

President's Message

Dear Friends:

As 2009 winds down, and the holiday season approaches, it brings great joy to my heart to think of the wonderful opportunities and experiences I've enjoyed while serving as President of this great organization.

One of the greatest experiences I've been fortunate to have this past year was attending the County Leadership Institute sponsored by NACO and the Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service in New York City. The theme was "*Leadership in an Environment of Shrinking Resources,*" and as I'm sure you'll agree, the topic could not have been more timely. Please indulge me in sharing with you some of the things we learned at the Institute.

As you know, counties and parishes are on the front lines for change in America today. As local leaders, we are confronting the real effects of this deep recession occurring across the nation. As workers lose their jobs, families lose their homes, vulnerable populations lose their services, and whole communities lose their visions of a future, they turn to us – to you – for leadership.

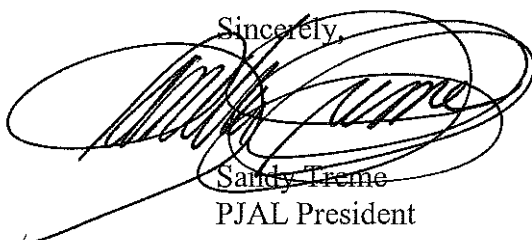
At the Leadership Institute in New York, we were encouraged, among other things, to foster a sense of community by letting families and neighborhoods know they are not alone in this (*or any other problem they're experiencing*), and that we can all make it through it if we pull together and recognize that blame will not fix the problem, only caring for each other.

The philosopher Isaiah Berlin said "*wisdom in leaders comes from understanding – not from knowledge*" which correlates with what has often been said before, that "*the high road to service is traveled with integrity, compassion and understanding ... People don't care how much you know until they know much you care.*"

There's an excellent book we were introduced to and studied at the Institute – Leadership on the Line – Staying Alive through the Dangers of Leading, written by Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky. In the book, you'll see sentences like this: "*The hope of leadership lies in the capacity to deliver disturbing news and raise difficult questions in a way that people can absorb, prodding them to take up the message rather than kill the messenger.*"

Whether parent or politician, CEO or community activist, the book will show you how you can exercise leadership and survive – and thrive – to enjoy the fruits of your labor. Get a copy, read it, and pass it on. It applies to so many on so many levels.

Thank you so much for allowing me to serve as President of the Association. It is my hope and prayer that you all have a Merry Christmas and a joyous holiday season!

Sincerely,

Sandy Treme
PJAL President

