

THE GOLD WHISTLE AWARD



By Gary Seibert, CEO, Small Business Resource Association

In August of 1963 I entered the Freshman Class at Lock Haven State College to pursue a degree in Health and Physical Education. At Freshman orientation, we were made aware of a prestigious award that was presented each year to the outstanding Male and Female graduating Physical Education Major. This award was based on academic achievement, participation in sports, clubs and extracurricular activities and finally a vote of faculty members and the other PE Majors. It was like the Academy Awards of Physical Education and a lofty goal to culminate four years of a College Education. Being a type A, I set out in pursuit of winning the Gold Whistle and did everything possible to fulfill the laundry list.

Fast forward to the fall of 1966, my junior year, I was called into the Dean's office and was asked if I would be interested in organizing and running a huge three-day Gymnastic Clinic, hosted by Lock Haven and run by the Physical Education Majors. As I was the captain of the gymnastic team, I felt very qualified for

this task and I saw Gold Whistle written all over this opportunity. Of course, I accepted the challenge and immediately started organizing my thoughts regarding everything that had to take place between then and March of the following year, the projected date of the Clinic.

(Continued on page 22)

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(Continued from page 21)

I found that I had a knack for project management as I planned and organized every aspect of this event, down to transportation to Lock Haven, hotels and dining facilities for the 300 plus boys and girls who would be attending, sourcing gymnastic equipment, getting insurance coverage, daily schedules of activities and clinic rotations, marketing flyers, registration forms, security, medical and activities for the students to participate in during the evening hours. I would meet with the Dean weekly to discuss my progress and bring her up to date as we approached the month of March. During one visit, the Dean told me that in all her years of being in charge of the department she had never met someone like me who was so well organized and detailed. One again, visions of a Gold Whistle.

As February was winding down and I was going through all my check lists and notes, I received a message from the Dean requesting a meeting. I gathered my briefcase full of information to share with her and headed off to meet. Feeling very confident that I had everything under control, I stepped into her office only to find her sitting behind her desk with both hands folded on top. She asked me to close the door and sit down. She then leaned forward, pulled her glasses down towards the end of her nose and looked over the lenses and asked, "So, how is everything going?" I assumed that was the cue to bring her up to date and therefore I started a detailed overview. Thirty seconds into my presentation she once again asked, "So, how is everything going?" Then she said, "You do know that there is no 'I' in team." T.E.A.M. stands for Together Everyone Achieves More. Up to this point, you have been a one-man band and although you have done a remarkable job

you have not allowed the other students the opportunity to experience and learn from putting this event together. You have done it all yourself. Your peers are very upset and are refusing to be part of "your gymnastic clinic." You are on your own.

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I just received a huge lesson on leadership. My real role was not to do everything, but to encourage and motivate others to work towards a common goal. But now what? In two weeks, 300 kids and their coaches were coming to Lock

Haven and I had no staff. The Dean calmly said, "Tomorrow at 1pm, in the field house, I have called a meeting of all the Physical Education Majors. You will have an opportunity to address them, humble yourself and ask for their forgiveness and see if you can get them back on board." As I look back 54 years ago and see that 20-year-old frightened kid standing in front of 150 fellow students, I now know the Dean gave me one of the greatest lessons of my life. I learned that Leadership is the art of getting other people to do something you want done because you have motivated them to want to do it. To this day I don't remember what I said but TOGETHER we pulled off an incredible gymnastic clinic and on graduation day — I did get the Gold Whistle.

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