

It was great to see so many NC folks in Atlanta at General Assembly, taking advantage of a professional development and networking opportunity so close to home. I really enjoyed getting to see people in person, giving and receiving hugs from people I've only seen online for a couple of years.

Leading with Intention, presented by Joan Garry, the self-proclaimed "evangelist of nonprofits," was my favorite of all the break-out sessions. Her delivery was fun-loving, but her message was anything but. Joan says nonprofits turn towns into communities, and I felt like she was specifically speaking about the Y. And she said it's not for the faint of heart; the work is hard and can wear you down.

But I loved her message, and it really spoke to me, so I'm going to recap it here for those of you who did not have the benefit of attending her session.

She shared a framework she is developing for leading a nonprofit organization, with purpose at the center, growth happening through leadership and evaluation, vision happening through storytelling and passion, people happening through participation and partnerships, and impact happening through courage and intention.

And her four takeaways for us that day were:

- 1) You can't do it all, so prioritize. Lead with intention. I think as YMCAs, we try to do all things for all people, and it's just not possible. The message I took home was simplify, do a few things well, and let go of the rest.
- 2) Tell your story. The fact is, we all stink at this. I hear it every day. Ys don't tell their story. And I am as guilty as anyone at not prioritizing telling the Alliance story, because I don't prioritize it over checking off my to-do list. Sound familiar? I bet it does. Joan said stop it! Tell your story first. The rest will happen.
- 3) Reframe fundraising from begging to inviting people to take part in the magic that is your purpose each day. Joan said we are "storytellers in the invitation business." How do you inspire

participation through volunteerism and giving in your Y's mission each day?

- 4) Build excitement about the destination. Nobody is excited about standing in line for a ride at Disney. They are excited about splashing down on the log ride in that final descent into the deepest water that gets everyone wet and screaming! This goes a long way to inspiring our teams to support the work we do each day, volunteers to serve as our most vocal advocates and ambassadors, and members to support our mission.

Joan is offering Y leaders an opportunity to join her Nonprofit Leadership Lab with a 25% discount. If you need inspiration and guidance, it might be worth your while to check it out. Here's the link. thelab.ws/ymca25 You can download her presentation [here](#) to see the framework she's developed.