

December 12, 2005

Message From the Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson

Next Monday will be my final opportunity to share one of my "THOUGHTS" with you on a weekly basis. Beginning on January 2 (no Bulletin on December 26) we shall use this space to ask various members of our Business Council to give us their "Thought For The Week". As I prepare to depart, I wish to thank you once again for the privilege you have given me for over past ten plus years. The task of trying to compose a few words every issue worthy of your attention has been an awesome challenge. Now I look forward to reading some of your "Thoughts". To all those who have been so gracious to me, I thank you from the deepest recesses of my being. To all of those who have so patiently and silently abided my efforts, I thank you for your restraint. What follows expresses my:

Thought for the Week: "A True Friend Is Someone Who Reaches For Your Hand And Touches Your Heart" (Editor's note: Dick's spirit will not go away; it will be heard through the voices of many who have been inspired by his commitment to service.)

Self Talk Has a Huge Impact on Performance on the Field & In the Community

Many of us were out of town for Thanksgiving when this lead editorial ran in the Fresno Bee. It does such a great job of noting the changes in attitude and web of activities going on that, with their permission, we are reprinting it in full. Join the fun and engage in whatever project or initiative is meaningful to you. Community transformation is an all hands on deck endeavor.

"Leading the Field Fresno State Football Tells Only Part of the Community's Story."

The Fresno State football team -- and thousands of its supporters -- invaded the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum on Saturday and proved to hundreds of thousands that the Bulldogs belong on the center stage. It has taken Coach Pat Hill's in-your-face "anyone, any time, anywhere" style to advance the program several notches and debunk the image that Fresno doesn't belong with college football's elite teams. It has taken a lot of effort: challenging teams in faraway places before hostile crowds; recruiting high school seniors to come to the Valley and be part of a team committed to raising the performance standard; hawking the program to whomever would listen to drum up economic and vocal support. It's a tough road, full of potholes, detours and blind intersections, that has been traveled to get the respect and admiration that Fresno and the Valley deserve. And that "let's-get-it-done leadership" is not just happening on the football field. It's Fresno Mayor Alan Autry pounding on the doors in the capitals of our state and nation to demand fairness in treatment and in allocating public funding. It's President John Welty challenging the University of California regents, the Legislature and the Master Plan for Higher Education to allow Fresno State to offer doctorate degrees in specific programs to benefit the Valley's students. It's scores of volunteers working on the Regional Jobs Initiative to create a rope to pull Valley residents out of the jobless pit. It's people like Pete Weber and Ashley Swearingen squeezing into leather chairs in fancy conference rooms in Sacramento and Washington to constantly remind state and national officials that the Valley is underserved and underrepresented. It's volunteers in nonprofit agencies throughout the region knocking on the doors of foundations throughout the land to help us gain cultural, educational and health care excellence. The Bulldog football team didn't win on Saturday. But the Bulldogs were surely winners. They showed the rest of the nation they have earned the right to be respected. To put it in Hill's words, "We're playing a lot more aggressively now." True of the football team. True, too, of the region's passionate, persistent and persuasive leadership.

Making a Difference Day by Day, Child by Child

Businesses across our community are quietly and consistently making a difference in the lives of children and the future of our region day by day. One of the projects developed through the Foster Care Oversight Committee is called Best Dressed Kids. Many foster care kids have very few personal belongings and rarely get to go shopping. While many people want to help, it is often the infrastructure needed for organizing that is the challenge. Tom Jones (One Hour Martinizing) stepped up immediately to serve as a collection network and Mervyns, Gottschalks and Kohls have provided support. The Best Dressed Kids store is located at 2025 East Dakota. A Best Dressed Teen Store is due to open soon in the Crocker Building at 2035 Fresno Street. In many ways, foster kids are everyone's children.