



Alabama Division HEROES

Maria E. Whitmire CPS/CAP Incoming President's Address May 15, 2004

Good Evening:

What an exciting evening!! I would like to start off by saying thank you for the opportunity to serve as your President for the Alabama Division. I am very excited about the year ahead.

I want to express my gratitude to Brenda Kern CPS and Deana Neely CPS for all the hard work they have done in preparing this weekend for us. They stepped up and accepted the responsibility of hosting the Division Meeting when we didn't have a Chapter to host and they have truly done an outstanding job as coordinators. Through the hard work of the coordinators, we all have enjoyed a very special time together, and one that I will never forget. Thank you.

I would like to thank IAAP. The impact that IAAP has had on my life has been tremendous. It all began for me in 1985 when I received a scholarship from the Decatur Chapter. Today, I feel very blessed to have the opportunity to be a member of the Birmingham Chapter. I would like to express my appreciation to the Decatur Chapter, Shoals Chapter and especially to the Birmingham Chapter. They have helped and guided me during my PSI and IAAP years. If it weren't for them, I would not be up here giving this speech.

I can honestly say that I wouldn't be where I am today if it hadn't been for the encouragement that I have received from IAAP members to do things that I thought were beyond my capabilities. Because of this encouragement, I have grown personally and professionally in ways that I would have never thought possible.

To the members of the Division Board, - not only those who currently serve, but those who have served with me in the past, thank you for all of the knowledge, encouragement, nurturing, guidance, support and friendship that you have all so generously given to me.

My appreciation is also extended to Trish Weldon CPS. Trish is the only Charter Member still active in the Marble City Chapter. She has served and supported her Chapter as much as possible while serving on the Division Board for the past 5 years. The past couple of years have been very stressful for her with job changes and many family illnesses, including her own. Through all the stress, she has continued to perform her Alabama Division duties and support the Marble City Chapter to the best of her abilities. Last year, Trish was installed as the 2003-2004 Alabama Division President. In her incoming speech, she stated that to be able to "LIGHT THE FIRE WITHIN"; our organization was going to have to grow from within. We members must have a burning desire for IAAP, for the education we can receive through our membership, for the networking we have available, for the unlimited resources we have at our fingertips, and for the lifelong friendships we make. When we have a burning desire – when we LIGHT THE FIRE WITHIN – others will notice. To LIGHT THE FIRE WITHIN, we have to be motivated, and stay motivated." Trish was very motivated when it came to visiting with the Chapters in the Division. Trish was "on fire" when she realized that we had the potential to form a Student Chapter at Calhoun Community College. Trish, Letitia, Ellen and I met with representatives from Calhoun Community College on two different occasions and I am thrilled that we now have a new Student Chapter there... and there are several members that are interested in forming a Professional Chapter at Calhoun (and I'm told there are at least 11 potential members already), so we hope to have a new Professional Chapter too! Trish, it has been a pleasure serving as your President-Elect and I am honored to have worked with you during the past several years and I look forward to working with you in the future. Your burning desire for IAAP has shown through and you have truly helped me LIGHT THE FIRE WITHIN. (applause)

Even though he's not here, I would like to thank my boss, Dr. Gregg Vaughn PE, Chair of Electrical and Computer Engineering at UAB for his continued support, flexibility and generosity; he supports not just my IAAP activities, but anything else that I feel will help me improve professionally.

Last, but certainly not least, I would also like to express my love and appreciation to my family. Tonight, I have with me my parents, Joe and Fran Edmondson, my husband, Brian and our daughter, Grace. Brian and I recently celebrated our first wedding anniversary so he's kind of new to IAAP, but he understands what IAAP means to me and how important IAAP it is to me. He hasn't always understood why I do the things that I do, but he has been supportive of me. He even assembled the Leadership Meeting folders earlier this week. Thank you! Brian and Grace are already looking forward to attending their first International Convention in Washington DC this year.

Now for the moment you've all been waiting for... I have chosen as our theme for the 2004-2005 year

Alabama Division HEROES. When I say HEROES, what comes to your mind first? The first thing that will probably come to your mind would be the firefighters and policemen who died on September 11. Some of you may think of a favorite Bible character like David who killed a lion with his bare hands and killed Goliath with a slingshot and sword. Some of you may think of comic book heroes like Wonder Woman, Batman & Robin, Spider Man or maybe Superman. Some of you may think of a sandwich. Some of you may have a family member or a mentor that you consider a HERO.

I decided to find out what a true hero was, so I went to the dictionary. Webster had several options: a mythological or legendary figure often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability; an illustrious warrior; a man admired for his achievements and noble qualities; one that shows great courage; the central figure in an event, period, or movement; an object of extreme admiration and devotion; Idol

So I started thinking about heroes that we might all know. So, I went to the Internet and did a search on the word "hero". I found one particular website that was a great resource www.myhero.com. There were so many heroes listed there that I couldn't begin to read them all. I did select a few that I recognized and want to share some of their accomplishments with you.

Helen Keller was stricken with a damaging brain fever that left her blind and deaf when she was nineteen months old. Helen was the second deaf and blind person in history to learn how to speak. She graduated from Radcliffe College with many honors. Helen Keller helped raise money to build schools to educate deaf, blind, and mute students. She was a writer hero.

Florence Griffith Joyner began running track at the young age of 7. At age 14, she won the Jesse Owens National Youth Games. During the 1988 Seoul Olympics Flo-Jo captured golden triples at the Games that were in the 100, 200 and 4x100 meters relay. She still holds world records in the 100- and 200-meter dashes that she achieved during 1988. She was a sports hero.

Harriet Tubman was born into slavery, but escaped from a Maryland Plantation and made her way on foot to Pennsylvania, some 90 miles, stopping at churches and aided by other sympathizers in the network known as the [Underground Railroad](#). She worked hard for two years, saving money to return to Maryland for her sister and her two children. Eventually she led about 300 people to freedom in Canada, and became known as the "Moses of Her People". There were rewards totaling \$40,000 offered for her arrest, but she was never caught. She was a lifesaver hero.

This one is for Grace... Walt Disney was a businessman as well as an artist. In 1923, Disney got a contract to make several cartoons. Things took off in November of 1928 when Mickey and Minnie Mouse made their debut in

"Steamboat Willie." This movie was the one that made the characters and their creator famous. Disney experimented with Technicolor and animation styles. In 1932 he won the first of 32 Academy Awards. He was an artist hero.

One day, Rosa Parks got on the bus, put her money in the slot, and sat in the front of the bus. Black people were supposed to sit in the back. The bus driver told her to move to the back, but she just sat there and refused to move. The driver called the police and they arrested Rosa Parks. Rosa made a stand and the rules for riding the buses were changed. She was a freedom hero.

At the age of 38, while traveling by train in India, Mother Teresa had a striking realization that her life's mission was to minister to the poorest of the poor. With the Pope's blessing, Mother Teresa descended into the slums of Calcutta, undoubtedly one of the poorest cities on the planet, and began the Sisters of Charity. She began giving speeches worldwide, helping to bring attention to the plight of the poor everywhere. In 1979, she was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize and her position as the world's greatest champion of the downtrodden was firmly established. Towards the end of her life, Mother Teresa was a friend of kings and presidents worldwide. But it was with the poor that she chose to spend most of her time, traveling to war-torn areas such as Beirut and drought-stricken nations such as Ethiopia in her ongoing quest to find new persons in need of love and support. Today, Mother Teresa's work is being carried on by the 3,000 + members of the Sisters of Charity. With missions worldwide, the Sisters of Charity minister to the poor on six continents, continuing the selfless legacy that Mother Teresa spent her life establishing. She was an Angel Hero.

In 2003, Oprah Winfrey became the first African American woman to reach billionaire status, according to Forbes Magazine. She has broken through cultural, geographical and gender barriers, letting the world know it's not your circumstances, but your heart that determines how far you go in this world. This powerful daytime talk-show host has come a long way from her humble roots that began in Kosciusko, Miss. Raised by her grandmother on a farm, Oprah learned to read and love books at an early age. By six, she was living with her mother and suffered from physical and mental abuse. Oprah ran away at 13, only to be turned away from a juvenile detention home and sent to live with her ultra-strict father in Nashville. This early trauma gave Oprah the tools and the strength to become great. At age 19, Oprah was hired by WTVF-TV in Nashville as a reporter/anchor, and later found her calling in a talk show called "People Are Talking." In January 1984, she came to Chicago to host WLS-TV's "AM Chicago," a faltering local talk show. In less than a year, she turned it into the hottest program in town, which was soon renamed "The Oprah Winfrey Show." As Oprah's wealth and influence have grown, so has her compassion. In 2000, Oprah's Angel Network began presenting a \$100,000 "Use Your Life Award" to people who helped improve the lives of others. Oprah has donated more than \$50 million to charity, including 50 local organizations. She formed her own production company, HARPO Entertainment Group. Oprah also co-founded

Oxygen Media, which includes the Oxygen Network, a women's cable network. With the help of Nelson Mandela, Oprah launched ChristmasKindness, giving the children of South Africa one day of pure joy, toys and hope, just as she received as a 12-year-old on welfare. Oprah is a business hero.

Then I started to think about what it took for these people to become “HEROES” to someone or maybe even to us.

I had a lot of words that I wanted to use to describe HEROES, like innovative, charismatic, dedicated, ambitious, for Linda – fun, for Joyce – grand, but none of those words started with the letters in HEROES and I was trying to stick with those letters.

H – Helpful

E – Energetic, Encouraging

R – Rewarding

O – Outstanding

E – Exciting, Effective

S – Supportive, Successful

I think that each of you are HEROES.

Some of us may not realize what potential that we have until someone confirms it in us. We need to **help** those new members and newer chapters to become HEROES as someone was for me when I was a member of the Shoals Chapter. I was pushed/helped out of my comfort zone.

I was **encouraged** to get involved. The best way to learn how to do something is to just do it. We learn best from our mistakes. There are many members who have served before us that can serve as mentors to us.

We have to be **energetic**. We should be advertising IAAP just like we would if we were selling Girl Scout cookies. Negativity is not an option. We have to stay positive and upbeat and direct our positive energies to our professional lives and IAAP.

We need to be **effective** to prosper as a chapter and a division. We are the “pro” in Professional. This past year, we have been on a mission. Our mission is to be the acknowledged, recognized leader of administrative professionals and to enhance their individual and collective value, image, competence and influence.

Our task must also be **rewarding**. I don't mean trophies, awards, certificates and recognition. If we don't feel we get anything out of doing something, we

aren't going to keep doing it. There are many personal and professional rewards that we can receive from IAAP. People must feel like they're benefiting from their membership in IAAP, or they won't attend meetings, they won't participate and eventually they won't renew their membership. We need to make their experience rewarding. Obtaining the CPS or the CAP rating is something that is rewarding to us as an individual, it may not mean anything to others, but it does to us personally. If someone values your knowledge about IAAP or other things, it is rewarding because we have something that we can give back that has been shared with us.

We are **outstanding**. As women, mothers, daughters, sisters, friends and Administrative Professionals, we are called upon to be outstanding every day. We are outstanding in our jobs and this is reflected in our beliefs, our ethics and our goals.

We have to be **excited**, stay excited and ooze excitement in everything we do, but especially with IAAP. I've said on many occasions, we as members can give the best testimony about IAAP. We can talk all day about what we have done for this organization. My resume and bio sketch are very lengthy because of my activities. But we need to talk about what IAAP has done for us. I truly believe that the more you put into something, the more you personally receive from it. Some people ask, "what's in it for me?". As LITTLE or as MUCH as YOU wish.

We must be **successful** in obtaining new members, forming new chapters and retaining the members that we currently have. If we do all these things, we will be successful in the coming year.

We as a Division Board pledge to **support** each of you in the coming year as you all become HEROES. We want to visit your chapters, we want to take part in your meetings, we are here for you. We will even present IMPACT meeting, educational programs and seminars. Please feel that you can depend on us to assist you, we are only an e-mail or a phone call away.

Chapters should be HEROES for their members. Today there are so many things that we want to do that we have to make a choice. If a member feels that they aren't benefiting, they will find something else to occupy their time.

I have been a member of IAAP since 1989, and I do not have the time to tell you what this organization has done for me and what it has meant to me. When I joined as a student member, I had no idea what I was getting into. I worked as a student secretary at UNA during my Junior and Senior year of college and I felt prepared to conquer the world because I had a college degree. I got a job, got married and joined PSI all around the same time. After a short time in PSI, I realized that I might have a diploma hanging on the wall, but I still had a LOT to learn. I might be able to use a computer and answer the telephone, but there were other things that I quickly realized I didn't have. I was asked to step into a

leadership position and I started out by serving on a Chapter Committee, then I chaired a Committee and I remember having to get up in front of my chapter and give a report and I was so nervous that I stumbled through the entire report. Then one day a lady named Alice Johnson came and spoke at a chapter meeting. She was the Alabama Division President that year. I saw something in her that I wanted and I made the decision that I wanted to be like her someday. In 1993, I served as Shoals Chapter Treasurer and Co-coordinator of the Alabama Division Meeting. Today, I'm teaching classes for UAB employees, giving presentations at IAAP Chapter Seminars and having a great time. I've served as Birmingham Chapter President, and was even selected as the Alabama Division Secretary of the Year. So you can see, I've come a long way. I didn't do any of this by myself. If someone hadn't challenged me to get out of my comfort zone and do something, I would still be sitting on the sidelines believing that I couldn't do anything. I had no self-confidence then, but this organization has changed my life dramatically and I'm sure it has affected yours as well.

Grace is going to be my helper tonight and she is going to pass out something for all the HEROES in attendance tonight. This is not going to be a select few, everyone here will receive a HERO ribbon. Each of you are HEROES to me.

One of the first things I thought of when I decided to use Alabama Division HEROES was a song. Did you ever know that you're my hero? The song is actually "You are the wind beneath my wings". I want to read some of the lyrics to you.

Did you ever know that you're my hero, and everything I would like to be?
I can fly higher than an eagle, 'cause you are the wind beneath my wings.

It might have appeared to go unnoticed, but I've got it all here in my heart.
I want you to know I know the truth, of course I know it, I would be nothing with out you.

Oh, fly, fly, so high against the sky, so high I almost touch the sky.
Thank you, thank you, thank God for you, the wind beneath my wings.

I need each of you... helping, encouraging, energizing, rewarding, being outstanding, getting excited and being supportive so that we as individuals, as chapters and as a Division are successful in the coming year.

Corrie Ten Boom wrote "Every experience God gives us, every person He puts in our lives is the perfect preparation for the future that only He can see." Thank you for your dedication and your commitment to IAAP. I am looking forward to this coming year, to working with each of you, and to the exciting times we have ahead of us! I cannot do it alone, but working together we can all become Alabama Division HEROES!