



A Christmas Letter

Skills and Professional Development





Dear ACC Colleagues:

What a year it has been! We have seen a series of events and any one of them would be history-making: a presidential impeachment trial, devastating wildfires, a worldwide pandemic, national protests, lockdowns, quarantines, the postponement of the Olympics, and cancellations of annual events that even world wars did not affect.

If I were to pick a word of the year for 2020, “UNPRECEDENTED” seems appropriate.

After months of history-making news, I am “news-fatigued.” [A song from 1983](#), sung by American country artist [Anne Murray](#), echoes my longing:

*There's a local paper rolled up in a rubber band
One more sad story's one more than I can stand
Just once how I'd like to see the headline say
“Not much to print today, can't find nothin' bad to say,” because Nobody robbed a liquor store on the lower part of town*

Nobody OD'ed, nobody burned a single buildin' down

Nobody fired a shot in anger, nobody had to die in vain

We sure could use a little good news today

And everybody loves everybody in the good old USA

We sure could use a little good news today

Allow me to share with you some good news from this year.

In February, I attended a documentary film festival and met some amazing people who reminded me that just one person can do unbelievable things.

[Billy Joe White](#), a tattoo artist in Zanesville, OH, transforms hate-filled tattoos into beautiful, peaceful custom designs. In 2017, after learning that a man from Ohio espousing neo-Nazi beliefs drove into a crowd in Charlottesville, VA, Billy decided to provide a free service to cover up racist tattoos. Starting with an offer for the first 10 people, he has altered hundreds of tattoos to date for free and will continue as long as people come.

[Judge Craig Mitchell](#), a criminal court judge in Los Angeles, founded a running club with people who live on Skid Row. In 2012, a former inmate asked Judge Mitchell to visit his recovery class at the Midnight Mission on Skid Row. Once there, Judge Mitchell decided the one thing he could do was run and offer people a chance to run with him. Over the last eight years, club members have not only completed marathons but have also overcome addiction, began new careers, and restored broken relationships.

Finally, let me tell you about [Lonnie Bedwell](#). Lonnie is a Navy veteran who lost his sight in a hunting accident in 1997. Lonnie overcame depression over his blindness and engages in adventure activities, including kayaking the Grand Canyon, mountain climbing, and skiing. Undaunted by his blindness, Lonnie mentors and trains others in overcoming their handicap. When I met Lonnie, his enthusiasm for life was palpable and he reminded me our limits are only a matter of perception.

These encounters and others I experienced with remarkable, amazing people — from the stranger who volunteered to play the guitar at our family member's funeral to the police officer who came to my aid when my car stalled in the middle lane in the rain at rush hour in front of a stoplight — gave me a year of memorable moments as well as difficult ones.

As 2020 comes to close, may we all remember what truly matters and that reality is about more than what we can see.

Recall the words of [Francis Pharcellus Church](#), the editor of *The Sun* newspaper written in response to eight-year-old Virginia O'Hanlon's inquiry: "Please tell me the truth, is there a Santa Claus?"

Excerpted from Church's reply:

Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus. He exists as certainly as love and generosity and devotion exist, and you know that they abound and give to your life its highest beauty and joy. Alas! How dreary would be the world if there were no Santa Claus! It would be as dreary as if there were no Virginias. There would be no childlike faith then, no poetry, no romance to make tolerable this existence. We should have not enjoyment, except in sense and sight. The eternal light with which childhood fills the world would be extinguished.

Nobody sees Santa Claus, but that is no sign that there is no Santa Claus. The most real things in the world are those that neither children nor men can see... Nobody can conceive or imagine all the wonders there are unseen and unseeable in the world.

You tear apart the baby's rattle and see what makes the noise inside, but there is a veil covering the unseen world which not the strongest man, nor even the united strength of all the strongest men that ever lived, could tear apart. Only faith, fancy, poetry, love, romance, can push aside that curtain and view and picture the supernal beauty and glory beyond. Is it all real? Ah, Virginia, in all this world there is nothing else real and abiding. No Santa Claus! Thank God! He lives, and he lives forever. A thousand years from now, Virginia, nay, ten times ten thousand years from now, he will continue to make glad the heart of childhood.

Despite the havoc wrought this year, I still believe in Santa Claus. I hope you do too.

[Maryrose Delahunty](#)



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