

People who work together get where they are going more easily

Visualize, if you will, the scene in the movie “Home Alone” when actor Macaulay Culkin, playing Kevin McCallister, realizes his family accidentally has left him behind – and his hands fly to his face, mouth and eyes wide open in panic – and you will understand how I feel right before my “Our Place” article is due.

The pressure is on – what to share with you that will make your time reading it worthwhile? Unlike some of my peers, Human Resources does not lend itself to a great number of measurable statistics – quantifying human behaviors is near impossible, despite the millions of books available from booksellers such as Amazon, Barnes & Noble, and others.

Were I to write such a book, it would be short and simple: “It never ceases to amaze me that people never cease to amaze me.” Period. Amen.

Which brings me to geese. (I hear you thinking, “OK, where is she going with this one?!”)

Recently, my husband and I spent a week at a tennis camp. For five days, five hours a day, we swung at balls – forehand, backhand, overhead, volleys – we batted so many balls I was swinging in my sleep and, thankfully, did not clock my husband!

All of us on the courts observed that every day at approximately 9:35 a.m., two geese would fly directly over the courts – and not just over the courts, but low over the courts, within ball-reaching distance.

One of my fellow campers



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from Canada quipped that they were “snowbirds returning home” which gave us a quick laugh between drills.

The geese on the courts reminded me of a learning piece we have shared with staff. I call it the “Geese Story,” and while its author remains unknown to me, I would love to hug him or her, because it rings so very true. I’d like to share it here:

“When you see geese heading south for the winter – flying along in V formation – you might consider what science has discovered as to why they fly that way.

“As each bird flaps its wings, it creates an uplift for the bird immediately following. By flying in V formation, the whole flock adds at least 71 percent greater range than if each bird flew on its own.

“People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going more quickly and easily because they are traveling on the thrust of one another.

“When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to go it alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the bird in front.

“When the head goose gets tired, it rotates back in the wing and another goose flies

the point. It is sensible to take turns doing demanding jobs, with people or with geese flying south.

“Geese honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed. What do we say when we honk from behind?”

“Finally, and this is important, when a goose gets sick or is wounded by gunshot, and falls out of formation, two other geese fall out with that goose and follow it down to lend help and protection. They stay with the fallen goose until it is able to fly or until it dies; only then do they launch out on their own, or with another formation to catch up with their group.

“If we have the sense of a goose, we will stand by each other like that.”

– Author Unknown

Who knew geese were so smart? Well, actually some of our golfers may, since the “dogs” on the golf courses appear to startle more golfers than the geese.

Teasing aside, we belong to a community known as Florida’s Friendliest Hometown. Change and conflict go hand in hand, and growth is an arbiter between the two. I encourage all residents to be geese during these transitioning times.

Be proactive by attending all of the many different District meetings available to you, asking your board supervisors and District staff questions that you have, and educating yourselves fully so that this “gaggle” of ours continues to fly well together.

Whether we are at the front

of the V formation or waiting our turn at the back, all of us – like our honking geese – are

important to the continuing success of our community.

While it would be unrealistic to believe that all individual needs, desires and expectations can be met, I think you would agree that this community

does a “honking” good job of meeting most, considering our gaggle of more than 104,000 residents, and we have a willingness to collaborate with you on those expectations that we cannot meet.

Thank you for your time today. On behalf of staff, I thank you for your “honks” of support and encouragement, and look forward to seeing you here at Our Place again.

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