

BIRTHDAY WISHES
from
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On the Occasion
of the
20TH ANNIVERSARY GALA
of the
MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD
Quest for Excellence Conference
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Washington, D. C.

GOOD EVENING!

ON BEHALF OF THE TENS OF THOUSANDS OF OUR NATION'S PUBLIC AND PRIVATE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS (PRE-KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADUATE SCHOOL AND LIFE-LONG LEARNING), IT IS WITH DEEP HONOR AND FULSOME JOY THAT I BRING YOU—MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD—THE HAPPIEST OF 20TH BIRTHDAY WISHES!

IT IS QUITE A COMMENTARY ON OUR 21ST CENTURY GLOBAL SOCIETY THAT BUILDING *SUSTAINABLE* LOCAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY IS SUCH AN ENORMOUS STRETCH GOAL! (Merely sustaining oneself or one's family is not normally one's highest aspiration.)

AND YET, IRONICALLY, IN TODAY'S WORLD, THERE CAN BE NO LOFTIER VISION FOR OUR EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS THAN FOR US TO BE THE BEST INSTITUTIONS WE CAN BE FROM WHICH TO LEARN AND TO TEACH THE LIFE SKILLS ESSENTIAL TO BUILDING *SUSTAINABLE* LOCAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY—A WORLD OF SOCIAL EQUITY AND JUSTICE, ECONOMIC SUFFICIENCY, AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT, WHERE PRESENT NEEDS ARE MET WITHOUT COMPROMISING OUR ABILITY TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THE FUTURE. AND . . . OUR WORLD DOES NOT HAVE THE LUXURY FOR THIS FOUNDATIONAL, SURVIVAL-LEVEL VISION TO BE LONG-TERM.

WE MUST QUICKLY GET BEYOND THE BASICS OF SUSTAINABILITY AND ONTO MUTUAL *PROSPERITY*, BUT *TODAY* THERE IS URGENCY TO MOVE FORWARD ROBUSTLY FROM WHERE WE ARE, HERE AND NOW, TO BUILDING A BASIC, SUSTAINABLE WORLD!

THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT OUR ORGANIZATIONS ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE A WISE SOCRATIC TEACHER TO LEAD US IN OUR LEARNING: THAT TEACHER IS THE BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY PROGRAM, WHICH IS GUIDING ALL OUR PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE JOURNEYS TOWARD ACHIEVING THIS URGENT VISION AND BEYOND.

. . . FOR THIS WISE SOCRATIC TEACHER KNOWS THE IMPORTANT BALANCE WE, ITS ORGANIZATIONAL STUDENTS, NEED BETWEEN SUPPORT AND CHALLENGE.

OUR WISE TEACHER KNOWS THAT BY ASKING EVER-MORE-CHALLENGING, HONEST, OPEN, NON-PRESCRIPTIVE QUESTIONS, WE (THE EAGER AND SOMETIMES NOT-SO-EAGER STUDENTS) WILL DISCOVER THE TRUTH THAT LIES DEEP WITHIN EACH ONE OF US AND OUR ORGANIZATIONS—ESPECIALLY WHEN WE ARE OFFERED ASSISTANCE BY THE VOLUNTARY, EVER-GROWING COMMUNITY OF EXAMINERS AND SUPPORT COACHES AT BOTH NATIONAL AND STATE LEVELS . . . WHO ENCOURAGE US TO COLLABORATE WITH, BENCHMARK ON, AND LEARN FROM SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS OUR LAND, BOTH AMONG AND OUTSIDE ENTITIES SIMILAR TO OUR OWN.

INDEED, YOU—MALCOLM BALDRIGE QUALITY—MODEL FOR ALL OF US *HOW* TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY, JUST AS OUR NATION'S EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS MUST DO FOR OUR COMMUNITIES.

BUT WE—THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS—SIMPLY CANNOT PLAY OUR QUINTESSENTIAL ROLE IN BUILDING SUSTAINABLE LOCAL AND WORLD COMMUNITY IF WE ARE NOT *SYSTEMATIC* IN OUR *OWN* APPROACHES. FOR—

IF OUR ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS CHRONICALLY BREAK DOWN,

IF OUR PROCESSES ARE COUNTERPRODUCTIVE,

AND IF WE DO NOT *KNOW* AND CANNOT COMMUNICATE TO OUR STAKEHOLDERS WHETHER OUR STUDENTS HAVE LEARNED WHAT WE SET OUT FOR THEM TO LEARN—

—INEVITABLY OUR FACULTY AND STAFF WILL FAIL THROUGH NO FAULT OF THEIR OWN. AND MANY WILL FEEL UNJUSTLY PUNISHED FOR THESE ORGANIZATIONAL FAILINGS, WILL BECOME DISHEARTENED, AND WILL NOT BRING THEIR SOMETIMES FEARFUL, ALWAYS VULNERABLE SOULS TO WORK OR TO CLASS.

GOING THROUGH THE MOTIONS, PLAYING IT SAFE, AVOIDING THE RISKS NECESSARY FOR INNOVATIVE TEACHING-LEARNING BREAKTHROUGHS, THEY WILL CREATE SOUL-LESS ORGANIZATIONS—HARDLY THE STIMULATING PLACES OUR STUDENTS NEED FOR THE *EXCITEMENT* OF LEARNING HOW TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE WORLD COMMUNITY!

AND, YET, THERE IS HOPE!

THANKS TO NEARLY A DECADE OF BALDRIGE GUIDANCE THROUGH THE EDUCATION CRITERIA, EACH YEAR MORE AND MORE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FROM ALL OUR STATES ARE LAUNCHING AND TRAVELING THEIR OWN PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE JOURNEYS.

AND SPECIAL THANKS GO TO THE FOUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND THREE HIGHER EDUCATION EXEMPLARS, HONORED BY THE MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD, FOR YOUR TIRELESS MENTORING AND QUALITY JOURNEY COACHING WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ACROSS THIS LAND.

SO, MAY WE USE THIS OCCASION TO CELEBRATE MALCOLM BALDRIGE AND 20 YEARS OF SUCCESS IN CONTINUOUS AND BREAKTHROUGH PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE—IN ALL SECTORS OF OUR SOCIETY, BOTH NATIONALLY AND, INCREASINGLY, INTERNATIONALLY.

AND MAY ALL OF US IN ATTENDANCE TONIGHT HEREBY PLEDGE TO CONTINUE OUR OWN PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE JOURNEYS AND TO ELICIT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES TO PLEDGE SUPPORT FOR THIS VITAL, *EDUCATION* SECTOR OF OUR SOCIETY.

BY FULFILLING THIS PLEDGE, OUR STUDENTS, OUR COMMUNITIES, OUR PLANET, AND ALL OF US WILL BE THE BENEFICIARIES.

AND WHEN WE GATHER AGAIN FOR OUR 40TH BIRTHDAY, MAY WE ALL BE CELEBRATING LIFE WELL BEYOND MERE SUSTAINABILITY.

HAPPY 20TH ANNIVERSARY, MALCOLM BALDRIGE NATIONAL QUALITY AWARD!