

Thank you, Association Trends – and thanks to each and every one of you who here today.

Wow - what an amazing moment to relish ... I am delighted to be in the company of the awesome other awardees recognized here today. And I am filled – actually overflowing – with a depth of gratitude to:

- my family,
- my ASHA colleagues,
- fellow ASAE Fellows,
- the many friends and mentors sitting out there,
- and all of you – I am so grateful to be part of this amazing Association Community.

As I stand here as the 40<sup>th</sup> recipient of this Association Trends Award, frankly I'm feeling rather unworthy – and deeply honored to join the ranks of those 39 previous Executives of the Year – several of whom are here today ... thank you for being such wonderful role models and inspiring leaders.

I'm also very mindful of how very lucky I am – and what an incredible measure of good fortune – along with a large dose of serendipity I've had throughout my life and career journeys to date.

- The serendipity of meeting the man who would become my husband of 35 years while I was on a date with a good friend of his.
- The good fortune of a career in speech-language pathology that fulfilled my love of science and my yearning to make a difference the lives of others ... and that lead to unanticipated opportunities in healthcare administration – and eventually to working at my professional association, the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA).

- The good fortune of being joined here today by the colleague and now long-time friend who is the brave person who hired me for my first association job at ASHA over 20 years ago – Stan Dublinske.

Thinking about the continuum of my journey makes me think of the life cycle of organizations:

- Birth
- Growth
- Maturity
- Decline
- Death

(thank you for that as well, Stan)

and where in that life cycle we as an Association sector, the industry of Associations if you will, are today.

Associations have a long and notable history world-wide – particularly here in the United States, dating back to the establishment of the first US associations in the early 1700s.

Over the years, Associations have evolved in many ways to be very embodiment of and among the key platforms for the exercising of our 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment rights: freedom of speech, to peaceably assemble, and to petition the government. The many ways that US associations benefit society are formally and officially recognized by the non-profit tax status we have earned.

I believe that in the two decades that I've been part of this community, our evolution has been remarkable and that as a sector we've achieved a stage of maturity as evidenced by so many things, chief among them the following six factors:

1. The large and growing body of offerings and resources that document and share best practices and research findings.
2. The safety and quality standards we promulgate – helping to assure that a wide array of products and services are safe and that professionals in fields ranging from Accountants to Zoning Officials (and literally everything in between) are competent to practice.
3. The perhaps unparalleled generosity in the sharing of information, insights, and learnings ... we are a sector wherein the commitment to making a difference goes beyond that of each of our organizational missions to helping and supporting one another across associations ... how many of you here today have been a mentor or a mentee? How many have shared information, a resource or a policy document? How many have been the beneficiary of a deeply candid learning from a colleague at another association that saved you time, resources – or perhaps a potential career mis-step?
4. Our ability to work together to wield more influence on issues of mutual importance – such as conveying the value of government employees attending our meetings or succeeding as we did earlier this year in helping to uphold the fundamental elements of non-profit tax status.
5. Collectively associations are the largest provider of post-graduate adult learning and professional development ... helping to assure that the workforce across practically all industries and professions keeps their knowledge and skills current.
6. And today many Associations possess incredible capacity, reach and impact in helping to change the world for the better.

One example of which I could not be more proud – is ASHA’s role in coordinating the coalition that successfully advocated for laws mandating that all babies born in a hospital in the United States have their hearing screened. As a result children born with a congenital hearing loss are now identified at an average age of a few months instead of a few years. I’m sure that all of you in this room can think of an infant you’ve watched progress through the developmental milestones of cooing, smiling when spoken to, uttering a first word ... now think of how that infant’s parents would feel if they had to wait a year or more to learn why their child wasn’t doing those things ... or what they could do to help put their child on a path of healthy development. ASHA was honored with an ASAE Summit award for that work ... as I look around this room, I see colleagues from many other associations that have also done remarkable things leading to: healthier meals in schools, cleaner water, more literacy programs, building stronger small businesses, meeting the needs of Veterans in hospice and palliative care, providing resources to support healthy, safe and inclusive programs in sporting and civic organizations, and particularly poignant at this time – advocating for school safety – and on and on. We – all of us – through and with our members and our organizations truly do make this a better, safer, and smarter world. That is something of which we all can and should rightly be proud!

So – as a mature sector, what can we do to help assure that Associations continue to thrive in maturity and not fall into a stage of decline?

What does the FUTURE hold for and ask of Associations?

I recall Jay Timmons’ impassioned message from this podium as 2016 Executive of the Year ... that we all can – and must speak out for what is right – and good – and for those who think their voices don’t matter. As Jay

reminded us, associations have a unique platform ... and associations of the future must set the tone and take our advocacy to new levels!

The reach of associations can, and perhaps even must, go beyond the professions and industries we represent – to more directly connect to the larger society where our members live and work in order to more intentionally impact how our professions, our industries, and our organizations can best serve society today and into the future ... we need to ask ourselves if we delivering societal benefit to the fullest extent to which we are capable? And are we fulfilling our roles as 21<sup>st</sup> century 1<sup>st</sup> amendment champions and conveners – because the responsible and effective championing of all of the precious rights granted in the Bill of Rights – be they in the 1<sup>st</sup> Amendment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment, or any of the others – is not static, but evolves over time. The world is quite a different place than it was in 1791 when the Bill of Rights was ratified!

In an era when all too often there is entrenched stalemate among elected leaders; and where expertise, knowledge, credentials – and yes, even actual, true facts -- are increasingly challenged and mistrusted, associations' ability to bring people together to collaborate meaningfully and effectively is needed more than ever. It may not be as much about “doing more” as perhaps “doing it better” – on that note, I would like to propose three specific things that I believe each of us and our organizations can strive to “do better”:

1. Knowledge creation – how can we engage more of our members in the co-creation of ideas, knowledge, and resources? And even more powerful ... how can we collaborate across industries and professions – across associations – to more involve broader wisdom, knowledge, and energy of more disciplines to better solve persistent problems? At a time when purpose and meaning are increasingly factors in whether and where people choose to join, what a strong value proposition that can be.

When we only engage with those whose knowledge and perspective most resembles our own, we are at risk of limiting our thinking by what we already know – it's when we extend those boundaries that we are most likely to acquire new knowledge and generate breakthrough insights.

2. Diversity and Inclusion – from this podium last year, Dawn Sweeney (2017 Association Executive of the Year) urged us all to lift each other up, to remember the importance of mutual respect, the power of being our authentic selves ... and the strength of building cultures of inclusion. The Me Too movement is a sobering reminder of the extent to which the abuse of power and privilege continues to exist and go unchecked too often in our society. What systems, policies, and practices can we put in place to support, engage, and demonstrate value for all individuals – no matter their gender, race, religion, place of birth, or any other factor? And here's the deal, not only is this the right thing to do ... it's the smart thing to do – as documented by the multitude of studies demonstrating the business ROI of diversity and inclusion.
3. Civility – what can each of us do to cultivate authentic exchange and civil debate of ideas and information so we can all learn better with and from one another in search of the best options and solutions? Respect for others is one of the oldest human axioms – codified by the world's major religions and legal frameworks, yet research shows that 26 percent of workers have left a job because it was an uncivil workplace. How can associations nurture civility for the betterment of our members, their workplaces, our communities ... and the whole of society?

I would like to echo Susan Neely's words as the Association Trends 2014 Executive of the Year – we all need to get outside of our comfort zones ... we can – and must – be consensus builders – we can and must be an example of how to overcome disagreements and work together to get things done.

In closing, thank you to my family, friends and colleagues for your ever-present love, support – and candor! I am honored to serve as CEO of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association ... and so very proud of the remarkable work ASHA members and ASHA staff do each and every day.

I'm also deeply grateful to be part of this community of smart, dedicated, and mission-focused colleagues – as I hope you can tell, I continue to be inspired by the countless ways that associations make this a better, safer, and smarter world. And I'm enthusiastically confident about the future of associations.

As Gandhi said, we must all be the change we wish to see in the world. What change do you want to see – for your workplace, for your members, for your organization, for society ... and what will you do to make it so?