

Women in Leadership Seminar Highlights November 14, 2008



“Lessons from Life Times Two” – featuring Lynn Erdman, SVP American Cancer Society for NC/SC and her husband, David Erdman, Senior Partner, Erdman & Hockfield, from Charlotte, NC. She's a nationally recognized speaker and a nurse by profession with impeccable credentials. He's a lecturer and very successful attorney whose practice was recognized in 2007 as the top firm for women in NC. Together they have 2 daughters, 2 high-powered careers, significant community involvement and a zest for living a positive and purposeful life.

Lynn has received numerous awards and delivered over 750 speeches and presentations to audiences large and small all across the country. One of her most popular speaking topics: “What I've Learned from Nursing about Life.” She uses the power of imagery and humor through a series of graphics and photos to share the valuable lessons she's learned. Some of the most memorable ones were:

- A photo of a cleaning woman at the hospital where she worked. She was asked by her supervisor if she knew her or ever spoke to her. Lynn said no but she learned a lesson she never forgot. Everyone is important regardless of position or title. Lynn remains close to this individual today.
- A story about a patient who held on to some wrapping paper. Years before, his child had given him a beautifully wrapped box with nothing in it. He chastised her for giving him an empty box and for wasting the paper. She replied: “It isn't empty. I blew 100 kisses in it before I wrapped it!”
- A trauma center patient about to go into surgery asked the staff to gather around his bed. He stood up and said, “I want you to operate on me like I'm alive.” A lesson about not just going through the motions but really paying attention to people, showing them respect at all times, and especially when they're ill.
- The importance of the DASH – i.e., the most important thing is not the date you were born or the date you die, but the dash in between. That will be your epitaph, how well you lived your life.
- A bone marrow patient asked for a white coat with his name on it, just like the doctors. He proudly put it on and said, “I just want to show you that I'm the center of this team.”

- Importance of humor even in the face of serious illness and what sometimes can become routine procedure. A woman with breast cancer decorated herself for surgery. In the operating room the doctors and nurses discovered two tassels strategically placed on her chest. It completely changed their attitude and definitely got their attention!
- A story about Lynn and her family when her daughters were younger. The kids would sometimes sleep in the bed with their parents and Lynn and her husband were trying to change that behavior. Upon returning home from a trip, Lynn was met at the airport by her 2 daughters and husband. When they saw their mother, the girls loudly exclaimed – to Lynn's embarrassment: "Mommy, guess what? Nobody slept with Daddy while you were gone!"
- Another important lesson: don't burn bridges. You never know when you may need to cross over again. Lynn shared a story of when she was let go from a position and could have been bitter but instead, she never said anything negative. Still has good relationships from that experience.
- Story of the college student who wrote her parents a letter about all the bad things that had happened to her. Her parents were mortified, but then, she ended the letter with a note that said, "Actually none of this happened. I just made a couple bad grades and wanted to be sure you put it all in perspective."
- Then there was the kid with leukemia who was teased by other school kids when she returned to the classroom with a bald head. The next day, not wanting to return, the child begrudgingly went to her classroom and was met by the teacher...who had shaved her head too! No one ever made fun of her again. The lesson is that we can influence the lives of others in many unique ways.
- Story of the special needs children in the Special Olympics race. One fell and the others could have gone on to complete the race in good time, but instead, they all went back to help the one who fell. Lesson: Helping someone else can change the course for you.
- A simple thank you...may be the most important thing you can do for someone else. Story of a hospital worker who was named employee of the month and received a plaque. No one thought much about it until the employee died suddenly of a heart attack. In her casket her husband had placed her certificate and said, "This made a difference in her life. She's never been more proud of anything."
- A young cancer patient wanted to be a fireman and was befriended by a group of firefighters. When they heard he'd taken a turn for the worse, they brought a ladder to the hospital and all climbed up the ladder to his room to cheer him up. Lesson: never give up hope.

The second part of this seminar was a very special presentation by David Erdman. You don't expect to see a conservative looking lawyer get up in front of a group and begin to play a guitar and sing...but that's what David did. Self taught on the guitar, he completely mesmerized the audience for 30 minutes with lessons in song mostly from the 60s rock and roll era. For example:

- "Life is too short to worry about unimportant things"...from a song by the Atlanta Tams
- "We will never be here again"....words from another song about when opportunity knocks
- "The road is long....he ain't heavy, he's my brother"...Lesson: it's our duty to make a difference for someone else
- "Walk a mile in my shoes"....there but for the grace of God, go I.
- Another song that says "fitting in with the crowd is not so important"
- Ricky Nelson song: follow your own destiny... "If you can't please yourself..."
- "Ring Ring"...about mending fences
- Tammy Wynette: "Sometimes it's hard to be a woman.."
- "No telling what a satisfied woman can do"...
- "Everything looks good in black and white"...
- "Chip, chip"...one little wrong leads to another
- "Third rate romance low rent rendezvous"....about cheating
- "Wise men say only fools fall in love but I can't help falling in love with you"...
- "Everybody plays the fool"...
- True love means being together the whole day through"...
- Don't take life or what you have for granted and no one's big enough to go it alone: "Just Ask the Lonely"
- Atlanta Rhythm Section: "Everyday with You Love is Sweeter than the Day Before"...
- "You Can't Rely on Your Old Man's Money"... very appropriate for this day and time
- Patience rewarded: "Someday I'll love again"...
- Determination: "I've got my mind made up to love you"...
- John Denver: "Listen to the casual reply"...
- Bedtime song for his girls when they were young: "I love you in a song"...

The above excerpts from Lynn and David Erdman's presentations don't do justice to the actual occasion. It was undoubtedly one of the most unique, entertaining AND inspiring WIL seminars ever!!! The participant feedback was also some of the best we've ever received...superlative all around. If you missed it, you missed something truly special.