

Announcer ([00:02](#)):

You are listening to the Safety Moment Podcast by Utility Safety Partners. Safety is always a good conversation and it's a click away. Here's your host, Mike Sullivan.

Mike Sullivan ([00:15](#)):

Welcome everybody to the Safety Moment podcast. I'm anxious to get on with today's episode. I have with me today Mr. Bruce Campbell, Mr. Mark Frost and Roger Lipscomb. These are the people that were at the center of the creation of the Facility Notification Center Association. And this is an organization that its time had come and for the One Call centers across Canada, US internationally, a place where connections can be made for the betterment of the work that we do, as whether it's Utility safety partners or Ms. Dig, or you name it, across North America and even around the world. Welcome to the Safety Moment Podcast. Gentlemen. It's an absolute pleasure to have you join me on this episode, and today we're going to be talking about something very near and dear to all of us. As the Facility Notification Center's Association and Center is written not in the King's English, just so everybody knows.

([01:13](#)):

Just so everybody knows. Yeah. And this something so it's spelled correctly. So it's spelled correctly. That's exactly it for the majority, right? So I'm outnumbered again. Here we are. But this is something when we had the event in Dallas just a few weeks ago, the FNCA event in Dallas, and it occurred to me that we need to capture this, and if we don't do it, then we're going to lose the story of the origin story. And every superhero needs an origin story. So this is what I wanted to capture, and I'm really disappointed, kind of bummed actually, that Susan couldn't join us and we tried to schedule her, but let's face it, and before we get into anything without Susan Bowl, we probably wouldn't be as far along as we are. She's been a fantastic chair. She's done a great job. She's taken this on amongst everything else she does for Oklahoma and other parts of damage prevention nationally, internationally. So kudos to her. Wish you could have joined us. So let's dedicate this episode to Susan Bowl. How's

Bruce Campbell ([02:23](#)):

That? Sounds good. Bo on sooner.

Mike Sullivan ([02:26](#)):

Yeah, right on. Well, before we begin this, want to everybody introduce yourselves? And Bruce, I'm going to start with you, so if you can introduce yourself, that'd be great.

Bruce Campbell ([02:34](#)):

Okay. I'm Bruce Campbell, retired former CEO of my dig, eight one one, the one call notification center for underground utility safety in the state of Michigan USA.

Mike Sullivan ([02:49](#)):

Thank you Bruce. And Roger, because you're so close to Bruce, you can probably feel the wind from Michigan. That's right. You can introduce yourself.

Roger Libscomb ([02:58](#)):

I'm Roger Lipscomb, the president, executive director of Ohio 8 1 1, which is the notify before you dig Center for the state of Ohio. I've been here for, in this role for over 20 years, and I've been in the industry for almost 40, and so I've known Bruce and Mark for a very long time. Known you for a very long time. Mike. I would say before I pass it over to Mark, that Susan is an amazing individual. She really is. It shows a lot of foresight on Bruce's part to heavily recruit her to take his spot when he stepped away. And it's been a blessing that he did that. So Bruce, you deserve some of that credit as well for recruiting her and recognizing the talents that she was going to bring to this. She has totally built it beyond your expectations, for sure.

Mike Sullivan ([03:51](#)):

Awesome. Bruce, you can be very convincing. I am a smooth

Roger Libscomb ([03:55](#)):

Talker, smooth

Mike Sullivan ([03:56](#)):

Talker, smooth leg butter mark, how are you? If you could introduce yourself, that'd be great.

Mark Frost ([04:01](#)):

Sure. I'm Mark Frost. I'm soon to be CEO. We're changing my title as we're adding a COO at Julie at the beginning of next year, so I'm excited about that. But I've been in the industry. I've been at this only facility notification center in Illinois, Julie for 34 years, and this is my 25th year as the executive for the organization. So I'm really excited about that. And I'm a little nervous now because I was expecting that Susan was going to be there and serving as her vice chair under her. She makes my role a lot easier. So I've got very big and tall shoes at times to fill if I've ever seen her. She likes to wear heels from time to time, so I'm a little nervous. I'm unsteady on heels. So

Roger Libscomb ([04:51](#)):

She's taller than us without heels. Yeah, she is. She's

Bruce Campbell ([04:56](#)):

Taller than me. Without heels or with heels. That's the only way we could get her to go is because we stand eye to eye.

Mike Sullivan ([05:04](#)):

Yeah,

Roger Libscomb ([05:04](#)):

Exactly.

Mike Sullivan ([05:06](#)):

I mean the FNCA, why was it created? And I'm going to go to you, Roger and Bruce, but before I go there, let me just tell you, and anybody listening today how I learned it, but I can't remember which conference it was at. And I was think walking around the conference trade show floor, and Bruce, you

called me over and he said, Hey, Sullivan, come on over here, chat with you. And you explained this idea of the FNCA, I don't know if it was even called that at the time, and you said, we need to do this. It's something that is necessary. And you explained it briefly and you said, are you in? And I said, well, yeah, I think we need this. And I agree, I am in, but it goes beyond that. So maybe before we get to that, Roger, if I can ask you maybe just to give a brief history on the one call centers in North America and predominantly the USA. You had OCSI, you had one Calls of America before FNCA. Just give me a brief explanation of that. Sure.

Roger Libscomb (06:10):

And One Calls of America is really where FNCA was born from. So one cause of America was primarily the call centers in the United States that were in-house had full operations, not vendor run call centers. These were in-house call centers. And we had come together for consortium buying. There were 24 or 25 of us at the time. We would get our healthcare buys this way, we would get our national telecom buys. Through this consortium buying effort. Obviously there's value in numbers and we were able to get really good deals throughout the course of the years. Those opportunities didn't pan out as much. We were able to find better deals locally, and we recognized that the consortium buy organization, one Calls to America, which we got a lot of other values out of, obviously the networking of our staff and our employees from each of the centers across the nation coming together.

(07:12):

But we recognized that it had kind of run its course. And so we in early 20 spring of 2020 came together in Georgia. Megan and Georgia was very gracious in hosting all of the executive directors. We came together to talk about what we were going to do. Were we going to dissolve OCOA or were we going to move away from it? What we're going to do? Bruce, myself and a number of us felt that we didn't want to just let it go. We needed a voice. We needed, much like when Bruce approached you, Mike, he was telling you, we need a trade association. But what the vision was was to make it bigger than just the US and to make it bigger than just in-house call centers. The idea here was to make it international, to talk to our brothers and our friends and our brethren in Canada to see if they were interested in joining us, being able to open it to the other businesses in the United States, the vendor run businesses like one called Concepts that served 15 or 16 states.

(08:16):

And so this was really the catalyst and it took some convincing. We did have some of the executive directors across the nation who felt they were fatigued and they were tired, and they were ready to just kind of take their toys and go home. But as you said earlier, Bruce can be persuasive and I can be persuasive. And Mark is one of our elder states people now, mark is persuasive. And so we just continued to nag people until we put it together. And that's kind of the origins of it. It's really the Phoenix that rose from the ashes of one cause of America.

Mike Sullivan (08:55):

And then Bruce, I mean, this is where I guess I came in or you come in, you saw me and you say, Hey, we want to do this. But the objectives for the FNCA, maybe you can articulate that a little bit because Roger went there a bit. The staff that make up the one call centers, whether it's the human resources or data or operations, they were connecting through OCOA, but there was only 20 some odd centers, and Canada wasn't part of that. So if you can sort of take it from there, what were the objectives of the FNCA in with not in the King's English, obviously?

Bruce Campbell ([09:35](#)):

Yeah, so I think there was a bit of a disagreement among the call centers and fatigue as Roger said, but not often do you get an opportunity to rebirth an organization such as OCOA into something like FNCA. So the dynamics that were going on, there was an identity crisis. Are we really one calls anymore because, well, we were all moving to web-based entry of locate requests, and so we're not one calls anymore. We're facility notification centers. Many of us were starting to move that way. We were pushing on that nomenclature. Then also, even though there were some disagreements and some issues that arose from OCOA and the practices there, the core things that when you look back on it and why it was originally organized was Ohio and Michigan, and they talked to a few other people, well, Michigan, that's when they broke up the bells into baby bells and we were getting better pricing on telephone than some of the other regions.

([10:46](#)):

So that's one of the, and then it was the healthcare also. But beyond that, what really came out of what we look, when you look back at OCOA and what was of the highest value was the networking and sharing of ideas on how you were running your business. It's a unique business. I liken it to, I tell people, it's like the NFL you have in the NFL. You've got 32 teams with 32 head coaches that are a very unique industry. The one call industry is the same way, only one. Sometimes there's two in a state, but primarily one. And it's a unique business that needs to be handled and has challenges because of that. And modernizing to the point of going to the web primarily to the web changed the entire, you went from a call center and Mike this, you were ahead of the curve on that as well to the web ticket. So how do you deal with that and how do you share that? And then we also looked at business models. So one cause of America, very concentric on owner run the center was run by the One call. But there's business practices that other business models could assist with or bring that information to the group to improve the safety in the underground industry as a whole. So taking the good pieces from OCOA and then what does that look like if we're going to move forward and what's the future look like? And

Mike Sullivan ([12:28](#)):

It was a real departure, obviously from OCSI one called Systems International. And I often will mention that I remember going to OCSI conferences, went to a couple and before CGA and I was really blown away by the sheer magnitude of it obviously. And my predecessor, Bob Chisholm, was a huge part of OCSI. But that too had run its course, the Common Ground Alliance came along and that had run its course and it became really just a committee under CGA. And that was my view of it all. And we needed a home.

Bruce Campbell ([13:07](#)):

And there was some friction there because of us starting this FNCA and CGA and OCSI underneath that. But one of the things that we found with OCSI, under the CGA umbrella, there were other people in the room that were influencing or trying to influence the decisions that were needed for our business and our industry. And when you look at CGA, and it's great that they have its common ground, but each one of those individual groups in there, they have their own trade

Roger Libscomb ([13:38](#)):

Associations.

Bruce Campbell ([13:39](#)):

Trade associations. Why can't we have a similar thing? So where we can get together and talk about what affects our industry and how we should best address the challenges in the overall safety industry and in particular for the notification centers

Mike Sullivan ([13:54](#)):

In generally.

Bruce Campbell ([13:55](#)):

Sorry, go ahead. Yeah,

Roger Libscomb ([13:57](#)):

I was just going to say, Mike, if I could, I think it's important for the listeners to know that the won't call Systems International, OCSI in its foundation in the symposiums you used to go to back then, and Mark can attest to this as well. His organization was a big part of that. Those were for the call centers. By the call centers. Of the call centers. And as to Bruce alluded to is when that group became a subcommittee of the Common Ground Alliance, and it immediately became open to a multi-stakeholder voice. That's where we felt as an organization that we didn't have a place that was our voice.

Mike Sullivan ([14:38](#)):

It became somewhat diluted. Right,

Roger Libscomb ([14:40](#)):

Exactly. And at that time, one Calls of America started serving that purpose for us, but that was never its intention, and that's how it wasn't structured. So FMCA was just the natural evolution of the fact that we needed a place, as you said earlier, Mike, we needed a home. And so since there was no home for us, we built one.

Mark Frost ([15:03](#)):

And even going back to Roger's point, even going back on OCSI, we were a freestanding committee under the American Public Works Association umbrella. We were under A PWA originally. And so OCSI didn't have any other outside influence. And we actually were granted staff from the A PWA as liaisons to us to assist us with creating our symposium. But our symposium was completely based upon not only the needs of the professionals within the centers, but also the other stakeholders, our board members, the excavators, our utility companies. So it really provided an opportunity for everybody who had a stakeholder role within at that time, the one call systems, as we were referred to before, we evolved into facility notification centers

Mike Sullivan ([15:56](#)):

And to that point as well, and you've all made it. We really were evolving, right? Yeah. Roger previously said a little bit ahead of the curve here in Alberta, in different parts of Canada, but we were all evolving, we're all going there. It was inevitable. I mean, just like the facts has withered away and disintegrated, people are migrating away from the phone. And that's a demographic thing. We pushed the change a little bit, but with that, the notification center became more of a damage prevention hub, which really pushed, I found, and maybe you found that as well. But I think it's really pushed additional expectations for expertise and knowledge on the staff, whether they're frontline staff managers, team leaders, or

directors of our respective centers. And that's where, in my view, those levels of our colleagues having that ability to connect, whether it's center to center or state to state, province to province, province to state, country to country. That's where the benefit of the facility Notification Center really association really comes along. But that's where we're kind of at now. But really to get there, I mean, how many years ago? I'm trying to remember.

Roger Libscomb ([17:23](#)):

This was back in the spring of 2020. Wow. Okay. And so that's when right before COVID, that nobody had issued stay at home orders yet. And so we had men in Georgia.

Bruce Campbell ([17:35](#)):

I think Roger was the first person in our group to get COVID. And he had it at the FNCA organizational meeting. He was so sick, he thought he had the flu. It turned out that he had COVID before.

Roger Libscomb ([17:46](#)):

I will tell you, I spent a whole evening IV treatments within the emergency room when we were there. But Bruce stepped in and what took over, and this is the important thing to understand, Bruce basically said he would lead the charge. Bruce said Michigan lead the charge. Michigan and Ohio were the organizations that really brought one calls of America together, and then Illinois and the others joined in. So Bruce said that Michigan would lead the charge on this. I'm like, okay, that's fine. Bruce said, wait a second, you're going to help me. Oh yeah. And so Bruce was the first chair, and he forced me under threat of bodily harm to be the vice chair. And from there, the concepts and the ideas of how do we turn this into something more, something that had further reach, something that was a unified voice for our industry to where people weren't speaking for us, other associations weren't speaking for us. And in those early days, it was a lot of work because again, we had folks that were supporting this effort. Some folks were saying, I'm tired, let's take a break. But to look at it today is just amazing.

Mike Sullivan ([19:04](#)):

Well, would you consider those the pain points? Go ahead, mark. Sorry, I didn't mean to cut you off.

Mark Frost ([19:08](#)):

Yeah, I wanted to try to connect a couple of dots that you've already kind of thrown out there. And we talked about the persuasiveness of Bruce and Roger to get people to the table to talk. And then you talked about the continued and the increased reliance on the needs of the facility notification center staff to be able to assist. So that was a natural thing that all of us were seeing because of our, what's nice about our industry is that we were not competitors. We share information. And so we collectively become better and more cohesive as a group. And because of our collective successes across the country and the continent, our members and the other excavation stakeholders just relied more and more on us to be able to provide more education opportunities and more services. And so to that end, my buy-in early on in the process was I was trying for a long time, we had been successful in having formats for our executives to meet and formats for our marketing teams to meet and formats for our damage prevention managers to meet.

([20:27](#)):

But there were so many other professional specialties within our F Cs that we weren't able to get together. I tried with some success at times and limited success to at least bring our finance people

together. And so once Bruce and Roger and others started talking about this thing, my buy-in was as soon as I heard the opportunity to be able to expand and create an association that was a trade association that represented all of the professional specialties, that's when I said, I'm all in. And I'm going to be a huge advocate for that. And that's one of the things I'm really proud about with where FNCA has gone is that very quickly we were able to include every single professional specialty, I think except one that we've identified now, executive assistants. But other than that, we have a space in our meeting when we meet twice a year for every one of our groups on our staffs. And now people are making connections and getting the value that we've been able to get for decades.

Mike Sullivan ([21:31](#)):

Going back to just the recent event in Dallas, we're seeing that expand or not improve, expand, however you want to say it, with every event. And identifying one new area, for example, administrative assistance. So to see the people that are working day to day and data, people that are working day to day in the contact center or software or whatever the case may be, education awareness that to see those connections happening and sharing experiences, sharing challenges and sharing successes, how to overcome those challenges. A little bit of, let's be honest here, it takes a little bit of pressure off of us as the executive directors, the CEOs, the CEOs, presidents of our organizations to have all the answers. And we don't. There's no way we can have all the answers except for Bruce, he had all the answers, but again, we can't.

Bruce Campbell ([22:28](#)):

And what good that did mean, that's

Mike Sullivan ([22:29](#)):

Good that yeah, that's right. But to allow those connections was important and to find a way to do it because as we said earlier, whether it was the Common Ground Alliance, a Canadian Common Ground Alliance or OCOA or OCSI, our ability to do so had become diluted amongst the masses. If you go to a CGA event and you have 1200, 1500 people, it's really hard to find your colleague in the same field of work as you amongst that sheer mass of people. But you bring it to FNCA where the hour event had about 120 people and then another, so many online joining, but 120 people roughly in person, it's not hard to make that connection that really matters at that event. And so that's one of the benefits I'm seeing for sure. But that's what we're seeing today. But to get there, I mean, there were some pain points and

Roger Libscomb ([23:32](#)):

It

Mike Sullivan ([23:32](#)):

Was, yeah, I mean, maybe we can talk about that a little bit. I mean, Bruce, at the very beginning, you saw some pain points. I can tell you from the

Bruce Campbell ([23:38](#)):

Start, I mean the birth of it was out of conflict and controversy between the one call centers, particularly around the healthcare. But it was also, there was stress in pulling from CGA and OCSI because CGA had a new leader at the top there, and Sarah was trying to rebirth CGA into something new and different and

better that met what she had a vision for that didn't necessarily match up with everything. We had an idea that we would like to do, and there was a lot of extra noise, and it was a difficult conversation. But when it came down to it was how could we best improve our business model that the one calls have to deal with regardless of their business model, whether it's 5 0 1 C3, if they're international owner, in-house owned in-house run or vendor, you still have the same business principles you have to deal with and the changes that are being made in the industry.

[\(24:48\)](#):

And to deal with our customers, not just our members, but the customers, the excavating community and their evolution and the move forward as the older fellows age, out of all these industries, you've got the new people coming in, the younger people coming in who are much more tech savvy, they have higher demands as far as response times and interaction. And how do you meet that with an industry that was birthed out of utility companies that have their own, they're a monolith of stagnation sometimes because you want your utilities to be constant firm and reliable. And that kind of prevailed through the one call industry because we were at first a sidecar to that industry, and then now we've developed into our own industry in that took a lot of, there's some rebirthing pains that happened when we got to FNCA

Roger Libscomb [\(25:51\)](#):

And Mike, I think one of the things that Bruce touched on there was we all recognized that the ultimate stakeholder that we serve isn't the utility members who make up our boards and our budgets. It's not necessarily the community that we serve. It's the citizens of the places where we live. So I have 11 plus million citizens in Ohio that don't really fully understand all the time exactly what organizations like ours do to keep them safe every day. We're kind of like that movie Men in Black where the men and women in black that don't really understand what we do to keep them protected and keep their neighborhoods safe and keep that utility infrastructure flowing and working so that they can live their lives and enjoy their families. And so that's the ultimate stakeholder. And I think to Bruce's point, with all of the conflict we had, all of the frustrations, all of the confusion, all of the noise that was going on.

[\(26:54\)](#):

The one thing that none of us lost sight of is that we were serving a cause greater than ourselves. And that was our foundation. That was the glue that kept us together. And striving for that to be successful is kind of how we were able to put aside our differences. We were able to resolve the conflicts. We were able to do some of those things to really step in and say, okay, how do we do what Mark said? How do we make sure that our teams continue to grow and continue to evolve? How do we get them in touch with their colleagues so that we can work out mutual problems and solve them collectively together? How do we better serve the members of the utility members who make up our memberships? How do we serve the contractor base? How do we serve those 11 plus million citizens?

[\(27:42\)](#):

More importantly, for me, one of the things that I very was very much excited about was the fact that we were going to be international. We were going to grow. There was a lot of good voices, a lot of subject matter, a lot of knowledge. Mike, just look at your career, look at your background, what you brought to the table for so many years, what Bob Chisholm brought to the table for so many years and so many others. We needed that. And then having the vendor run families, though, the one called concepts, having those folks there and their experie is coming to the table. But at the end of the day, the most exciting thing for me with One Call or FNCA at that time was that we were finally going to have a unified voice on the national stage. There's a lot of legislation. There's a lot of agencies, federal agencies

here in the US that are trying to fix problems and solve and reduce damages and keep people safe. And everybody and their brother, were speaking for our industry, but us. And now we have that advocacy voice. We have that voice not to go out there and push our will, but to go out there and make sure people understand exactly how this process works and what the challenges are from an unbiased perspective.

Mark Frost ([29:02](#)):

So Mike? Yeah, Mike, we covered so far, the early part, the part about remolding OCOA into FNCA, that was the 2020 to, I'd say mid to late 20, 21 timeframe where we were convincing all of us collectively that it was the right thing to do. And then as we got into late 2021 and then into 2022, it's the next thing you're asking about, what were the next hurdles that we had to overcome? And this is what they were in my memory, which

Mike Sullivan ([29:36](#)):

Was, and you have a really unique perspective on this mark, because you mean you're the co-chair or chair and you're seeing a lot of this evolve in front of you. Exactly.

Mark Frost ([29:46](#)):

And so what happened next was our peers were saying, okay, we're willing to give this a chance with this asterisk. Okay, FNCA cannot duplicate what we're already doing because we only have so much time and so many resources to be able to allocate. And so our peers at the other FNC were saying, we will try this, but don't do what OCSI and don't do what CGA is already providing us, do things that are filling other gaps. And so we quickly were able to address that and look at that and focus on the fact that while OCSI and CGA provide us some important pieces to what we do, they're not that trade association that we were looking to do. So that became our focus, and we figured that out in 2022 that we were going to be the trade association where all of the managers within our F Cs could come to for networking and for a variety of resources. And that became then the basis by near the end of 2022, when then we presented our inaugural strategic plan at that time, which then went into effect. The first three year plan was for 2023 through the end of this year.

Mike Sullivan ([31:14](#)):

Do you see though, mark or the rest of you as well, but Mark, maybe you have a different window to this and perspective, but do you see potential conflict still though between F-N-C-A-O-C-S-I? What if there's an issue that comes up that there's been some reports where we've had to chime in on or whatever the case may be, what if we disagree on? That's the challenge.

Bruce Campbell ([31:42](#)):

I'm going to jump in on this one because I'm untethered, so I'm safe.

([31:48](#)):

So to that point, in a very critical point that the eight one report came out that basically said 8 1 1 is no good. Every state is terrible. Some are just worse, they're all bad and some are worse than others. And that was a lightning rod in the industry. And it was a battle between CGA wanted to respond for us for the one call centers. And we went through, most of us went through and said, okay, here's all the things you listed about my state, and here's where you're incorrect. And at that time, Sarah and CGA were

offering to take OCSI and make it just one calls and do some things that would just be us, and we could be separate but remain in CGA without having to start FNCA.

(32:45):

And as a group, we discussed it, and that was a kind proposition that they offered. And they did try to speak for us, but even when they did through OCSI and CGA in that instance, it still got a little tainted and touched down because some of the major stakeholders in CGA paid for that report. So you had that internal conflict of interest. Yeah, conflict of interest. And we needed a place to go as notification centers that we could speak freely amongst ourselves and come out with a unified statement. So that was one of the, I would say, well, that was one of the points where we diverged and it did make the impetus behind getting FNCA up and running and actually moving forward. It propelled us to go, okay, we are whatever other things we didn't agree on as notification centers, this thing we agree on and we're going to move forward on it.

Roger Libscomb (33:50):

It was the catalyst.

Bruce Campbell (33:51):

Yeah, it

Mike Sullivan (33:52):

Was a rallying cry,

Roger Libscomb (33:54):

And it showed us the need that illustrated the need for this voice. Now, Mike, to your point, when we do have a disagreement with one of the other stakeholder groups or one of those organizations, the one thing that we do is we are not there to point fingers. We're there to bring people together. If you ask any of us, the primary function we perform within this industry is to facilitate understanding among stakeholders so we can foster cooperation among stakeholders. So there's a polite way to disagree with the reports like that eight one report and recognizing that it was biased because of who paid for it and recognizing it was incorrect in so many states. Were we frustrated? Yes, we were frustrated, but our approach was to say, okay, let's just correct the record. Let's go ahead and submit and point out where this report's off.

(34:50):

We're not going to say the report isn't a good idea, or the concept of a report isn't a good idea. But what we talked about was possibly doing our own report. We sit at the center of all the stakeholders, we could probably give the most unbiased report as to what the issues are in the industry. And so we've talked about that. Again, all of this illustrates why FNCA was necessary. Now, mark touched on something that I think is really important, and that is one of the first things that Mark really was a driving force behind this once he got into the leadership of FNCA was to basically say, we need a strategic direction. Who are we going to be when we grow up? Bruce and I, were in the delivery room, Mark's like, okay, how are we going to grow? What are we going to be? Who are we going to be? And Susan was the glue that held it all together. So Susan and Mark really looked internal, the organization and said, okay, how do we grow the organization now? How do we move it forward? I mean, mark was one of the driving forces behind the fact that eventually we're going to need staff at FNCA, those types

of things. And so my role have kind of stepped back, but you'll see my role is probably more that broader voice to make sure that no one's misunderstanding what our position is

Mike Sullivan ([36:17](#)):

And keeping the board honest in the board has to keep its own organization honest. But that's a good segue actually, where I wanted to get into, and we've talked about the beginnings of FNCA and how it came to be, why it came to be. And mark this, I'm going to turn to you now because it is exactly what Roger has said. You were the one who took pen in hand and say, okay, let's craft this strategic direction here for the organization. And that first kick at the can was back in 2022, after we had got some policies done, the governance model was taking shape. We knew what we were, now we were going to start to figure out how we were going to be, what we were going to do next. And here we are five years, almost four, sorry, three years, almost four years after that. And we've evolved. We've done some interesting work. So maybe you can take us through that a little bit.

Mark Frost ([37:15](#)):

Yeah, sure. And I'm going to start with, we had seven goals that we created, and one of them is the one that's I think the greatest work in progress, which speaks to your prior question, Mike, which is the whole question of the disagreements that still might exist and how are we resolving those and what are we doing with those that is in our advocacy area? And there's just no question. And so I think what's happened, and I'm going to tell you about the success in another area first, which feeds into and supports our way that we're trying to address advocacy, which is our first and foremost goal was to grow FNCA, to be an association that represented 80% of all North American facility notification centers. And we've met that goal, which I think is phenomenal. And we've never had a group of facility notification centers in that number in the same place.

([38:15](#)):

We've come close, we've tried in different ways, but not as involved and especially not including the level of participation from the Canadian provinces. So that's the first and foremost. But what that allows us to do then is to say, okay, this isn't just the opinion of those that show up for this group's or that group's meeting. It's really the majority of the industry coming together, talking through particular issues and then finding solutions. And so I talk about it being a work in progress for advocacy. We still have to come up with a process that would where we put out a white paper or position statement on something. But as we've dealt with a couple of issues, we've started to recognize that we could proactively look to change or to drive some of the areas that people are focusing on, such as just two or three examples at the top of mind for me is a standardized ticket format.

([39:18](#)):

Another one is to find common agreement in our positive response codes. And then finally the latest one, which we're talking about, which is this concept that Georgia penned, which is excavation readiness. And so those are some areas that we're starting to talk about in earnest, and then we're driving the bus rather than being the passenger and going along for the ride. And that's what I'm excited about. So those are two goal areas, Mike, to start with advocacy and membership. But then I'd also like to talk about our member programs and services. So it's one thing to start including your finance people and your member services people and your IT people, all those folks at the table. But you have to provide something that's worthwhile for them to come to more than just networking. And so very quickly, we challenged them to come up with at least one thing. We'd like them to get up to three, but at least one thing that they need from each other now that they're not getting. And they have been able

to incorporate that into their meeting structure, and they've been able to start putting together documents that they share and those type of things. One of my data collection.

Roger Libscomb ([40:36](#)):

Data

Mark Frost ([40:37](#)):

Collection is another big thing. Data is a huge one. And then we look at what most associations do. One of our other seven goals is the creation of a resource library. And so we're in the process of building that library very quickly, and we're looking to at least minimally populate it with the 10 most useful resources that we can use. I mentioned earlier, I've been in the industry for almost 35 years. I can tell you that I have had probably over 150 requests during those 35 years for what do you do with this situation? What do you do with that situation? And I've taken that survey more than once because somebody had the question now and then seven years later, somebody had the question again. And so if we can get to a point where we have all of this information in a repository and we're quickly starting to fill those library shelf walls, those virtual walls with this information.

([41:37](#)):

And part of the reason that we're able to do that is another one of our goals, which was the creation of association staffing. We created a three-year plan to get somebody in place by 2026 last year at our meeting in New Orleans, when we met as the CEO ED group, I was asked to give a presentation, and I guess I was persuasive because we left that room in total agreement that we were going to add our first ever association staffer. And then we went through the process and hired Mandy Benson, our administrator and coordinator. So all of these things are happening because of Susan's leadership, the board's leadership, and now we have staff to be able to support as well. And then the last area is our association finances and very, very quickly, because if facility notification centers don't do anything else, well besides taking tickets, they know how to take in money and spend it frugally and quickly get a cash reserve. And that's what we've been able to do. And so now we're to a point in late 2025, we are now entertaining a financial cash reserve policy because we have the ability now to look at that because with the dues that we've charged, we've been able to do everything that we need to do with our meetings and still have money left after paying our staff and all of our other bills.

Mike Sullivan ([43:11](#)):

And that's a huge, yeah, it's just huge. Well, it's a huge feat. I mean, it's an accomplishment, right? To arrive at that point. Now we've made some decisions. We have a staff member we have that we're approaching, I would say we're not there yet, but we're approaching that cash on hand or reserve fund where we can have some cushion and some comfort. I'd say we're getting close. We're going to have that policy in place soon enough. But in terms of the comfort level, for me anyway, and probably for you guys too, is as to have that advocacy role, I think you need that financial cushion first of all, because the moment you start speaking on behalf of everybody, that takes a lot of effort to gather the message, that collective message everybody can agree to, whether it's on one issue or another. And that takes capital, that takes time, that takes staff, and that obviously it takes money.

([44:06](#)):

So the closer we become that advocate, and it's not just going to be for the us. I mean obviously there's a thrust of membership across the United States and I, here I am waving the flag with a couple of others here in Canada that this is worthwhile. We need to be part of this. But the thrust, obviously is coming

out of the US and I think some of the things we need to look at is how we can build those bridges across Canada or other parts of the world even. But when we reach that level of being a recognized advocate, and I think we are getting there, we need that capital. We need to have that financial reserve fund. And I think that's where we're going. I mean, we have our plans in place, our strategic objectives and the board is solid. We have board members, two board members from Canada, myself and Katie Gosman from Ontario One call. But where do you see this going? I mean, Bruce, you saw at the very beginning you had this vision among others to get to a place, and Roger and Mark and myself, you've been part of that journey to now. And Mark, I see you as you're carrying this. I mean, are you pulling us through the sand? Are you dragging that anvil through the sand or are you leading a charge on a well paved road? And it's no bumps at all? Where do you see us going with

Mark Frost ([45:37](#)):

This? Well, I'll start. One thing that's already indicative of where we're heading is at staff meetings or at individual department meetings. As I talk with my staff and we talk about different things that are happening, my staff proactively is saying, well, that's a good topic or a good thought market, something I can take to my peers at FNCA. So when that starts happening organically that you've arrived, because people are now saying in all my departments, and they get excited about the FNCA meetings that are coming up, and the beauty of it is even if they can't join in person, they get to join virtually. So having that has been a huge plus for us. I just continue to see that this is going to be the association that we want it to be. We've talked about the potential of getting into for those individual areas that may not have other professional certificate programs available to them.

([46:51](#)):

We may go into the area of certificates or certifications that may be something down the road, but minimally, I think it's still a period where we are just becoming established. Our name is getting out there. We have high percentage of fnc that have joined. They're seeing the value. We're including every group, including the vendor run centers, and everybody is freely sharing information in a way that even exceeded my wildest expectations from what we've done in the past. We've always been willing to share, but there was always this hesitancy maybe to share if vendors were in the room, well, that's not happening anymore.

Mike Sullivan ([47:33](#)):

That's right. We've passed that hurdle, right?

Mark Frost ([47:37](#)):

We've passed that. We passed that barrier. So I think that where we're heading is technology is taking us in a lot of directions very, very quickly. And I think having the ability to have this infrastructure in place for us to be able to talk about it as groups and to say, okay, how far are you willing to go with ai? How far are you willing to go with virtual agents? And how far are you willing to go with all these other things that are coming up? And so there's just a lot of, as many challenges as we think that there might be. There's twice the number of opportunities.

Roger Libscomb ([48:20](#)):

Hey, Mike, if I could just, sorry, Bruce, I'm going to jump in. I just want to touch on something that Mark hit on. Our staff members are getting excited about the meetings, but what I've seen is they're not just communicating at the meetings. They're communicating amongst themselves between meetings,

Mike Sullivan ([48:40](#)):

Making those connections,

Roger Libscomb ([48:41](#)):

And they're collaborating. One of them runs into a problem. They're talking to their peers about how to solve it and the growth. So that feeds right into with the fact that we're going to eventually have some structured certification type stuff. And I think that's a very important piece. Mark touched on it a bit there, but the growth that I've already seen in the staff members from all of our centers because of this interaction and then this opportunity we've given them and the collaboration that's going on nationwide is what's going to make us strong. And that's what's going to help us deal with the challenges like AI and how do you deal with AI and how do you manage AI and how do you manage volumes across the nation? And I'm sure in Canada as well, we are seeing record volumes of excavation activity taking place, and we're seeing a number of initiatives that are driving that. How do you manage that into the future? How do you manage those volumes? All of those challenges we each face as individuals collectively will solve those challenges through the collaboration of an organization like FNCA.

Mike Sullivan ([49:48](#)):

I agree. And this is where I see, and to your point, Roger is and Mark is the people connecting outside of these meetings and conferences on their own throughout the year. That's where we're going to see the evolution of not just an individual, but not just one state or province, but collectively, the Facility Notification Centers Association. Because out of that, I think what the FNCA has created beyond anything else is a place that fosters education, knowledge and recognition of same, that this is important. And without that, without this home, those people that are going to lead this 5, 10, 20 years from now, now they have those connections. The recognition factor is going to be enormous for those individuals and not to pound their own chest and say, here I am. But let's face it, the vast majority, I can't think of anybody who isn't here for the cause. We're not here as individuals. We're not here to get all these letters after our name and accolades. That's not why we're here at all. We're here for the cause. And everybody I've worked with, whether it's in Canada or anybody I've met with and worked with in the us, they are here for the cause. What I think the most value, just from my perspective, the FNCA provides is a home for those people who are here for the cause and allows them to just expand. And wherever that takes them, it takes them

Roger Libscomb ([51:24](#)):

Servant leadership, Mike, that's what it is. The interesting thing is our brother Bruce retired and he started this, he's like Spanky from the Little Rascals. He thought up something to get us all in trouble, right? But Bruce, then he walked away. Bruce. Bruce thought it up. Yeah, exactly. I'd love to hear his perspective and in hindsight, him seeing and understanding everything that we've been able to take from his original vision. Bruce, I mean, if I can ask him the question, Bruce, what are your thoughts about what you've seen and heard and how you've watched this thing grow?

Bruce Campbell ([52:07](#)):

It lightens my heart. Makes me happy to see that this has grown the way it has. Going back to not to, I don't want Susan to just float away because she's getting all these accolades, but Oklahoma actually joined OCOA right at the time. It blew apart, and yet she stayed. And there's a couple other states that had just come into OCOA and the thing blows up and we start talking about FNCA and what that's going to look like. And they go, oh, that's actually something maybe more valuable than what OCOA was to us.

And then when we went, we got past the fear in the room of having vendor run centers involved. Of course, OCOA came in and Matt Rudo and his group, and they got involved. But what made Heart and me was that the centers that they represent started to join FNCA. So that showed the value of what we were doing was beyond just connections and networking.

(53:18):

The people who were vendor run, they have other business opportunities and issues that they have to deal with FNCA could help them with. Regardless of that, they were using OCA or whoever to run their center. And that that foundation was there and that there was enough buy-in. And to Mark's point, we went back to our staff members and said, if you had a chance to do this all over again, what would you do? What would you want? What didn't you get from OCOA or what don't you get from going to CGA that we can do here and do it better for us? And my background as my primarily, I was in the engineering and excavation world for most of my career, and that's a whole different, you talk about two different worlds. It's dog eat dog or Kumbaya. Let's all work together. I came from the dog, eat dog and get them before they get you kind of attitude.

(54:22):

And one of the things I was hoping for or see that FNCA would do is let's not wait for somebody to mandate to us how things should be done in our industry. Let's tell them, Hey, this is what we need to be doing and this is why, and this is what we're going to do about it. Maybe what you're going to tell me is good for a utility company or it's good for a locator, but it may not be good for the one call center or the notification center or the people we actually serve, which is the population of the municipalities or the government bodies we are in. So I'm glad to hear that that's still the impetus behind it. And as long as we stay true to that, I think the ceiling for FNCA is unlimited, really.

Mike Sullivan (55:11):

I think it is. And gentlemen, this has been, I've wanted to do this for a while and I'm glad we got a chance to do it today. Once again, really bummed that Susan's not here, but she's here in spirit, obviously. Bruce, thank you for pulling me across the tree to a floor that day and getting me involved. And I say that in all seriousness, not just thanks a lot. No, I really mean it. Thank you for getting me involved. You're welcome. It's a pleasure to be involved and to be associated with guys like you. It really is. And I'm not at the beginning of my career. I'm getting closer to the end, but to be involved with something like this, it's meaningful and that meaningful engagement with people across provinces and the states and nationally, internationally, it means a lot. And especially at times like this. And we're not political, and I really appreciate that too. Before we go, I have one last question for you. Is the Stanley Cup coming back to Canada this year?

Roger Libscomb (56:13):

Tell him, mark. Tell him, Marco,

Mike Sullivan (56:15):

It's been long

Bruce Campbell (56:15):

Enough. Well, I can tell you we might own Cleveland, but we don't own the Stanley Cup here in Detroit. Yeah, it's terrible. And it doesn't sound like it's getting any better here in

Roger Libscomb ([56:26](#)):

Detroit. Come on, mark. Step into this.

Mark Frost ([56:29](#)):

Well, I wanted to say I'm kind of occupied at the current moment. The Chicago Cubs play tomorrow against the Milwaukee Brewers, and there's only four National League teams that can say that right now. Yeah. Oh, there he goes. We

Mike Sullivan ([56:44](#)):

Don't even hire a National League team. We have the js, but we'll see what happens there too. I always get that hat

Roger Libscomb ([56:50](#)):

On. Hey Mike, I do have something for you.

Mike Sullivan ([56:53](#)):

What's that?

Roger Libscomb ([56:54](#)):

I cannot tell you how much I appreciate you pulling this together. I think it's important. And when you first approached me with this and said, Hey, we can't let our history go to the wayside. We have to make sure that future generations, I mean, as you said, you're getting towards the end of your career. Bruce is doing the grandpa thing and loving that, and he's kind of out there doing it. As Mark said, he's been a long sitting in this industry, and he and I have talked about what our exit strategies are. I'm going to probably be gone in the next four or five years myself, and I'm starting to position my organization for someone else to take over. That's the other thing that FNCA brings us. We've got that repository that Mark talked about. We've got our history, we've got those kind of things. This will get added to that library, right? This kind of stuff. Our origin story will get added to that library, and future generations will understand some of the effort and the challenge and things that put together so that we could make this wonderful thing happen. And for me, I think we're just going to see, I mean, our future is only limited by our willingness to see it. So let's hope it all works. But I thank you, Mike, for having the vision to say we can't let our history get lost.

Mike Sullivan ([58:14](#)):

Well, it has to come from the storytellers at the center of it, and you guys certainly are. And I really, again, appreciate you guys, mark, Roger, Bruce for joining me here today. And I hope that all of the centers that are part of the FNCA and even those who aren't will share this episode with their employees and with their users to really understand why the FNCA was created and to understand where we are and to understand also where we're going to go. So once again, thanks guys. I appreciate it. No problem. Thank you. Take care. Thank you guys. Thank you guys.

([58:52](#)):

That's going to wrap things up on this episode of the Safety Moment podcast. I really want to thank the guests that joined me today. That was certainly an interesting episode for me in the fact that we are capturing the origin story of the FNCA that told by the people that were right there at the very

beginning. I want to thank our producers stories and strategies, and I hope you choose to follow this podcast on any directory you're listening on. And please do leave a rating. Certainly appreciate it. You can follow us Utility Safety Partners on X at Utilities Safety. We're also on Instagram, Facebook, and LinkedIn. And if you'd like to send us a note, maybe you have an episode idea, you can email us at info@utilityafety.ca and put podcast in the subject header. Nice bold letters. And with that, I'll say goodbye. I'm Mike Sullivan, president of Utility Safety Partners. Click to know what's above and below. One click costs you nothing, not clicking that could cost you everything.