

### **Message From The Chair Emeritus—Dick Johanson**

Have you ever sat at a potter's wheel pondering the formless mound of wet clay in front of you? Then the wheel begins to spin. Your hands start to mold what is before you. What was once a blob goes away. Something unique replaces it. So, too, I submit is our potential for creation after the stress of the election process. Regardless of whether our proposals or candidates won or lost, we now have the opportunity to share the potter's chair and together mold our tomorrow. Whether at the national, state or local level we live in a democracy where all sides have an opportunity to contribute to our destiny. Soft clay is malleable. Now is the time for all of us to come together. As we pool our skills, so do we create our future. Our potter's wheel can only create what we design together. Only when our creation is removed from the wheel and fired in the kiln do we define our destiny. The question then becomes: "Have we helped operate the treadmill?"

### **Preparation Essential to Effective Public Service—Civic, Political & Social**

We are steadily building capacity in many critical areas due to the hard work of key organizations who have stepped up to provide comprehensive training and practical experience. Wanting to help and actually doing so requires more than an intention; it requires the willingness to learn the subject matter and the development of the skill sets to do so.

#### **Urban & Social Entrepreneurship**

The Lyles Center at Fresno State now offers both social and urban entrepreneur classes to prepare people for the hands on work of community transformation. For example, this year's project in the urban entrepreneur class taught by Craig Scharton, CEO of the Central Valley Business Incubator, is a feasibility study for a food co-op in an area of town where access to healthy food is difficult. Neighborhood food co-ops provide jobs, build a sense of community, insure access to healthy food and provide a steady retail outlet for small farmers. Given the obesity and diabetes challenges in our community, such a project aims at addressing the root causes, not just symptoms in the spirit of true entrepreneurship.

#### **Political & Civic Entrepreneurship**

The Chamber's long standing Leadership Fresno has provided intense subject matter training to decades worth of community leaders by providing a comprehensive overview of critical issues, challenges and opportunities to make a difference. A more recent effort, The San Joaquin Political Academy, the brain child of former Supervisor Stan Oken and ably led by Ruth Evans, provides an excellent mixture of content and skills development. The mission of the Academy is to "assist in the development of visionary political leaders who recognize that a healthy business climate is necessary for a strong economy and a strong economy is necessary for a vibrant community."

There are over 250 elected seats in the County of Fresno without counting judges. Every one who is elected has an ethical responsibility to serve the best interests of the whole, not simply supporters. While most begin the experience with a fairly narrow viewpoint, as knowledge and experience grows the reality of the complexity and interdependence of issues makes the easy answers offered up as a campaign platform seem shallow, if not counterproductive. In the highly competitive and churning global economy, every community must develop a shared vision and strategy to both compete and create a high quality of life for everyone. This can only be accomplished through collaboration and the skillful leveraging of resources. Competent, steward leadership is extremely important and that requires knowledge, experience and maturity.

Applications for the coming year are due December 1. Whether you are interested in running for office or are simply exploring the possibility, the Academy will help to prepare you to run a campaign and serve should you be elected. Those who have served as elected officials will also help dispel illusions you may have about public service. For more information, go to the website at <http://www.sjpa.org> or call 559-313-3304.

### **A Commitment to Life Long Learning—Primers on How to Become a Community Entrepreneur**

Two outstanding books that describe the impact of the entrepreneurial spirit rising across our country in every sector are: *Grassroots Leaders For A New Economy: How Civic Entrepreneurs are Building Prosperous Communities* and *Civic Revolutionaries: Igniting the Passion for Change in America's Communities*. Both books were authored by Doug Henton, John Melville and Kim Walesh who have served as coaches to many communities. Fresno is part of both a statewide and national network of regions supporting one another in developing best practices for community transformation.

