

## ***The Essence of our National Association***

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*If both the physiological and the safety needs are fairly well gratified, there will emerge the love and affection and belongingness needs. The whole cycle will repeat itself with this new focus. Now the person will hunger for affectionate relations with people in general, for a place in his or her group or family. The individual will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal.*

- Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1970

Members of our national association, the National Association of Activity Professionals (NAAP) sometimes feel disconnected and unaware of the day-to-day operations and responsibilities of their elected board members. This distance, between membership and board, adds to miscommunication and feelings of not ‘belonging’ and being heard. William D. Hitt, author of ***Management in Action*** says it all too well; “Today the large organization often is like a machine devoid of feeling and compassion, like a body without a soul.”

As Vice President, I oftentimes find myself reflecting on a leadership model that was introduced to me many years ago as a school district administrator; ***Japanese Management Practices and Productivity***, Hatvany and Pucik, Organizational Dynamics, 1981. This strategic model of leadership specifically highlights three domains: Philosophy, Strategies, and Tactics. In essence, these are the domains that we, as your board, work through each time we meet. Board discussions, via telephone, internet, or in-person, highlight the following Standards of Practice:

- Utilization of board members’ strengths and skills
- Open dialogue, honest communication and strong working relationships
- National trends and issues
- Delivering quality education services
- Proactive and positive attitudes toward assignments and projects
- Members’ inquiries, questions and concerns
- Completion of assigned projects

The National Association of Activity Professionals’ philosophy fully encompasses the concept that our members are the most important part of our organization. Maslow stated, “All people in our society have a need for a stable, high evaluation

of themselves, for self-respect, and for the esteem of others...Satisfaction of the self-esteem need leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability, and adequacy, of being useful and necessary in the world.” – Abraham Maslow, *Motivation and Personality*, 1970. Our members provide us with keen insight, creativity, and thought-provoking questions needed for all of us to move forward in this ever-changing profession of Recreation/Activities.

Board members have specific working portfolios assigned to their positions. Projects, which we call ‘Action Items’, are generated during bi-monthly conference calls. Each board member reports on individual progress and communicates any and all concerns along the way. Articulation is a major component for being on the board and remains a high priority throughout the strategic planning process. In addition, each board member is held to high ethical standards with regards to active participation in the Recreation/Activity profession, genuine concern and respect for our association, and a willingness to be transparent with one another as important decisions are made in the best interest of all our members. It is important to know that board members are not only accountable to each other, but to you, our members. Each individual believes and practices the following Code of Ethics: being a board member is more than words, feelings and thoughts; and it’s more than just believing in the name of the association. Our decisions and actions impact hundreds of Recreation/Activity Professionals. We choose to be honest and open-minded throughout all our communication and interactions.

Our association has always held education and the delivery of Quality of Life standards and practices at the highest level. It is through education that we learn and grow professionally. The NAAP Board knows that our members expect and deserve the very best speakers, topics and conferences possible; on-line and in-person. Our Lunch & Learns, NAAP Chats and support of on-line Continuing Education have proven most successful during the past six months. Education will always be a top priority as we strive to better our services each and every year.

Through my recent journeys across the western section of our United States, I found myself traveling a very lonely, sparsely populated section of the Nevada State Highway System; Highway 95-N. My mind continually wandered as I thought about how isolated and ‘alone’ some of these smaller Nevada towns actually were; Goldfield, Mina, and Luning, Nevada. All combined, these three towns have a population less than 300 people. Some hospitals, continuous care

retirement communities and skilled nursing and rehabilitation centers have more folks!

During the driving experience, I remembered about reading a book on pathways, culture change and connections. Then it came to me. You know, that “aha” moment! Nancy Fox, author of *The Journey of a Lifetime: Leadership Pathways to Culture Change in Long-Term Care*, wrote about the subject of ‘Companion Planting’; p. 262. The thought process behind ‘Companion Planting’ is to help foster pest control and management between gardening specialists and their agricultural neighbors and communities. What a valuable lesson, we as Recreation/Activity Professionals, can learn from this simple, yet intricate and detailed process. How vitally important it is for us to talk, share, learn, and work side-by-side with each other. Isolation is not an option! Relationships are necessary and important even if we live in small towns and villages across this beautiful nation. As the opening quote from Abraham Maslow states, “...The individual will strive with great intensity to achieve this goal.” It is our goal, as your NAAP Board, to foster positive relationships, so that each person will know that his/her voice and opinion matters and is heard.

Lastly, on behalf of Alisa, Cindy, Lisa, Colleen, Mike, Carolyn, Linda, Jackie, and Vanessa, I thank you for being a member of our national association. You are important to us, and know that each member makes a positive difference in our work. It takes all of us to pull together and move forward. Thank you for what you do for our seniors all across the United States and Canada. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s words wonderfully emphasize my final thoughts regarding the NAAP Board’s focus:

*“There is nothing more dangerous than to build a society with a large segment of people in that society who feel that they have no stake in it, who feel that they have nothing to lose. People who have a stake in their society protect that society, but when they don’t have it, they unconsciously want to destroy it.”*

*-Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

May members of NAAP always feel confident and supported in the expression of their ‘voice’ and know that they have a vital and significant stake in the daily ‘happenings’ of their board.