



What If We Threw a Party and No One Came?

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

An old friend of mine, Caroline Herring, is a musician who is launching her fourth album two days from now as I write this. Even though her reviews have been great, she's still nervous—terrified, in fact.

And who wouldn't be? She's spent countless hours of her life coming up with ideas for songs, exploring different ways to present them, finding her voice (not to mention a record contract), performing those songs in a recording studio...and then she waits to see if anyone is listening.

If you've opened an urgent care center, you know the feeling. Think about it: you've spent countless hours of your life coming up with ideas, researching them, gathering expert feedback, putting all the pieces together, getting finances in order, developing a marketing campaign, making all the final touches...and then you wait to see if anyone comes.

I think we *all* know the feeling. I know that I do.

Every year, about 15 minutes into the start of the annual Urgent Care Convention, we start planning the next one. We make topic lists, we note the great speakers, we start thinking about themes—and for many months after that we narrow down our ideas and choose faculty and put program together. The brochure mails...and we wait to see if anyone registers. It's torture until that first call.

It's the same whether you're opening your first urgent care center or your 31st. The seeds may have been planted when you saw the UCAOA booth at the ACEP or AAFP Scientific Assembly in Boston last month, or when a center opened up in your town, or when you heard about an old friend who is opening one.

"Hmmm...", you think to yourself. Then you talk to some trusted advisors, pick a site, get some financing, deal with mountains of paperwork, staffing, build-out, marketing. Opening day



Lou Ellen Horwitz is executive director of the Urgent Care Association of America. She may be contacted at lhhorwitz@ucaoa.org.

"What would you pass along to those who are thinking of following in your footsteps?"

comes...and you wait for that first patient to pull into the parking lot to confirm it wasn't all a crazy fantasy. It's torture!

It may have been five minutes since that first patient walked into your center, or it could be five months or even five years; you probably still remember that feeling of panic that no one would show up—and the tremendous relief when that first person did! It's a common experience we all share, whether we are "selling" albums, conferences, or healthcare.

We want to gather those experiences from you, whether you were the owner, the office manager, the biller, the provider, or the registrar, and share them with others.

What do you remember about your Opening Day and the weeks leading up to it? What do you recall and what would you pass along to those who are thinking of following you?

I think this is a great project, as well as a chance for you to pass along your wisdoms, great and small, and give back to the industry that *you began*. It's a chance for you help others skip the mistakes you made, and build on your successes.

Whether you have one sentence or many pages to share (or simply have a question about the project), I invite you to send those remembrances to me at lhhorwitz@ucaoa.org.

Let's see what we can gather to share with each other and with those who will follow in your footsteps.

By the way, soon we will be able to share some of the details of the 2010 Urgent Care Convention in Orlando, and we hope you will be as excited as we are! If you are not getting the newsletters we e-mail each month, you won't be among the first to hear about early, discounted sign-ups for the convention. This would be a good time to make sure we are on your "safe senders" list and that we have a current e-mail address for you. ■