

# Powder Keg

■ LOU ELLEN HORWITZ, MA

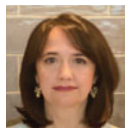
It started on a Saturday afternoon with just a few people. They wandered in one by one, looking hopeful but a bit unsure if they were in the right place. Then there were a few more. Then a small group. Then a big group. Then a small flood, and then a *big* flood, and by Sunday afternoon we were absolutely covered up with people.

The 2022 Annual Convention had begun.

Those 5 days in Las Vegas where the urgent care “band” got back together were nothing short of magical. The word LOVE-FEST comes to mind, as well. Not only was it the largest group of urgent care people ever gathered in the history of our industry, but also the happiest. Never in my life have I experienced such fantastic energy over such an extended period—from the opening “come as you are” reception until the closing general session (which was also fantastic), everyone basked in the gift of each other’s presence and shared knowledge and experience and celebrated new and old connections.

We aimed to elevate our convention education to a more advanced level—and your feedback tells us we hit that mark—so my hat is off to all of our session faculty and our planners for ensuring our courses went beyond the basics. As all of you become more and more sophisticated in your clinical and operational acumen, we will continue to work hard to stay ahead of you and keep you challenged.

There was also music and laughter and some serious dancing. Our opening keynote’s violin solo brought some people—including me—to tears. And then he started speaking, and we were all riveted. We had general session panels on the past vs future of urgent care practice and the future of healthcare on our evolving planet, and gave everyone a lot to think about and look at when they got home. We took a 750+ person selfie, the Urgent Care Foundation raised over \$285,000, the Electric Slide was performed under the Vegas sky by more than one CEO, the Solutions Expo was a hotbed of activity, the NERUCA



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and CalUCA chapter lunches were standing-room only, and the College of Urgent Care Medicine had a blues band during their members meeting.

It was one for the record books and, speaking on behalf of all of the staff, we loved every minute of being with you all at last.

All that said, what struck me the most as I watched and listened to all of you all week is that instead of feeling like the *end* of a long road to get back together, it felt like a *beginning*. There is an energy in urgent care that has been building and building and building for a decade or so, and it feels like it is about to blow up. All of the small, constant pushes by 10,000+ urgent care locations and UCA and CUCM and UCF are finally setting our flywheel to spinning faster and faster and faster. There is power among us, and during the Convention when so many of you were physically in the same place I could literally feel the potential in the air—it was electric.

But what happens now that you have all dispersed again to your homes across the country? And what about all of the untapped power of the urgent care centers who weren’t even represented at the Convention or aren’t a part of UCA at all?

The question before us is whether we can harness our potential power and do something with it. We at UCA want to do that with you, and you know that we are stronger together—but as an industry and specialty we aren’t yet very good at coming together. It’s a talent we have not yet developed. We are mavericks by nature, and mavericks resist being corralled. But I think that our maverick nature—which got us where we are—is also holding us back because our potential power is diffused rather than concentrated. What got us *here* won’t get us *there*.

When we created the Convention theme of “getting the band back together” we were only thinking of a few days in Vegas, but as I look at it now it means—or could mean—a lot more. ■