A Tribute to Mel Byers

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A TRIBUTE TO MEL BYERS

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ABSTRACT (EDITOR’S COMMENTS)

This is a tribute to an individual who is a special person to me. He has helped me to gain a much better understanding of the field and has expanded my thinking. I have not met a person with as much perspective and foresight.

Mel is an individual who is a free thinker and innovator. He is always ready to help and put forth a maximum effort to develop the profession. His impact upon the profession has been immense. Much of the profession’s growth is a direct result of his leadership. A testimony to him may best be told not by his accomplishments but by his impacts upon people’s lives.

A TRIBUTE TO MEL BYERS

I first met Mel in 1968 - the year my company decided to make a major push into the area of Employee Services. In attempting to make rapid progress I checked with other companies in the Toledo area to determine what kind of local resource people might be available. As I did so I kept hearing personnel directors say: 'If you really want to talk with an expert, get acquainted with Mel Byers at Owens-Illinois.'

To make a long story short, I did just that and it turned out to be one of the best moves I ever made. From suggestion plans to service award programs and from employee club by-laws to bulletin board management -- and everything in between, Mel 'had been there' and knew the pros and cons, the psychology and dynamics of nearly every program -- and there are many -- which could be placed beneath the Employee Services umbrella.

I quickly became a fan, and, I am privileged to say, a friend of Mel Byers. His encouragement, counseling and support over the ensuing years have been invaluable to me. He is simply the best at what he does and those who are fortunate enough to be associated with him are made better because of it.

I soon learned of Mel’s prominence at the national level. It turned out that he had been a guiding light for the National Employee Services and Recreation Association (NESRA) for many years, having served as a regional director, a national vice president, a member of the editorial board, and of the executive committee. Following his retirement from Owens-Illinois in 1975, Mel became a paid consultant to NESRA -- a position he continues to fill -- most capably -- today. It was directly as a result of Mel’s sponsorship efforts that I became active with NESRA at the national level and eventually served as president of the association.
In the early 1970s, Mel had another of his many excellent ideas: to form a local chapter of NESRA to directly benefit area Employee Services practitioners. Mel polished and developed the idea, turned it into a reality (he's great at that) and, almost unaided, built the Toledo Industrial Recreation and Employee Services council (TIRES) into what is today the second largest (and fastest growing) and most professionally operated chapter within the NESRA organization. Mel continues to serve, as he has from its inception, as the organization's executive director.

Mel remains, as he has been for many years, NESRA's 'national treasure'. He really should be listed as an asset on the association's balance sheet. He's one of a kind.

An indication of the regard in which Mel is held is reflected by the fact that upon the occasion of his retirement he was presented with a special plaque - a 'Distinguished Service Award' by the management of a company for whom he had never worked. The inscription reads, in part, as follows:

'In recognition of your many years of service to your company and your community, and in appreciation of the kindness, help, courtesy and cooperation extended to our employees this memento of friendship is presented by the people of Owens-Corning Fiberglas'

In summary, Mel Byers is the best thing that ever happened to the field of Employee Services.

COMMENTS

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