

CLOSING REMARKS of the OUTGOING PRESIDENT

Beth Staples, M – May 2, 2020

Nearly twenty ago, my sister, Nancy Staples, (Chapter O/SC and a PhD thanks to an ELF loan), called to tell me that she was considering allowing her name to be considered for the State Board in South Carolina where she lived. Being the annoying little sister, I advised her to pour an adult beverage and lie down until the urge passed. So, when I hung up the phone from saying “yes” to having my name considered for the State Board here in New Jersey, I was not surprised to hear my big sister’s heavenly laughter – and that laughter has followed me throughout these five years. Nancy was the extrovert cheerleader in the family. I’m the hermit, introvert. Self-distancing is the norm for me. It has been a personal challenge, therefore, for me to come out of my shell and engage with chapters and sisters throughout the state. It has been challenge, but also a joy. Once again, Nancy was right. This is an experience not to be missed.

Thank you to the women who have flown before me on this board. Lynn Murphy, Caroline von Glahn, Wendy Baker, and Beth Gammie (Beth #1) showed me the way and left an uplifting, well-marked trail for me to follow. Helen Wolfmeyer, Robyn Burns, Lois Johann, and Rosemary Seghatoleslami have beat their wings to keep this P.E.O flock in the air. Your flight paths of service continue, and I look forward to moving back in the formation to support you. I am confident that you will take us to new heights as our P.E.O. journey continues.

We did not get to have our convention this year, and it was going to a kickin’ party. Thank you to my hostess Chapters – H, AO, AS, and AU. You were ready to make my convention dreams a reality no matter how far we pushed the envelope. Thank you to my finance chair, Ginger Flaten (AO) (with the help of Libby and Scott Tune) for designing our new online registration system that will, hopefully, make the process easier and smoother for years to come. Thank you to Nancy McKeen (AU), our convention secretary, for documenting everything that we planned. And a special thank you to my convention co-chairs, Cathy Brabandt (AU) and Karen Burke (AU) for your calm guidance, flexibility, and willingness to think big and plan a terrific event.

Lastly, I must thank my own, beloved Chapter M. Where would I be without these sisters? They have nurtured me from my beginnings in the Sisterhood. Taught me about leadership. Helped me to go to school. Stood by me through sorrows and joys. Been my friends and my sisters. For the last five years, they have vicariously lived board service, and our chapter has grown in numbers as they Let Love Lead and invited new sisters to the party. I look forward to new adventures with these beloved sisters for many years to come.

The P.E.O. Sisterhood is unique on the planet. We really do love and care for each other, and Letting Love Lead is the P.E.O. way. This has never been more in evidence than during this time of self-quarantining. It has been a joy to witness how P.E.O. sisters have stayed in touch, learned new technologies, and reached across the airwaves to see each other, talk with each other, nurture each other, and love each other. This is P.E.O.’s strength – the incredible women who are now our sisters. The work that we do is noble – educating women. We change women’s lives. I know that P.E.O. has certainly changed mine. I have thousands of sisters – all working with me to further the mission of the Sisterhood. This is the message that I encouraged you to shout from the rooftops this year. We are P.E.O.s. We Let Love Lead. We let it guide the decisions that we make, and it will lead us through any challenges that we may face.

Thank you for allowing me to serve on the State Board. I am honored to join the illustrious ranks of the Past State Presidents, and I am confident that Helen and her new board will lead us with love as we fly even higher.

