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President's Message

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

February 2010

"Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them."

~ Lady Bird Johnson

When I was in 5th grade, my academic path took a sharp turn. And I owe it all to my 5th grade teacher, Mrs. Barbara Hassell. She made me believe in myself that I could be great because she believed I was great. She pulled me aside after class to encourage me to excel further, entering me in competitions and pushing me to do things beyond what was required. She praised me publicly, and her enthusiasm and support only spurred me to work even harder. She transformed me from a shy, mediocre student to a confident, top-performing one, all because she saw a spark of potential in me, and simply fanned that flame.

"Mentoring is a brain to pick, an ear to listen, and a push in the right direction."

~John Crosby

As a 2010 New Year's resolution, I have resolved to seek out more mentoring and menteeing opportunities. And, I encourage you to do the same! No one is ever born a leader or a success. Everyone's ladder to success is made up of rungs of mentors and teachers. Be someone's mentor – formally or informally. Although the traditional models of mentoring are hierarchical (teacher-student, attending-resident mentoring, senior and junior faculty or partners), in which mentors offer advice on career paths, serve as role models,

and help with challenging or difficult situations.

Good mentors also identify and provide potential opportunities and push the mentee to go for something that they might not otherwise have entertained.

They provide a sounding board, give support and respect, and share their own personal experiences and mistakes. They might provide resources, institutional knowledge, advocate for the mentee within the department, advise how to balance personal with professional life. They might provide connections or introduce the mentee to new people. Mentoring can sometimes mean being an active listener and offering nonjudgmental feedback. Or, it can be opening someone's eyes to possibilities for career takeoffs and pursuits outside clinical work that may cultivate career longevity. If you have a particular interest or niche in your organization, or you have an administrative position or participate in hospital committees, be a mentor to someone who might share those interests.

If your institution does not have a formal mentoring program, you may consider starting one for the medical student, resident, or junior faculty. You can easily become a mentor in the



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Virtual Mentoring Program, sponsored by the AAEM Young Physicians Section. (To find or become a mentor, register online at <http://ypsaaem.org/mentors/>.) Many other emergency medicine organizations, including the Emergency Medicine Residents' Association (EMRA), American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), Society of Academic Emergency Medicine (SAEM), and the Council of Residency Directors (CORD), have mentoring programs that you can easily join. You can become a faculty mentor for medical students involved in the emergency medicine interest groups (EMIGs).

State, regional, or national meetings, such as the AAEM Scientific Assembly, are a great way to network, meet people who are movers and shakers in the field, as well as people with similar interests, and form mentor-mentee or mentee-mentor relationships. In addition to soaking up the knowledge from the didactic sessions, make it a point to meet new people and make contacts.

On a broader scale, the field of emergency medicine is still a small community. For that reason, it is crucial that we mentor those who are newly entering our field. Mentorship can simply be an education about the history of our specialty, which really only began 50 years ago. Emergency medicine was born out of a demand for immediate access to care, and it has been a continual struggle to be recognized as a legitimate specialty within the house of medicine. In the 1970s, we developed specialized residency training programs, administered board examinations, and the American Board of Emergency Medicine began to require EM residency training to qualify for the ABEM certification exam. Since then, there have been continued battles to maintain our legitimacy as a specialty. AAEM formed as a response to the exploitation of emergency physicians

throughout this country, through unfair business practices and hiring of unqualified emergency physicians willing to work for less pay. Even today, there are ongoing fights that AAEM is championing to ensure that emergency physicians are not subject to unlawful corporate practices of large contract management groups. Our duty to the younger generation of physicians is to make them aware of the historical journey of our specialty and push them to be informed and educated about what is going on beyond the physical ED workspace. If you're interested in becoming more involved with CAL-AAEM, our board of directors are happy to serve as mentors and show you ways to become more involved.

Mentorship comes in various forms. You can be someone's mentor. Or maybe you need to find a new mentor. We all have something to teach and something to learn. The rewards of mentoring relationships are well worth the time, and the payoff is huge. It enables you to foster a new generation and leave a legacy, to contribute to your own personal and professional growth, and keeps you engaged in your environment. Happy mentoring!



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