

Choose One Word to Guide Your Plans for the New Year

I have written this, and you are reading this – so clearly neither of us won last Wednesday's Powerball! "Powerball" – the word alone evokes images of paid mortgages, dream cars bought, extended vacations to be scheduled, family members and friends helped, charities donated to, indulgences in unlimited chocolate and weeks at health spas to make up for it, shopping at Neiman Marcus without looking at price tags ... sorry, I digress!

Much as stating "Powerball" evokes a reaction, there is power in all words. Words stir up memories, restore faith, conjure emotion, inspire a thought, provide comfort, create a belief, cause hurt and call us to action – "Four score and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation ..."; "A Book of Verses underneath the Bough, A Jug of Wine, a Loaf of Bread – and Thou..."; "One small step for man; one giant leap for mankind ..."; "...to have and to hold from this day forward ..."; "Half a league, half a league, Half a league onward, All in the valley of Death Rode the six hundred" – and their impact on us may last seconds, or a lifetime.

Jon Gordon, an American business consultant and motivational speaker, collaborated with Dan Britton and Jimmy Page to produce "One Word that Will Change Your Life." Simply stated, they challenge us to forget making New Year's resolutions (not a new idea) and instead choose one word for the year to provide focus to your life for that year – mentally, physically, emotionally, relationally, spiritually and financially.

Sounds pretty cool, right? What words come to mind?

Patience? As in "being patient with yourself and others" and as in "slow down." Our amenity



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fees cover a lot – but they will not cover the cost of damages you've incurred to District or private property, or people, that could have been prevented by just taking a few more minutes: to leave early instead of rushing, to look both ways instead of jutting out into traffic, to reduce speed around bends so pets or passengers are not jettisoned out of your golf cart, to remember to keep legs and arms inside the cart, to slow down as others approach from the opposite direction. We care about each of you, and would truly like you to be here to enjoy yourselves and others as long as possible!

Gratitude? A shout out to our awesome staff for working to meet residents' and guests' needs, answer questions, solve problems, find solutions and do it as efficiently and seamlessly as possible, basing all actions on our core values.

But that gratitude goes both ways, because it takes a village to run The Villages. So a big thank you, too, to those who contact Customer Service with safety concerns. Our village is made up of all of us – residents, guests, vendors, District staff, local businesses, etc. We all have an ownership stake in the longevity of our environment.

So when you think "Why hasn't someone done something about (fill in the blank)?" – call and let us know so that we can take care of it. As one of my favorite quotes states, "You can't complain about the dark if you

aren't lighting any candles."

Another way to show gratitude is by participating and giving back – become a District employee (more than 80 percent of our 1,000-plus employees are residents!) or a board supervisor, a resident lifestyle volunteer group leader, or attend a Resident Academy or Welcome Wednesday meeting. Check our District website for more details – districtgov.org.

Tolerance? This community is a melting pot that continues to grow and bubble. We came from the North, South, East, West, and everywhere-in-between areas of our nation, as well as from all over this small planet.

We were waitresses, lawyers, truck drivers, generals, secretaries and bank officers, to name a very few careers represented here. Our combined life experiences alone should temper our quickness to judge, complain or criticize, knowing that those providing services to us are committed to making this continue to be a great place to live.

We may not do it as fast or perfect as one may expect, but we are doing it a lot better than any other government entity I have ever experienced.

The poem "Desiderata" by Max Ehrmann speaks to tolerance and "keeping it in perspective." Although written in 1927 and not becoming widely known until the early 1970s, it is timeless – maybe you recall it?

"Go placidly amid the noise and the haste, and remember what peace there may be in silence. As far as possible, without surrender, be on good terms with all persons.

"Speak your truth quietly and clearly; and listen to others, even

to the dull and the ignorant; they too have their story.

“Avoid loud and aggressive persons; they are vexations to the spirit. If you compare yourself with others, you may become vain or bitter, for always there will be greater and lesser persons than yourself.

“Enjoy your achievements as well as your plans. Keep interested in your own career, however humble; it is a real possession in the changing fortunes of time.

“Exercise caution in your business affairs, for the world is full of trickery. But let this not blind you to what virtue there is; many persons strive for high ideals, and everywhere life is full of heroism.

“Be yourself. Especially, do not feign affection. Neither be cynical about love; for in the face of all aridity and disenchantment, it is as perennial as the grass.

“Take kindly the counsel of the years, gracefully surrendering the things of youth.

“Nurture strength of spirit to shield you in sudden misfortune. But do not distress yourself with dark imaginings. Many fears are born of fatigue and loneliness.

“Beyond a wholesome discipline, be gentle with yourself. You are a child of the universe no less than the trees and the stars; you have a right to be here.

“And whether or not it is clear to you, no doubt the universe is unfolding as it should. Therefore be at peace with God, whatever you conceive him to be.

“And whatever your labors and aspirations, in the noisy confusion of life, keep peace in your soul. With all its sham, drudgery and broken dreams, it is still a beautiful world. Be cheerful. Strive to be happy.”

Author Neetal Parekh commented that, “We are here but

for a second, but our impact ripples through time.” Our words – written or spoken – cause ripple effects wider than we can imagine and in ways we may never know.

Be kind to each other, have patience and be thankful for each moment that is gifted to us, and be tolerant – especially when it is most trying. With all of our perceived differences, we are not so very different at all. We all do really want the same thing – to be happy.

So, I have written many words today to simply say, until we meet again at Our Place, what someone else stated better than

I: “Watch your thoughts, for they become words; Watch your words, for they become actions; Watch your actions, for they become habits; Watch your habits, for they become character. Watch your character, for it becomes your destiny.”

I challenge you to choose your word for the year, and may that choice result in your best year ever.

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