The OAC is still riding the wave of celebration that took place at this year’s 6th Annual Your Weight Matters National Convention this past August. Upwards of 550 individuals joined together in the heart of New Orleans for the nation’s best education, tools, resources and support to guide them along their weight management journeys. And, while the OAC’s National meeting has been coined as a premier event for the everyday individual to come and learn science-based strategies to manage their weight and health, there’s something else that has been building which becomes more alive each and every year.

This year’s attendees left with something remarkably contagious – a passion to engage deeper with their own health journeys, engage with the OAC and engage with one another as part of a powerful community.

Sure, each and every Convention hosted by the OAC has given individuals a place to join together, but this year was special – because never more did we feel the electrifying sense of community than at the 2017 Convention. It truly was a celebration! Through every educational session, exercise demonstration or simple conversation, feelings of unity and acceptance filled the room. And, while our attendees came from all different backgrounds and experiences, our differences did not divide us, but united us in one powerful community of voices!

If you didn’t have the opportunity to attend this year’s Convention in New Orleans, we wish you could have been there! But, we want you to take a look back with us at an incredible weekend you can still be a part of throughout the year, and hopefully will get to experience with us at our 2018 Convention in Denver – July 19-22!
ENGAGED to Educate

It’s not an easy task to find education about weight and health that you can trust, especially when misconceptions about weight and obesity often cloud our ability to do so.

At YWM2017, experts from around the country engaged with our community to provide this kind of reliable education. Attendees took away practical, empowering tools and information to guide their weight management journeys now and in the future through popular educational topics and opportunities including:

- The dangers and realities of weight bias
- Medical and surgical treatment options
- Nutrition, exercise and lifestyle tips for a healthier weight management journey
- *Your Weight Matters* Healthy Living EXPO Hall offering beneficial products, services, samples and information
- Chances to engage with experts and address important questions/concerns

And so much more!

When individuals have access to education and resources they can trust, we as a community can do more to inform ourselves and others about health and the understanding that obesity is a complicated disease. Science-based knowledge, free from bias and stigma, is instrumental to finding long-term support and success – and YWM2017 provided this essential platform.
ENGAGED to Advocate

There’s no room for silence when it comes to being proactive about weight, health and access to appropriate care. Advocacy requires a community of individuals who are willing to share their stories, use their voices and make an impact to affect future change for all who are on the journey with weight and health.

Many of our YWM2017 attendees were inspired to elevate the OAC’s mission of reaching local, state and national legislators and advance the future of obesity care. At YWM2017, we empowered attendees to recognize and raise their voices with special events such as:

- **OAC’s National Advocacy Training** – Offered tools and knowledge for advocating and influencing the legislative process, and hosted mock legislative visits to put newly-learned skills to the test
- **ENGAGE! Discover the Power of Your Voice Training** – Featured information about engaging with the OAC and using powerful stories to impact change, and instructed attendees on all the platforms they can easily use to help us achieve our mission and goals

If we engage as a community and unify our message, our advocacy efforts are made stronger and our message is clearer. THANK YOU to our next set of newly-trained and engaged YWM2017 advocates who are determined to impact the future of health and obesity care!

ENGAGED to CELEBRATE!

There is always strength in numbers and in coming together, and YWM2017 offered attendees the opportunity to celebrate each other and our health! There’s no doubt that great education and hands-on instruction on various types of advocacy is important, but the Convention also allowed us to celebrate ourselves and one another through key events – which all had an element of “fun” attached! Here’s a look at the celebrations we got to have throughout the weekend:

- **Convention Attendee and Exhibitor Welcome Reception** – The official “kick-off” event designed to break the ice and let our attendees meet and mingle with one another alongside our fantastic vendors in the EXPO Hall
- **New Orleans-themed Welcoming Ceremonies Dinner** – A true “celebration” of our attendees and unique OAC community – complete with live entertainment that helped us visually hear and see the power in multiple voices coming together for one common purpose
- **OAC Annual Reception and Awards Ceremony** – A celebration of our outstanding OAC members who have gone above and beyond in advancing the OAC’s mission and making YWM2017 come to life
- **ENGAGE! Celebrating the OAC’s Community** – The final “Send-off” to the event that empowered attendees to reflect on the weekend and share themselves in an honest way, and reinforced the value in having a strong and vibrant OAC community

“Advocacy requires a community of individuals who are willing to share their stories, use their voices and make an impact to affect future change for all who are on the journey with weight and health.”
Many often describe Your Weight Matters National Conventions as an extension of their home and family life, and as an organization dedicated to our community, the ability for attendees to engage with one another and celebrate our journeys is invaluable. **YWM2017** was a place where barriers were broken down, walls were opened and transparency was possible. It was a place where attendees could be honest with each other, share their stories and honor the authentic presence and experiences of others alongside of them.

No matter where we are on our own weight and health journeys, we DO have a reason to celebrate because our community is our foundation! Together, we are empowered and stronger. Together, we can move forward with our journeys one step at a time.

“**YWM2017** was a place where barriers were broken down, walls were opened and transparency was possible.”
We also extend our heartfelt thanks to each of our YWM2017 sponsors who made it possible to fund, develop and bring the 2017 National Convention to life:

A very special THANK YOU to our Platinum-level Sponsor Novo Nordisk for supporting the OAC’s Community Building Events at YWM2017!

For a complete recap of the 2017 Your Weight Matters National Convention, including pictures, attendee experiences, educational sessions and more, we encourage you to view our collection of digital memories by visiting: www.Storify.com/ObesityAction.