

## Opening Session Address Gary Stoneback

Good morning and welcome to GAWDA's 64<sup>th</sup> Annual Convention. I can't tell you how excited that I am to be here today at the Atlantis in the Bahamas. Obviously, I have been concerned about the possible weather issues, so much so that my children have wondered if the "Weather Channel" has replaced "ESPN" as my favorite channel.

I would like to extend my gratitude to a number of people. First and foremost, I would like to thank my wife, Liliana, for her much needed counsel, patience and support during the past year.

Thanks to my brother and partner, Greg, for his encouragement and understanding.

I want to thank my entire family for making the effort to be here this week - my mom and dad, Neal and Lillian - my brother and sister law, Greg and Chrysia - my sister and brother in law, Susanne and Phillipe - my younger sister Megan and her husband Reid – my younger brother JP as well as my three nephews and seven nieces. Thanks for being here.

I want to thank all of our GAWDA volunteer members. Our Regional Chairs, Committee members and Chairs, Board of Directors, and Executive Committee Members have all worked hard to continue the success of our association. Special thanks to our 2<sup>nd</sup> Past President, Whip Seaman, and our 1<sup>st</sup> Past President, Bob Ames for their dedication and continued mentoring. I would also like to take this time to recognize the hard work and efforts of both Britt Lovin and Jenny McCall. They have gone above and beyond to make GAWDA a better association. The future leadership of GAWDA is in very capable hands.

Special thanks to the staff at Fernley and Fernley. Kent VanAmburg and his team of Malvenia Avery, Kate Cole and Tawnee Shuey have been a joy to work with and have made my job easy. Kent has truly lived up to his title of Executive Director. He has partnered with our team, helped execute our ideas and he has helped us reach our goals.

Last but not least, I would like to thank our membership, our distributor and supplier members, for giving me the privilege to be your President this past year.

As many of you may know, my theme this past year has been "teamwork", and also that I am somewhat of a sports junkie. One of my all time favorite movies is "Hoosiers." The movie is based on a true story of a high school basketball team from a small community in Indiana called Miland. Coach Normal Dale, played by Gene Hackman, is a washed up ex-college basketball coach who gets a second chance when he takes on the head coaching duties for Miland in 1954. One of my favorite scenes is when Coach Dale conducts his first practice. He instructs his players that there will be **NO** dribbling and **NO** shooting. His entire practice emphasized passing and conditioning. The next day's practice is the same as is the next day and so on. Finally a player and several parents begin to complain. His retort was "I need five players on the floor functioning as one unit – Team, Team, Team. No one more important than the other." The players fall in line and eventually win the State Championship of Indiana. To this day, Miland High School is the smallest school to achieve this feat. Truly a David and Goliath story.

There is a corollary of this story to our GAWDA team. In order to be successful and accomplish our ambitious goals, we needed to work together and share the work load. Our volunteer members become more involved as evidenced by our monthly Executive Committee conference calls, our quarterly Board of Directors conference calls and the countless committee calls and meetings in between. We have worked hard on the fundamentals. We have put the time and effort in to make GAWDA a better association.

Miland High School has a trophy and state championship to show for their dedication and hard work. How can we measure our success during the past year? As I stated in my address at both Spring Management Conferences, we are striving to be as transparent as possible. Today, we are here to inform you, are members, on the current state of GAWDA.

I would like to quickly give you an overview of the speakers that will follow me.

David Walker, GAWDA's treasurer, will give you an update on the association's current finances.

Britt Lovin will be discussing the Audit Committee and the role that the committee played in regards to our consultant contracts, as well as future expense control projects. I want to take a moment to thank Britt and the committee for the tremendous effort that they put forth. To be clear and on the record, this process was carried out with the utmost integrity and professionalism. I am very excited about the future offerings that will be available to our membership.

Lloyd Robinson will update us on the efforts of the Dues Task Force. One of our goals was to try to make our dues more equitable. The Dues Task Force has put a great foot forward in achieving this goal.

GAWDA U Online is our new online training program that has been recently rolled out to our membership. Kent VanAmburg is going to update you on the current status of the program. This program is a very economical and detailed approach to training your people.

Our Young Executives program continues to flourish. Richelle Smith-Brecht, our Young Executive Committee Co-Chair and Central Zone Director will provide an update on the educational and networking opportunities that the program has provided as well as an update on future events.

Bob Ames, our First Past President, will discuss GAWDA's leadership development. I am thrilled about our future leadership- our association has a great pipeline of future leaders.

Thanks again for your support. Your support and input are critical to the continued success of this association. There will be a question and answer program scheduled for later today at 1:30 PM in the Imperial Ballroom H&I. We will be available to answer your questions at that time.

Your planning committee has put together a great meeting for you. I look forward to seeing you throughout the week. I have really enjoyed my year, but I can't wait to pass the torch to Britt on Wednesday.

Thanks again and please welcome David Walker.