

Rising Together in Optimism



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My Fellow Optimists:

In 2020-2021, East Missouri is going to be Rising Together in Optimism. I want to bring us to a new visioning of what leadership means for us here in East Missouri. Being a leader does not always mean that we are looking for the next governor, the next OI President. It means that we are looking for someone who wants to be something for themselves and for others. I asked my lieutenant governors to put together a list of people they see in their clubs who will be leaders, whether they lead a committee, lead our organization, or just lead their home better than they did before they met Optimism.

Over my journey through Optimism, I have been led by the example of a number of great Optimists. I took two years off from the movement (I call it my sabbatical) while I received a masters degree in early interventions for autism. During my sabbatical, Optimists kept me connected; reminded me that I was important to them whether I was at East Missouri conferences and conventions or not; checked to see how school was going; checked to see how I was doing. They retained me as an Optimist even though I did not step foot into anything the East Missouri district did for two years.

Ladies and gentlemen, that is the kind of leader I want you to be for your clubs, your Optimists, your families, and your friends. New members are important but in East Missouri when we Rise Together in Optimism, I want us to focus on retention. I want us to be the ones who are making phone calls, sending text messages and Facebook messages, retaining our friends whether they are committed to the organization at this moment or not.

It is retention that is going to take us to the next level as an organization, and it is our responsibility to retain friendships regardless of how many new clubs we build or how many members we lose for reasons beyond our control. Retention did not just bring me back to the organization and make me your Governor. People who wanted to retain me in their lives and in this organization brought me back and introduced me to people who will answer my calls, my text messages, my Facebook messages whenever I have a question or need support.

We do not simply have to retain people as Optimists today; we need to retain them as people in our lives. This is who we are going to be as leaders when we Rise Together in Optimism in 2020-2021. Retention comes not just from paying our dues but from our intention to care about people, our intention to make or answer a call or text, and our intention to believe in the greatness of somebody else and let them know that we see that greatness in them.

This quote from Brene Brown is hanging in my work office and in my bedroom at home. It guides me daily and it comes from Theodore Roosevelt.

It is not the critic who counts; not the man who points out how the strong man stumbles, or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the area, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; . . . who at the best knows in the end the triumph of high achievement, and who at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly.

Ladies and gentlemen, we are going to dare greatly in East Missouri. We have followed the lead of those who have come before us and we are going to take ourselves to a whole new level of commitment, retention, and compassion for one another as we are Rising Together in Optimism this year.

Thank you for joining me on this journey!

Rising With You in Optimism,

Liz Christman
2020-2021 EMO District Governor
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