Thank You

EDITORIAL

In Tribute to Pamela R. Happ, MSM, CAE

Leonard J. Press, OD, FAAA, FCVD, Editor-in-Chief

Dylan Thomas famously exhorted “Do not go gentle into that good night”, yet the genteel Ms. Happ wouldn’t have it any other way in exiting as Executive Director of COVD. Pam is not one to call attention to herself, though it was impossible for her to escape the spotlight entirely as she received COVD’s President’s Award from Dr. Daniel Press this year.

It is hard to believe that 14 years have passed since Pam became the fourth individual to serve as Executive Director of COVD, preceded in that role by Dr. Robert Wold, Dr. Robert Greenburg, and Dr. Stephen Miller. In 2006, during the Presidency of Dr. Drusilla Grant, an interview committee took the bold step of recommending that COVD hire a non-optometrist with previous managerial experience as its ED. As the first female in that role as well, Ms. Happ’s hiring marked a watershed moment in the maturation of the organization.

The letters that appear after Pam’s name seem to have been created for her. The Master of Science in Management (MSM) is described as providing executives with essential and advanced leadership skills in such areas as managing group behavior and conflict, strengthening strategic influence, driving organizational and crisis leadership plans, ethics, and business law. The CAE or Certified Association Executive credential is the ED’s version of COVD fellowship. Take a look at the eligibility requirements for becoming a CAE, and you’ll see that they could just as well be the mold that formed Pam. http://bit.ly/CAEeligible

Several years after joining COVD, Pam travelled to a meeting in Atlanta to help represent the organization before a Committee tasked with shaping the requirements for Board Certification in Optometry at large. It was a defining moment during which the significance of Fellowship in COVD was acknowledged even among an array of professionals not well-schooled in vision development and rehabilitation. That was a striking but not solitary illustration of her dedication and skill. Integral to a wide array of advancements in our organization, Pam played an essential role in all processes during her tenure, including the birth of the journal you are now reading.

Characteristic of her low key approach, Pam quietly advised the COVD Board toward the end of last year, prior to the pandemic, about her intention to retire at the end of 2020. There were approbations aplenty for Ms. Happ as she prepared to ride off into the sunset. In his President’s announcement to the membership, Dr. Dan Press wrote: “Ms. Pam Happ, MSM, CAE, is to retire as Executive Director effective 12/31/2020. Pam’s tenure as COVD’s ED comes to a close after 14½ passionate, professional and productive years. COVD’s members, past, present and future owe a debt of gratitude for Pam’s service to the organization and I am confident in saying that COVD would not be where we are as an organization today without Pam’s influence. Please join me in wishing Pam a peaceful and healthy retirement. Pam, you should feel fulfilled with the work that you have accomplished while with COVD. The love you showed for COVD’s members and the field of vision therapy and rehabilitation should serve as a guide for future ED’s.”
To say that events this year have been challenging due to COVID-19 would be quite an understatement. Despite this, or perhaps because of this, Pam exits on a high note. Borrowing a sports analogy, the hallmark of great athlete is that she makes the players around her better, and Pam certainly qualifies as one of the greats. This is reflected in the message that she shared with membership:

As my time with COVD comes to an end I want to thank the COVD Board of Directors, our past presidents, all prior board members, volunteers, members, and vendors I’ve had the pleasure to work with. It has been an honor and privilege serving as COVD’s Executive Director. While I am sad we didn’t have the opportunity to say goodbye in person this year in Toronto, I will treasure the moments we did get to share. I hope you will all join me in welcoming Katie. I know I am leaving COVD in good hands and I look forward to watching COVD continue to flourish and grow.

Katie of course is Kathryn Kirschner, MS, CAE, well-known for her role in coordinating IECB, the Annual COVD Meeting, and as managing editor of Vision Development & Rehabilitation. The fruits of her collaboration with Pam will be evident as she assumes her new role as Executive Director of COVD. As much as Pam has been recognized for her greatness in making those around her better within Optometry on an international level, the scope of her influence is also reflected in her regional volunteerism as Immediate Past President of the Greater Cleveland Society of Association Executives.

Since 1998, the National Optometry Hall of Fame has recognized optometrists who are luminaries, their stated purpose as honoring those who have made significant and long-lasting contributions to the optometric profession. Were the Hall to broaden its criteria to include organizational executives, Pam would surely be among the first to qualify. We wish her well as family and friends now become the full beneficiaries of Pam’s love and attention.

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