and a vice president at New York Life. "I had a lot of fun meeting so many bright, young actuaries, even if my bowling performance wasn't up to their standard," he noted. Of course, Mr. Schobel could take heart in one of the more astute observations of the evening. "When actuaries bowl we have our own rules," remarked one participant. "Six pins down is as good as a strike!"

YAN followed up the September event with a networking happy hour in December and plans to hold more events in 2009. In addition, YAN is hoping to expand programming to other markets and is offering assistance for young actuaries looking to organize events in their local area. It is also worth noting that YAN is believed to be the only SOA subgroup open to pre-ASAs.

Actuaries are blessed with a very rigorous exam process which prepares us well to handle many challenges that we will encounter in our line of work. However, nothing can replace the experience of sharing and learning from others in our industry, whether it is in a formal or informal setting. Our profession will benefit greatly in the future if we increase the networking and educational opportunities for actuaries of all levels. We hope you will join us in this endeavor and we urge to share your ideas and vision of what steps we can take in the years to come. Together we will ensure a bright tomorrow for "the Actuary of the Future." ☆