

Good morning and welcome to Advocacy Day. I wish I was welcoming all of you in person, here in Madison. I long for the day when we can return to in person gatherings and the pandemic is history. I also recognize that this pandemic has brought a tremendous opportunity for our Y's across the state. We were able to leverage our strengths and utilize our existing expertise to expand the way we serve our communities. Some have talked about stepping up but the Y didn't step up, we held steadfast and resilient as we operated our programs to enabled others to do the same.

These efforts reintroduced our Ys to members of the community that may have lost track of what makes the YMCA such a special place and a valuable member of the community. As our leaders in Washington DC, Madison, our counties and cities were all working to address the needs of the pandemic, they all recognized how the Ys serve our communities. This recognition allowed us to reap the benefits of our efforts through programs like the Beyond the Classroom grant, the DCF grants and unemployment repayment.

How were we able to do this? Simply by telling our story. There are 6 elements to effective story telling; trust, drama, relatability, immersion, simplicity, agency, and familiarity. Let's explore each of these components.

1. **Trust** lies in the one telling the story. This is a lock for the Y. Honesty is at the core of who we are as an organization. Our reputation combined with the reputation of Foley and Lardner enabled people to drop their guard and actively listen from the start.
2. **Drama**, well it has been a pandemic after all and that provided enough drama for all of us for a lifetime.
3. **Relatability**- I think this is what put us on the radar for our legislators now more than ever. We were all trying to solve the same problems and we provided immediate gratification for those in public office. They needed child care for essential workers, we are experts in child care and met the need. The pipeline to food was shut down and we redirected the flow to enable people to get the food they so desperately needed.
4. **Immersion**- As with relatability, our public officials and the Ys were in this together and working side-by-side. They saw first hand how YMCAs are able to execute.
5. **Simplicity**- The Y's mission is incredibly broad and the pandemic forced us to simplify our efforts and our messaging. This made it easier for our impacts

to be more easily quantified in real time and the connection between problem and solution was apparent. This allowed for our impacts to be better understood.

6. **Agency**- When those we are telling our story to, are able to determine their own meaning on the impact delivered, the story is stronger. Our stories and impact meant something different to each of the political figures that heard them. This helped them understand how our role served their needs.
7. **Familiarity**- Our story was familiar because people could connect with it and understand how it was serving everyone in our communities.

As you meet with your legislators in the future, I would like to challenge you all to remember what factors go in to telling a good story. I am sure everyone is familiar with the golden rule; “do unto others as you would have done unto you.” I suggest using the less familiar platinum rule which says, “Do unto others as they want to be done unto.” Determine what is important to our audience and play to their desires, goals and mission. This will make it immediately relatable, and immersive. It will force the message to be simplified and allow them to determine the impact it delivered to solve their goal. This connection will make the story familiar.

I know, you may be thinking what about the first two, trust and drama? The trust is a given because of who you all are and the organization you represent. As for the drama, I know that each Y across the state makes a huge impact in the community we serve and the measurement of those impacts will add all the drama that is needed. Speaking of drama, I will turn it back over to Rob Johnson. Thank you.