

Valley District Conference Thoughts
November 8-10, 2019

Executive Board Opening Thought

Charles Schulz, the creator of the “Peanuts” comic strip, said “Happiness is a warm puppy.” Now, I love a warm puppy just as much as the next person, but today, for me, happiness is being together with my Alpha Delta Kappa sisters once again. I know I’m in for lots of smiles and laughter.

And according to author Harvey Mackay, that smiling and laughter will provide a good workout. He states that one smile uses more than 16 muscles, and that during a round of laughter, the body increases its oxygen intake, which is just as good as taking a few cleansing breaths.

Another good reason to laugh? Results from a California study published by AARP showed that laughter had a positive impact on short-term memory.

Even if you don’t have anything to laugh about, a study done at the University of Illinois shows that forcing yourself to smile influences your mood and outlook. And just like yawns, it has been proven that laughter and smiles are contagious. A great example of this is the Coke ad that’s been showing up on my Facebook page lately.

The commercial takes place on a crowded subway. People are boarding the train after a long day at work. Everyone is silent and keeping to themselves. It is clearly not a joyous occasion.

Suddenly, the camera focuses on a hired actor who randomly starts smiling while he is looking at his computer. He then begins laughing uproariously, over and over. Everyone on the subway notices him and, after a bit of confusion at first, they too start smiling and laughing. And even though I’ve seen the ad several times, every time I watch it, I can’t help but join in on the merriment.

Scientists say that a genuine smile and laughter increase the body’s levels of serotonin and dopamine, the happy hormones and feel-good endorphins that slow cortisol production and diminish feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression.

Smiling is also a bonding agent. It builds bridges to other people around us. It keeps us from remaining aloof and separate from one another. There are so many benefits to smiling and laughter, someone even wrote a poem about them that I will share with you as my reconvening thought.

So sisters, I’m ready for my workout. I have been looking forward to this all week. Let the smiling and laughter begin!

Valley District Conference Opening Thought

_____When we began planning for this conference, one of the first things we knew we needed to decide was our theme. Past State President Mary Ann Englehart had already volunteered to share her pictures and memories of her trip to the headquarters for St.

Jude Children's Hospital. We knew her stories about the good work done there and the children they serve would be perfect since many of us volunteer at the local Dream House, and St. Jude's is one of Alpha Delta Kappa's international altruistic organizations.

We also wanted to include our current State President's theme of Riding the Wave of Inspiration. Wait a minute. Inspiration? Children? Voila! And thus the theme of Inspiring Children was chosen.

We liked the fact that, as the quote on your program states, our theme has a dual meaning. We, as teachers, continually inspire children. But just as often, those children also inspire us.

I am lucky enough to have three adorable grandchildren who are a constant source of inspiration to me. They make the mundane seem special and I find myself striving to be a better person to inspire them.

I found a poem on Pinterest that shares my thoughts quite well. It is entitled, "The Child", and the author is unknown. It says:

What is it about a child
That makes us want to smile?
Is it the enthusiasm of their play?
Or the funny words they try to say?
Is it the way a child grasps your hand?
Or the way they love to play in the sand?
Is it that they are the future of humanity?
Or the fact that their actions attack our sanity?
A child makes the adult world seem brighter.
A child makes the seriousness of the moment lighter.
A child makes us remember the innocence of life
When things were carefree, and without all this strife.
Sometimes life is difficult to face.
But with a child, the world is a better place.

Thank you for the inspiration each of you has been, and continues to be, in the lives of children.

Conference Lunch Thought

We have had quite a morning, and now it's time for lunch. I'd like to share a few thoughts with you before we eat.

One of my inspirations as I grew up was my father. Dad was not well-educated. He dropped out of school in the eighth grade and wasn't one to read much or think deeply about life, or so I thought. He probably had a learning disability that we could easily help him overcome today, but in the 1930's, he was just labeled dumb and slow. Despite this, he found his talent, and became an accomplished truck driver and mechanic. He was always more at home working with his hands than with the academic world.

He never really said much about the fact that I did love school and that I became a teacher. Clearly, we were quite different people, and I was never sure he understood me or my motivations in life.

But he paid me the highest compliment I ever received not too long before he passed away. We had been sitting on our back patio talking one afternoon. I remember it was fall because the leaves were turning and the weather was cool. I had been enthusiastically describing some project I had devised for my third grade students. As I finished my explanation, Dad said, "I wish you had been my teacher. I know I would have learned better and enjoyed school more."

So in honor of Dad, I'd like to share one of his favorite meal-time blessings:

Good bread, good meat, good God, let's eat!

Conference Closing Thought

Recently, my family and I were lucky enough to spend three days at the happiest place on Earth: Disneyland. We drove from our home the night before and stayed at a nearby hotel so that we could start our days bright and early.

Now, I've been to Disneyland several times in my life, so this was not a new experience for me. But in spite of this, I still got that wonderful feeling of excitement and child-like glee as I walked through the turnstile and beheld the wall of flowers topped by a train station. I actually gasped in anticipation and got a bit teary-eyed. I was at Disneyland!

As we walked into the park, I saw smiling people who were just as thrilled as I was. Everyone seemed to be having a good time and didn't let the normal annoyances of being in a large crowd bother them. (Accidentally bump into someone? No problem! Here, let me help you with that stroller.) Even the employees were pleasant and helpful. (Your grandson spilled his popcorn? Have another one. Free!) And no matter that we stayed until closing, and I was exhausted, and my feet were killing me. I left each night with a wonderful feeling of wanting more and looking forward to my next visit.

Now you may be thinking, that's a really nice story, but what does it have to do with Alpha Delta Kappa? Well, think about it. What if every Alpha Delta Kappa member entered their chapter meetings with the same excitement and anticipation I felt entering Disneyland? What if they knew that they were in for an entertaining time where they felt

special and valued? And what if everyone left each meeting already looking forward to the next one?

I'm not suggesting that we make each meeting a visit to an amusement park, but I do think we can replicate the feelings one has there to some extent. We can have interesting speakers, visit fascinating places, foster a feeling of camaraderie and sisterhood. We can be pleasant and make every meeting so enticing, no one will want to miss it.

I understand that it is inevitable that people will bump into each other's feelings every now and then and that sometimes we will drop our bucket of enthusiastic popcorn. But instead of complaining or holding grudges, we can do what the Disney employees do and find a way to make things better.

Is this easy? It can be. Greeting everyone with a warm smile is just one way to help everyone feel like a part of the group. And get to know your sisters, especially the ones you may not normally seek out. Remember that the ones who need the most love will often ask for it in the most unloving of ways, so don't be put off if they resist your friendly overtures at first or seem grouchy or unapproachable.

I think we can all agree that there is already more than enough negativity and sadness in the world today, so I challenge you to turn that around. Make Alpha Delta Kappa the safe, welcoming organization it should be, and go back to your chapter and make every meeting you have the happiest place on Earth for your sisters.

Executive Board Reconvening Thought

The commercials on TV remind me often that it's cold and flu season. They constantly advise me to catch my cough, wash my hands, and do everything humanly possible to keep from spreading these infectious diseases.

It's nice to know that some infectious things are meant to be spread. The following poem has no title that I could find and at least six people have taken credit for it, but it's worth sharing anyway.

Smiling is infectious; you catch it like the flu.
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling, too.
I passed around the corner, and someone saw my grin.
When he smiled, I realized, I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile, then I recognized its worth.
A single smile, just like mine, could travel around the Earth.
So if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected.
Let's start an epidemic quick and get the world infected!

And the moral is: Cover your mouth when you cough, but never when you smile.

Executive Board Closing Thought

As you know, Veterans Day is this Monday, so I thought I'd share a few interesting facts I discovered about the holiday.

The first thing I learned is that in the name for the holiday, the word "veterans" does not have an apostrophe. As a teacher, whenever I'd see the word written this way, I thought it was an error. But apparently there is no apostrophe because the day doesn't belong to just one or even multiple veterans. It's a day for honoring all veterans, so no apostrophe is needed.

I don't know about you, but I have always found the distinction between Veterans Day and Memorial Day to be a little bit fuzzy. But according to my research, they are definitely two different holidays with two different purposes. Memorial Day is a time to remember those who gave their lives for our country, particularly in battle or as a result of wounds suffered in a battle. Veterans Day honors all who have served the country, both in war and peace, dead or alive, although it is largely intended to thank living veterans for their sacrifice.

Most of us know that the holiday was originally called Armistice Day and that it commemorated the end of WWI. WWI actually officially ended when the Treaty of Versailles was signed on June 28, 1919. However, fighting had ended about seven months before this when the Allies and Germany put into effect an armistice on the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month of 1918. For that reason, November 11, 1918 is largely considered to be the end of "the war to end all wars" and was dubbed Armistice Day. In 1926, Congress officially recognized that date as the end of the war, and in 1938, it became an official holiday. It was primarily a day set aside to honor the veterans of WWI.

But then WWII and the Korean War happened, so on June 1, 1954, at the urging of veteran service organizations, Congress amended the commemoration yet again by changing the word "armistice" to "veterans" so the day would honor veterans of all wars.

For a while, the date of Veterans Day was changed, too, which confused everybody. Congress signed the Uniform Holiday Bill in 1968 to ensure that a few federal holidays-Veterans Day included-would be celebrated on a Monday. Officials hoped it would spur travel and other family activities over the long weekend which would, you guessed it, stimulate the economy. It's always about the money, isn't it?

For some crazy reason, the bill set the date for Veterans Day commemorations on the fourth Monday in October, and on October 25, 1971, the first Veterans Day under this new bill was held. Not surprisingly, there was a lot of confusion about the change and many states were unhappy and chose to still recognize the holiday in November.

Within a few years, it became pretty obvious that most US citizens wanted to celebrate Veterans Day on November 11 since it was a matter of historical and patriotic significance. So on September 20, 1975, President Gerald Ford signed another law which returned the annual observance to its original date.

You might not be aware that other countries celebrate Veterans Day, too. WWI was a multinational effort, so it makes sense that our allies would also want to honor their veterans on November 11. The name of the day and the type of commemorations do differ somewhat, however.

Canada and Australia both call November 11 “Remembrance Day”. Canada’s observance is pretty similar to ours except many of its citizens wear red poppies to honor their war dead, and in Australia, the day is more like Memorial Day.

Great Britain calls it “Remembrance Day” too, but it observes it on the Sunday closest to November 11 with parades, services, and two minutes of silence in London to honor those who lost their lives.

I hope this little history lesson has reminded, or maybe even taught you, a bit about the very important holiday we’ll be celebrating on Monday. And while you’re enjoying your day, don’t forget to thank all those who have served our country in any branch of the service.