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A WAVE AND A SMILE

Every school day I drop my 6th grade son off at Laconia Middle School and every day no matter what the weather there you will find either Chris Ennis the Assistant Principal or Jennifer Sottack the Coordinator of Student Services overseeing both the arrival of the school buses along with the car drop off of students. Some would consider *'Bus Duty'* to be a punishment detail --- but not these two! They each take special pride in offering a wave and a smile to each parent dropping off their student. It is not something that they *'have'* to do – I'm sure their primary focus is to ensure safety --- but while they are doing that they also manage to do something else: They make their Students feel welcomed and they make the parents feel connected. While this doesn't cost a thing --- the benefit and value is priceless. They take something that could be routine and impersonal and turn it into something very different --- and all before the Student even enters the building. Principal Jim McCollum couldn't have two people making a better first impression --- and doing so each and every day! I have to believe that this upbeat and welcoming attitude that I get a glimpse of is the same attitude and approach that is taken in the hallways and classrooms as well!

Working as I do in the retirement living and assisted living world I witness everyday just how important having a good attitude can be. Some managers in the business world only place value on technical competence and professional ability and are not at all concerned about attitude and approach. I don't know if that really works in any business --- but I know for sure that it has no place in senior living. As part of training sessions I always employ a very time worn old saw that says it more clearly than I can: *"People don't care what you know until they know that you care"*. This is the standard that most of us apply to just about every personal interaction we have – whether that is with our physician, a Wait

Staff Member at a restaurant, the Cashier at the supermarket or the person on the other end of a phone conversation. Our attitude towards others is shaped by our perception of their attitude towards us. When people are really really good you can hear the smile in their voice over the phone!

A wave and smile are important because they are the outward and visible signs of something more important. In the retirement world it is all about *'caring'* and we need to go on to demonstrate what caring really means. We teach our Staff that one of the best ways that any of us can show that we care – is to just listen carefully to what someone has to say! That All! Nothing fancy or psychologically manipulative – just taking the time and showing genuine interest in sitting down to really listen. What we do is important --- but not more important than how we do it.

I'm always giving tours and inevitably at the end of each tour a prospective Member will comment on how friendly our Staff and present Members are. It doesn't cost a thing to be friendly – yet many businesses in some misguided effort to be *'professional'* have pretty much banned it as being improper. I'm convinced that a place that doesn't feel friendly --- really isn't friendly.

Laconia Middle School is a shining example of how demonstrating great attitude is part and parcel of providing great education. Jim McCollum along with his Faculty and Staff show how great attitude doesn't have anything to do with the size of the organization – but everything to do with the size of its commitment to excellence! At the Laconia Middle School you know even before you walk in the door that this is a special place!

What is good for our organizations is also good for us as individuals. Are our lives so busy and so serious that we don't have time or interest in a wave or a smile? At the very least a wave and a smile means that we take a moment to engage in a brief contact with someone else and that we move our focus from ourselves to someone else. That's a good thing.

It's time for us all to follow the Middle Schools example and to smile and wave more often.....

Age Well!

Howard Chandler has worked in elder services for over 35 years and is Vice-President of Meredith Bay Colony Club along with being a Partner of White Mountain Eldercare Solutions. Your comments are always appreciated. chandler@metrocast.net and at chandler@meredithbaycolonyclub.org and on Facebook.