Report of the President
Lisa Gourley

Hi everyone. It’s that time of year when each Board member gives an annual report. This is the opportunity we have to share some of the highlights and insights that have occurred in our organization. This is also my first year as president, so I would like to share with you some heartfelt observations without doing the traditional timeline approach. You see, for me, it’s what we have been currently experiencing that really has set this year apart from any other year in the history of our organization.

After Conference 2019, we were stepping up on member education opportunities as well as member and community outreach. We were on track for a pretty good year as we increased building our membership and our strength. Many great things were occurring and our members, staff and Board were doing an incredible job.

Then, as you’ve experienced, our jobs and lives were turned upside down as the imminent threat of COVID-19 was in our schools. This was unfamiliar territory as our schools and communities shut down. It is for this reason I would like to speak to you today about our members. Because, as educational employees, we are doing a great job!

In the last few months, our OSEA members have faced great personal challenges. While collectively classified members continue to make a difference every day, their individual strengths are being exemplified through personal dedication and determination. Yes, these are tough and even precarious times. For some of us, they are filled with great stress and fear. But it’s also a time of personal growth as members push themselves beyond their traditional roles. Every day we continue to work together to make a difference for our communities and the young people we serve.

All over the state, classified staff has simply continued to do their best. Each day we are doing the essential work of sanitizing buildings and buses. Many have continued to prepare and deliver needed meals. While some provide technical support, others are preparing educational materials and supporting teachers. They are working in offices and libraries and communicating with parents and students. Our members are reaching out to remotely assist students with their homework. This work enables the function of our schools and supports our districts’ ongoing distance education.

To achieve this, some members are working outside their traditional job classifications. This increased flexibility is necessary to provide child care for essential medical personnel to do their jobs. We know we will continue to make unprecedented changes as we move to respond to unforeseen educational needs. We do this as our communities, counties, states and nation continue to navigate through both economic and social hardships.

Yes, we know our work is essential. This is because the work we provide is a vital part of the structural support of our schools. So, it is very important to remember during this global pandemic — we are the ‘essential workers’ that have continued to provide the diverse day-to-day support every district has needed.
I just want to thank you for doing this work. For being a member and seeing the value of what we can do when we work together. I want you to know you’re not alone. Although things have been hard, we have come a long way since the beginning of the year. We’re doing a good job that wouldn’t have been possible if we hadn’t been working together.

We know the situation may continue to be unique and turbulent. But we have laid a foundation. By using our voice and working together we can continue to be a valued part of moving forward for our students, their families and the communities we serve. It is our voices when used together that has and can make a difference.

As an organization, we have successfully advocated to keep our members financially whole. We’ve advocated for increased personal protective gear and workers’ safety. We have advocated for fair and clean communication with state and federal entities while, at the same time, we’ve worked to strengthen and support our community partnerships.

As we move forward, we will continue to work and to fight to protect our jobs and we will use our voices to support each other.

Thank you everyone.