

Holiday Reflections

By Chris Casteel

Happy Holidays to All!! As I write this, I am in the midst of Holiday frenzy. Yes, it is getting harder and harder to find a parking spot in front of Target; family traditions are numerous; the last of the Christmas cards have been sent; and suddenly I crave sugary cookies decorated with a man in a red hat! The inspiration for this week's article actually comes from the Christmas letters I have received this season. You know, the ones that eloquently chronicle the events of the past year for the sender. I have always admired these individuals that can place an entire year of their life onto one page of decorated paper! As for me, well, I am way too wordy (you think!?). The Christmas letter really is a bit of a cultural phenomenon – a sort of personal reflection and public witness to our history. Considering the fact that most of us are running around in circles this time of the year, perhaps a little look into the rear view mirror of life is needed?

One of the many things about the holiday season that just seems to come naturally is reminiscing. Perhaps it's because we know that soon we will be making those dreaded New Year resolutions! The idea of reflection really doesn't have to be some deep philosophical exercise in introspection. Simply stated, it is a tool that is indeed invaluable for growth (both personally and professionally). It brings balance. It transforms the hustle and bustle of life into recognition, appreciation and growth. Hey, isn't that what we want as instructors?! Recognition, appreciation and growth!

I realize that instructing color guard may seem an endless series of seasons: winter guard, summer training & field. With all of the pressure to attain success (whatever your definition may be), it seems all too easy to discard due to the endless cycle of our activity. Considering this, a little reflection is essential in our activity. Put a halt to the endless forward motion (just for a moment) and look back. Allow yourself to take a short break in the race and remember where you have been. I would suggest you write as much of this process as possible. The existence of words on paper brings both clarity and greater recognition. Listen, you will gain from this.

Reflection includes both the good and the bad. Perhaps there have been some unexpected 'bumps' in your year. Turn those moments into triumphs by addressing a few questions: What could you have done different? What will you change the next time you encounter this 'bump'? There may have been challenges for you too. How did you react to those challenges? Did your response elicit the outcome you desired? The good news is that your thinking and choices will always be changeable from the perspective of the past. Nothing is set in stone! In order to grow, you must acknowledge the challenges in your programs. Believe me, no instructor is without them. By doing this, you *will* move your program forward and inspire growth.

Likewise, I realize that there have been many successes in your program too. Take a moment to enjoy and learn from them. What led you to that place? How can you replicate those moments

again? Appreciate the growth and progress not only in your team but in yourself as well. Reflection is an amazing way to focus on all the good things in our lives. Believe me, we all need this! Be grateful for where you have been and what you have accomplished in the past year. The bottom line is that the act of reflecting gives a moment in time to enjoy our successes, or realize that we may need to change our course a bit.

Listen, this is not meant to be a huge soul searching commission, because, really, who has time for that at this point of the year?! I would imagine that for the people who write those Christmas letters, the process of reminiscing is both beneficial and therapeutic at the same time. so, whether you are caught in the Holiday frenzy or just the cycle of color guard, my wish for you is that you would be able to take a much needed moment over the next few weeks and reflect.

Happy Holidays!