

Alicia Wadas , President

As I transition from my board role of VP Communications & Conferences to President, I want you to know that I'm deeply appreciative of the honor and the confidence placed in me by the Board, the chapters, and the FBI. And really, it's confidence placed by FBI HQ in all of us as the FBI Citizens Academy Alumni Association. We have the support and encouragement from the highest levels at HQ; just as you heard today directly from Assistant Director Hale, I can share that from my meetings there two weeks ago with Jacqueline Maguire, Deputy Assistant Director of the Office of Public Affairs and Assistant Director Brian Hale, we are a valued partner. We can move forward with their confidence and enthusiasm for our community outreach effectiveness.

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Think with me for a moment - Why are we here – what's our purpose, and Who are we?

I believe that we are here because of our shared values, specifically our allegiance to the United States, with the goal of keeping our citizens safe. We are here because of our respect for the world's premier law enforcement agency. The knowledge we gained through the FBI Citizens Academy has both empowered us and requires us to be ambassadors in our communities; to help open doors for the FBI to do what they do best – keep us safe and bring the bad actors to justice.

There's an acronym created to help you remember our Why, our Purpose. With credit to Dr. Alan Lieberman of the Miami chapter, the acronym is A.I.D.E. – as in an assistant to an important person.

A- assist the FBI in its community outreach programs.

I - inform the public about the mission, priorities and organization of the FBI.

D - demystify false conceptions that intimidate or discourage cooperation with the FBI.

E - encourage the community to serve as "grassroots defenders", to heighten awareness and reporting of suspicious activities that may signal terrorist or criminal behavior.

The other question I asked – Who are we, I'd like to answer with this. There are somewhere around 43,000 graduates total from all Citizens Academies since they began in 1993. That's a small town. Sounds like a lot of folks until you put a small town in the middle of America and look at how many people there are in our country – so we are in an exclusive group. You were chosen because you are a community, religious or business leader, you have a sphere of influence that is large. I point this out not to puff you up or give you a big ego, but to reinforce that we are professional and respected members of our society. As such, we want to behave in a manner becoming to the trust that has been placed in us. To recognize Why we are here and rally around the greater good. We are all taking time away from our jobs, our families and our friends to do what we do. I respect that we are all sacrificing, and I expect that we will work respectfully with each other, both with our fellow CA alumni and with our esteemed FBI colleagues in this room, to accomplish our goals. If we keep the end in mind, we can't go wrong. If you can embrace that we are servant leaders, everything will come into perspective whether it be as simple as a recognition that our individual membership dues for our local chapters or Chapter dues with National are not to be viewed as "what do I get" rather to see the dues as our financial donation to the work we do for the greater good.

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When you combine the Why we are here with the who we are, you can see that we are an influential group that truly can support our hard-working law enforcement through service, and we can help to keep our country safe. That one thing you do or say as an Ambassador for the FBI will ripple like a stone thrown in a pond and you may be the wind beneath the FBI's wings stopping a bad actor in their tracks.

Let me close by reading part of an email written by Pat Greco, a Coca-Cola executive who is an alumni from Buffalo, who summarizes the support many businesses provide with food and beverage to the law enforcement communities which have experienced a tragedy of a mass shooter or an officer down. Pat writes:

“What Coca-Cola (and all the other companies) has done is a true testament to the generosity of the human spirit during tragic times. Truth be told, most of the initial contacts that I have engaged...I have never met; or met, maybe once. They have not “stepped up” and offered their support because I am a short, bald, ruggedly handsome colleague from the same company. They have engaged because of their community, because of stewardship, because of the innate goodness in people. What a privilege to be part of an organization, the FBICAAA, that can foster that behavior...even in the worst of times.”

Thank you all for your dedication and service and for listening to me. We may have different ideas, beliefs and politics, but when we come under the umbrella of the FBICAAA we are united in our cause – to help keep our country safe by furthering the community outreach mission of the FBI.

Thank you.