

How firm a Foundation

Whenever I stand up to make a presentation, I usually begin by saying, “My name is Sam, and I am a counselor. I hope never to recover.” The words are a play on the way that members of addictions groups often introduce themselves. My words are not meant to be disrespectful but rather to emphasize that when someone becomes involved with an organization or discovers a passion, it is often life changing, whether addicting or not.

I became a member of the American Counseling Association in March 1971 when I was a graduate student in counseling at Wake Forest University (where I now work as chair of the Department of Counseling). I was urged to join ACA by my major professor, Thomas M. Elmore. A few years later when the ACA Foundation began, I was one of the original members, contributing the princely sum of \$100 out of my salary of \$12,000. I was again urged on by a person whose name is legendary in counseling: David Brooks. As David said then (and it still holds true today): “If we do not support counseling now, it may not be here in the future.” I am glad he advocated as he did. As I look back, that small contribution was one of the best investments I ever made.

Since that time, I have contributed annually to the ACA Foundation. Sometimes it has been a stretch financially; sometimes not. Always it has been a pleasure. I have taken great pride in supporting the profession of counseling and the Foundation that stands behind it. I believe to the depths of my being in counseling as a profession. Counseling supports, encourages and promotes growth in individuals, groups, families and society when people are stuck developmentally or situationally. It does not wait for people to get sick or extremely dysfunctional. Rather it

helps people resolve daily and lifetime difficulties so they can move on into wellness and health.

This underlying philosophy of counseling is one reason I support the ACA Foundation. It is a primary reason I have given of my book royalties and personal income to the Foundation year after year. The Foundation does much good — and in many ways that individuals cannot. It reaches into classrooms, through the Growing Happy and Confident Kids project, to provide counselors who work in schools with classic children’s books that promote character development. The Foundation helps support counselors who work with victims of natural disasters through the Counselors Care Fund. It sponsors an essay contest for graduate counseling students to write on issues crucial to the health and well-being of the profession. It supports an awards ceremony at the ACA Conference to recognize outstanding counselors.

Without the ACA Foundation, counseling as a profession would be much poorer. In fact, counseling might not be at all. Therefore, I urge you to look over the ACA Foundation’s activities and, if so moved, contribute anything you can.

The Foundation is extremely frugal. In the past two years, members have paid their own expenses to face-to-face meetings and to events where both veterans and fledglings of counseling could be exposed to the Foundation’s virtues. In recent times, quietly and efficiently, the Foundation has moved forward to strengthen its commitment to schoolchildren, victims of disasters and graduate students in counselor education programs. The Foundation is a living system. Although it takes in revenue, it gives out support generously. It is an organization that is very committed to the well-being of others and to

recognizing exemplary clinicians and educators in the profession.

Looking back, there is much for which the ACA Foundation can be proud. It has been supported by the most and the least affluent, by veterans and newcomers to the counseling profession, by those who believed in one of its missions and those who believed in all of its foci. The story of the Foundation up to this point is one of inspiration and awe.

As the present and future unfold, the question becomes: Will the ACA Foundation continue to be as fruitful and potent? My belief is yes. The reason is that those who care for the profession of counseling will not allow it to be less than that. We as human beings are at our core altruistic. The nobler parts of us exemplify what the geriatric researcher Gene Cohen said about human beings — that our greatest gift is to leave a strong legacy, to be “good ancestors.”

As you reflect on your life as a counselor, I hope you will consider contributing to the ACA Foundation. In doing so, your money will find its way to four solid realms where counseling can make a difference: children, disaster relief mental health workers, graduate students and the recognition of exemplary practitioners, researcher, educators and scholars. Your donation, however small or large, will strengthen the profession in ways that are both tangible and significant. ♦

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