

Good evening. I want to start by thanking all of you for taking the time to come to Mobile and attend the 56<sup>th</sup> Annual Alabama Division Meeting. Thanks also to the Southern Region consisting of Mobile, Montgomery Area, Tuskegee and Alabama State University Chapters for hosting this year's event. My deep appreciation is extended to the current and past leaders of IAAP that saw potential in me, got me involved, and encouraged me to take that next step and embark on the road of leadership. I'd also like to express my gratitude to the members of the Huntsville Chapter for their faith in me and being my steadfast cheerleaders. I especially want to thank my family here with me tonight--- my husband, Marlin, for his love and support of me in all my IAAP endeavors throughout the years. There are many nights and weekends he helps me by taking care of our pride and joy, C.J, which allows me to attend to my numerous IAAP activities, functions and duties. And C.J. has tracked my progress through the organization as well. When I was elected as Division Vice President she asked me when I was going to be President. After taking office as President-Elect, I told her that next year I would be President. She then became quite concerned about the situation because she thought we had to move away to Washington D.C. and live in the White House. I also want to thank my Mother, Jeanette Lester for helping to raise me and teach me, which I'm sure you can guess was no easy task. I would definitely not be the person I am today were it not for all of their unfailing love and support.

As those of you who faithfully read your correspondence from Headquarters already know, the International theme for the 2008-2009 year is **Excellence in Action**. At the Incoming Division President's Conference I attended at the IAAP Headquarters in Kansas City in March, the International Board and Headquarters staff shared a wealth of information with us. One area we learned about was corporate branding. In an effort to make IAAP a more easily recognizable organization we have been encouraged to embrace this concept at all levels and deliver a unified image that is more memorable.

So it is my pleasure to announce that our Division theme for 2008-2009 is also **Excellence in Action**. That being said, I'd like to share with you some thoughts on excellence from Chuck Gallozzie's personal development website.

Excellence is not a destination we reach, but is an unending process of constant improvement. What better way to live than by growing better each

day? Those who pursue excellence aren't in direct competition with others, because they measure themselves against their own accomplishments.

Debbi Field has a philosophy that can be expressed in four words: do a little more. She believes that no matter how common the task, it should be done uncommonly well. She doesn't believe in mediocrity and chose to follow the path of excellence. Choosing the path of excellence is always wise; after all, the path of excellence is never crowded and is a path that leads to the top. In Debbi's case, the small company she founded in 1977 grew into a half a billion dollar business called Mrs. Field's Cookies.

Excellence is deliberate, not an accident we stumble upon. It is about asking of ourselves more than others do. If we aim for a more ideal self, success will naturally follow. And the good news is—we can all grasp excellence by merely doing our best at every moment. It's not about perfection, which is an unattainable goal, but about becoming what we are capable of being. Each of us has to make a decision. Do we wish to join the mediocre majority or do we wish to make a difference by embracing excellence?

Some people rationalize by telling themselves they will strive for excellence later, when they have a better job. They try to hide from themselves the fact better jobs come AFTER attaining excellence, not the other way around. Perhaps they don't realize there are no dead-end jobs, only deadbeats; there are no menial jobs, only menial attitudes. Martin Luther King Jr. said, "if a man is called to be a streetsweeper, he should sweep streets even as Michelangelo painted, or Beethoven composed music, or Shakespeare wrote poetry. He should sweep streets so well that all the hosts of heaven and earth will pause to say, here lived a great streetsweeper who did his job well."

After college Jerry Wipf started pumping gas. Is that a menial job? It is if you make it so. But Jerry had the Martin Luther King Jr. attitude. He believed in excellence. He believed in being the best gas station attendant possible. Excellence came first. Success followed. Jerry worked his way up in the company by becoming assistant manager, station manager, area manager, regional manager, merchandise manager, vice president and general manager. In 1996 he joined Valvoline and today is the President of Valvoline Instant Oil Change, a company with more than 600 corporate and franchise lube centers throughout the United States.

Although I've been using examples of excellence in the business world, the art of doing our best applies to every aspect of our lives, including IAAP. To make our division excellent our chapters must seek excellence. To make our chapters excellent, our members must also try to be excellent. As members we should strive to help our chapters achieve excellence. Get involved. Volunteer on a committee and look for ways to make it better, employ the Debbi Field's philosophy—do a little more. Endeavor to become an officer or committee chair.

Those who are successful in their quest for excellence simply do their best and do more of it. They go about life always alert for better ways of doing things. Every endeavor they engage in is imprinted with their mark of excellence. They understand that if you do a job quickly, people will forget about it. But if you do a job well, people will remember. Do we want to rush through our IAAP tasks and have forgettable results? Or Should we do a little more and produce something Excellent that is UNforgettable?

### **The Path to Excellence**

Care more than others think is wise.

Risk more than others think is safe.

Dream more than others think is practical.

Expect more than others think is possible.

Strive more than others think is worthwhile.

Do more than others think is necessary.

Be more than others think is sufficient.

Alabama Division members, I look forward to our journey together during the 2008-2009 year as we demonstrate **Excellence in Action**. Thank you.