

A Note from Executive Director, Lisa Zimmers

Grow Through It

Experience is different than education. Education is a formal process that often focuses on rote learning, facts, formulas, and repetition and is aimed at developing a skillset in a particular area. Experience is something you acquire by doing. It is gained through professional and personal trials and triumphs. It can be a wicked teacher and a forever friend.

My family didn't place a great deal of value on education growing up. I had to go to school because it was my responsibility. I wasn't permitted to miss school unless there was a spontaneous combustion happening within my body that was the result of a gastrointestinal disruption. I was to be there every day and not bring home anything less than a "C" on my report card. There was no expectation to go to college. It wasn't something my parents or anyone else in my family had ever done or perceived to be necessary or even possible.

My parents' lack of experience with higher education provided me with a lot of experience. I didn't necessarily realize it at the time; it just annoyed me. I was motivated and had a point to make. I did commit to going to college after high school, and they were very proud and gained a new perspective. My focus shifted a couple of times and resulted in various degrees and certifications. The path wasn't traditional, and it wasn't smooth. I received a great deal of education in my chosen field, and I acquired a great deal of experience on my journey. Although it was fragmented, it came together wonderfully albeit difficult.

Recently, we had a special guest speaker at Twin Lakes. Associate Ian Gorley shared his adventures hiking the Appalachian Trail. Over 150 people came out on a chilly January evening to be part of his experience. Although no one completed the trek with him, listening to his recount and applauding his achievement felt like a way to experience it with him. We were enriched, educated, and entertained. There was a common sentiment of awe and commendation. There wasn't a reunion of "thru-hikers" after the presentation. Ian was a minority. His choice to take on the challenge made him unique in that setting. There was tremendous appreciation for his commitment and tenacity, and willingness to share with us.

Over the past several decades, I've had the opportunity to meet many people. I'm consistently inspired and surprised, and sometimes disappointed. Each of these individuals leaves a legacy with me. I vicariously learn from watching them navigate the bumps in their road. Listening to the stories of others and drawing on my recollection of other paths and my own creates a bank of experiential learning. As I head into the fourth quarter of my work era, I look forward to growing through many more experiences and hope to help others grow through their experiences as well.

Thank you for being part of my journey.

-Lisa Zimmers

