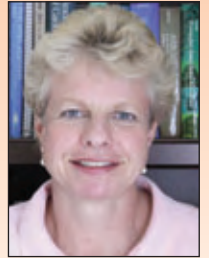


Thank you.



By Sharon Lilly

ISA Director
of Educational
Goods & Services

"Thank you so much. Peace and joy of the season." That was one of about a half dozen responses I gave as people stuffed their dollar bills through the tiny slot in the covered red bucket. It was a new experience for me—ringing the bell for the Salvation Army's annual charity fundraiser this past Christmas season—and "Merry Christmas!" was getting a little monotonous.

I stood outside that frosty evening, jumping up and down and shuffling around in an effort to keep moving and stay warm. I sang Christmas carols, struggling to remember how many Lords a Leaping and Pipers Piping. A highlight of the evening for me was when a tiny boy in his mother's arms exclaimed, "It's Santa, Mommy!" (I was wearing a red coat and a Santa hat, but I hope the lack of a beard and big belly differentiated me from that jolly old elf, at least to people over the age of two.)

Standing alone out there, I tried to predict which people would donate and who would walk out of their way to the other door of the supermarket, so they wouldn't have to pass by me. I made a study of the demographics of those who donated: older people donated more frequently than younger, and women were more likely than men.

But what touched me most was the number of people who stopped for just a moment to tell me, in all sincerity, "Thank you. Thank you for volunteering to do this."

I wasn't doing it for the thanks; I was doing it to give something back to my community and to make a small difference in peoples' lives. But it made me feel good to be thanked.

Then I started thinking about all the thousands of people who volunteer some of their time for ISA. Hundreds of dedicated volunteers help me each year by reviewing articles, books, CD-ROMs, and other educational materials. More than 75 reviewers were involved in the review of the study guide revision alone. Dozens of volunteers helped with the ISA conference in Providence, RI, and even more will be helping with the 2010 conference in Chicago, Illinois. Each year about 150 volunteers help to put on the International Tree Climbing Championship. Some arrive on-site days before the event to prepare the trees and site, then stay through the competition and the conference.

ISA has a Board of Directors of nearly 50 people (although the structure is changing) overseeing ISA's governance; twenty-some committees, charged with various responsibilities; and a Certification Board, which oversees the certification program. Hundreds more volunteers help to administer certification exams all around the world. This is just the tip of the iceberg of ISA volunteers because I haven't even mentioned all of the volunteers who are actively involved at the chapter or professional affiliation level.

ISA is a large and diverse organization and there is so much going on at any given time, it can be difficult even for those of us on staff to keep track of it all. Anyone who has spent time navigating around the ISA website has been exposed to the depth and breadth of ISA activities. Our relatively small staff in Champaign, IL, does not do it all, though. It takes an army of passionate members, each donating a little time with a project or program they care about, to keep it all going.

Winston Churchill said, "We make a living by what we get, we make a life by what we give." Churchill lived during a time that was more difficult than we are experiencing now, and what he was asking people to give (or give up) was much more than the things we do to advance our profession. But caring for and preserving trees is a pretty noble cause, and this is a profession that does make the world just a little bit better. So I dedicate this column to all of you out there who are helping, with educational materials, certification, conferences, tree plantings, days of service, climbing competitions, or any projects you do to make a difference. Thank you.

And next December, I'm going to don my warmest coat, scarf, mittens, and Santa hat and get back out there to ring the bell knowing that, no matter how cold it is outside, doing so will somehow make me feel warmer. **AN**

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living by
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we make a life
by what
we give.*

—Winston Churchill



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