

**AMERICAN LIBRARY ASSOCIATION
ALA MIDYEAR CONFERENCE
ALA PRESIDENT'S PROGRAM
SUNDAY, JANUARY 21, 2007 - 3:30 - 5:00 p.m.
SEATTLE SHERATON, GRAND BALLROOM C/D
SEATTLE, WASHINGTON**

>> LESLIE BURGER: Good afternoon, everybody. Welcome to the 2007 ALA President's Program. I'm Leslie Burger, in case you didn't know that, and I am ALA President.

I'm delighted to see so many of you here this afternoon. Thank you for making time in your busy conference schedules to join me and our keynote speaker, Deena Ebbert, for a discussion of how you can use the FISH! Philosophy to make dramatic changes in your personal work life and in that of your organization.

Today's program is just one component of my yearlong focus as ALA President on transforming libraries and, by extension, transforming the communities that we serve. We know that when libraries are transformed, either by new service programs, renovations, or new buildings, the communities we serve are in turn transformed. Our users' relationships with our libraries change. They become advocates and passionate supporters for what we do, and they learn in new and different ways.

You may be thinking as you hear this that transformation is a desirable goal in the abstract, but that it's too ambitious or too time consuming to translate into the reality of your overcommitted life and your busy professional environment. I ask that you set aside your doubts and concerns for now and that you join me this afternoon in thinking about ways that we can begin the process of transformation. Are there concrete steps that we can take that make the path to transformation one that is within everyone's reach?

I've begun my own journey by developing a series of initiatives

that I believe will have a lasting impact on each ALA member, on our association and on our profession. Several of these initiatives are taking form here at this Midwinter Meeting. Work will continue between now and June and will culminate at the Annual Conference in Washington, D.C.

The first of these initiatives is the development of a National Agenda for Libraries: A clear, compelling and positive statement of what we want for the people who use our institutions and that defines our goals for the 21st century libraries. I want us to create an agenda that captures the imagination of those who fund libraries, fully meets the needs of all the constituencies we serve and transforms the way in which people perceive our institutions. We need an agenda that is bold. We need an agenda that's easy to understand and that can be supported and implemented at the federal, state and local levels.

On December 10th and 11th, 2006, a small group of librarians, policy makers, information specialists and users gathered at the ALA Washington Office to discuss the need for a National Library Agenda and to develop specific recommendations for consideration by the library community. A draft document, *Toward a National Library Agenda*, is being circulated here at this Midwinter Meeting and is available on my website at:

<http://wikis.ala.org/nationallibraryagenda/>

Please read the draft paper and send me your feedback by February 15th, 2007. Our goal is to have a document available to the library community in time for National Library Legislative Day, May 1-2, 2007.

The second of my presidential initiatives is the creation of an Emerging Leaders program to identify and provide leadership training to the librarians who are the future of this profession and of this association.

117 librarians who are either under 35 years of age or who are

new librarians of any age with fewer than five years post-MLS experience were selected through a competitive process for the first class of Emerging Leaders.

The group met this past Friday at the Seattle Public Library for a full day leadership workshop where they began to acquire the tools they need to advance the ALA and transformation agendas. They will work in teams between conferences to complete projects that further the strategies and goals of ALA, its divisions, round tables and Chapters, and they will come together again at the Annual Conference in Washington for a second full day of leadership training.

Our 2007 Emerging Leaders will put their training to immediate use by accepting a two-year term of service on an ALA or ALA unit committee or working group when the 2007 program is concluded. And I'm really thrilled to tell you that ALA has committed to maintaining the Emerging Leaders program as an ongoing program within the association!

(Applause.)

(Cheers).

If this sounds like something you would like to do, please apply to be an Emerging Leader in the class of 2008.

The third of my presidential initiatives directly relates to the question I raised a few moments ago: What are some of the concrete steps that each of us can take to begin the process of transforming our libraries? I'm very excited to announce that at the upcoming Annual Conference -- here we are at Midwinter and we're already talking about Annual -- there will be the first ever Transformation Track in the program lineup. Members of my Transforming Libraries Task Force are developing conference programs on *Transforming Library Services*, *Transforming Library Technology*, *Transforming Your Staff*, *Transforming Library Space* and *Transforming Your Community*. The track will culminate with my ALA President's Program featuring Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. I'm also developing a Transformation Tool Kit that

will be available on my website. Stay tuned for more information as we move closer to the Annual Conference.

At this conference, I hope that you were able to take advantage of the Seattle Sunrise Speaker Series, which was also dedicated to the theme of transformation. Yesterday, author, businesswoman and mountaineer Sue Ershler talked about *Transforming Yourself, Reaching New Heights*, and this morning futurist Bob Treadway discussed *Transforming The Future: 20/20 Foresight*.

Finally, I'm excited to report that we're close to realizing a dream of mine -- a website specifically for people who love and support libraries: "iLoveLibraries.com"

This website will highlight the wonderful work that we do in serving communities, actual and virtual, through our school, public, academic and special libraries. It will provide information that will make it easy for the thousands of people who love libraries to take action and become advocates for what we do. It will feature news stories and links to related organizations. A focus group met here at this conference yesterday to review a conceptualization of the site, and we hope to have the site up and running by National Library Legislative Day in May so that everyone will be able to see it when we descend on Washington.

I couldn't have begun to accomplish my ambitious presidential agenda without the help and support of members of my hardworking Presidential Advisory Groups and Task Forces. If any of you are in the audience, would you please stand now so that we can recognize you? Stand up if you've helped me in any way.

(Applause.)

Thank you for your contributions and hard work.

Before we move into the substance of the program, I'd like to make a couple of general announcements.

First, this program is being captioned for the hearing impaired. If you need this service, please move to a seat where you can see the

screen. The captioned text will be posted on my President's Page on the ALA website after this conference. It does take several weeks, however, to prepare the presentation for posting, so if you don't find the text posted right away when you get to the website, please check again at a later date.

I would also like to thank all of the international members and attendees who have come to Seattle, including Alex Byrne, president of the International Federation Of Library Associations and Institutions. I especially want to thank Linda Cook, president of the Canadian Library Association, and all of our colleagues from Canada who have joined us here. Would our international attendees in the audience please stand so we can recognize you?

(Applause.)

Thank you for coming.

I'd also like to announce a big milestone for ALA. 2007 is the 100th anniversary of *American Libraries* magazine. More than 29 million copies of *American Libraries* have been published since 1907. A number of anniversary events and articles, including an official commemorative issue in June/July, will culminate in the new ALA pavilion in the exhibit hall at the ALA Annual Conference in Washington, D.C. this June.

And now it's time to turn our attention to the focus of today's program: using the FISH! Philosophy to create transformation.

Seattle's world-famous Pike Place Fish Market -- have any of you ventured down that way yet? I'm sure a few of you have wandered off-site. It's a very easy stroll from the hotel. But it's an otherwise regular fish market that's extraordinarily successful. The work is hard and the hours are long, yet these employees make a personal choice to bring amazing passion, playfulness, commitment and a positive attitude to work every day. This is the exciting and extremely entertaining basis of the FISH! Philosophy.

The FISH! Philosophy developed when a company facing bankruptcy

realized that it would have to change to survive. Following the suggestion of strategic business coach Jim Bergquist, the company created a vision that their fish market would be world famous. This was the genesis of the FISH! Philosophy, which is based around four simple tenets:

- **"Play"** - Have a little fun at work.
- **"Make their day"** - Make a difference. Engage others. Make them part of the fun.
- **"Be there"** - Actually pay attention to make sure you can take care of the person in front of you right now. And, finally,
- **"Choose your attitude"** - Before you go to work in the morning, pick out an attitude just like you choose your underwear.

(Laughter.)

Our keynote speaker this afternoon is Deena Ebbert. She carries the unconventional title of FISH! Philosopher. A former professional opera singer and a veteran of corporate America, Deena spent 15 years working with heads of industry during times of turbulence and change. Deena built a reputation by creating a winning environment where top-performing teams flourish. Her positive impact on corporate environments and employee productivity earned her 14 prestigious leadership awards. Deena has brought her witty, wry and realistic perspective on ways to empower and motivate teams to a diverse group of organizations, including the Alzheimer's Association, Boys and Girls' Clubs of America, Caterpillar, Harley-Davidson, Hilton Hotels, Johnson & Johnson, Microsoft, and now, the American Library Association.

I invite you to sit back, relax and get ready for a presentation that may just transform you.

Join me in welcoming FISH! Philosopher Deena Ebbert.

(Applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: My name is Deena Ebbert, and I am a motivational speaker.

(Laughter.)

Do you feel better?

(Laughter.)

You know, it's weird. I didn't grow up planning to have "Motivational Speaker" on my business card. My dad worked for IBM for years. I'm an IBM baby. I always grew up thinking I should have "Manager," "Director" or "Boss" of some other thing on my business card and I did for 15 years. So today, when I really tell people what I do, if I say "Motivational Speaker" they run away because they're afraid I'm going to ask them to be in a skit.

(Laughter.)

By the way, there is no skit today, okay?

So if I'm really going to be honest, it's more than "Motivational Speaker." I mean, I'm a decorated refugee of 15 years in corporate America. I'm a consumer of goods and services. I'm a Renaissance festival hippy. I'm a sweater-set wearing, SUV-driving urban dweller. I'm a motorcycle mama. I wish we could put all that stuff on our business card or on our résumé, because sometimes we get so stuck in thinking about "What is our credential? What are we bringing? How is the title by which we call ourselves going to impact people? And how will they respond to that?"

Now, I love what I do. I mean, with the exception of one job, I have the best job in the world. The hottest job in the world, in my personal estimation, would be to be a librarian.

(Laughter.)

(Applause.)

I'm not kidding! Do you all know that librarians are hot! I was so excited to come to this conference. You know, my three favorite groups that I work with are senior housing -- I love working

with senior housing groups because the people are so engaged in what they do. I was out here a year ago with the National Association of Auto Auctioneers. I love working with auto auctioneers because it's just so much fun to get them to talk really fast.

(Laughter.)

But when my agent called me and she said "I have a library gig for you," it was the greatest thing in my life. I was so excited. I keep calling her saying, "I'm here in Seattle with the librarians!"

I don't think you understand what you mean to me. You protect my right to learn. The ferociousness of that and the commitment to it doesn't go unrecognized. So when I say librarians are hot, I mean it. Y'all are hot! So thank you.

And so I'm talking to my agent. This was a while back. She said to me, "You know, I need you to talk to another agent." "Why?" I replied. "You know me and I know you. I've already impressed you, I don't have to try." She said, "No, because there's this women's conference in San Francisco. The agent wants to talk to you and see if you're the right fit." I said, "Okay." She said, "Well, I'm going to have her call your home office." And just so you know, after 15 years of working in corporate America - you know, the black suit and the bun -- now my commute is down two flights of stairs to the basement. My uniform? Pajamas. Nice!

(Laughter.)

So she said, "I'm going to have you have a conference call with her in the morning. It's kind of early. And I'll have her call your house. Can you please try to be impressive?" And I said, "Okay, I'll try to be impressive."

So I get up, I didn't really comb my hair. Kind of brushed my teeth. It's your home office. I have on my pink pajamas with the bears that are snowboarding. As I'm getting ready for the call I did my research on her. She's a very impressive agent. I'm starting to feel nervous. Waiting for the phone to ring. I look at her website:

very elegant! Starting to gather things around me to talk to her, to convince her that I'm the right fit, that I have the credentials that it takes to do this event.

So the phone rings and I'm ready to go. I'm feeling fierce and I pick it up and much to my horror her voice comes across the line and I realize that she has one of those very erudite British accents. I can see her in my mind's eye, and this is what she looks like.

(Makes a face)

Really, I don't know what she looks like. Here's what it is. I can see her and she's sitting in her beautiful office. And she's got a lovely polished mahogany desk and there's nothing on it at all. Here comes someone tapping on the door to bring her one beautiful piece of parchment paper with something important written on it that she needs to sign. She's sitting behind her desk in some tawny colored silk suit. Her gleaming blond hair is tossed behind one shoulder. There's another tap at the door and there's someone bringing her coffee. Well it wouldn't be coffee, would it? Someone is bringing her tea with biscuits and clotted cream. And I'm sitting in Minnesota, in my basement. I'm wearing my pajamas. You know, eating left over hot dish from last night.

And so suddenly I start to get really nervous. Her accent completely throws me. And we're talking back and forth and I'm trying to be impressive. She's asking me a lot of questions that I'm not really ready for. And so, in terror, I grab a copy of my résumé. The last time I updated it was 1996. So I'm clutching onto this copy of my résumé and I'm reading to her off my résumé because I want to prove that I have credentials. And she says, "Deena, really, darling, no. Stop. I must be completely candid with you. I'm not particularly interested in your résumé and I'm not really very impressed with your credentials." And then she laughed. Like this. "Ha, ha, ha." You know, that really hurts in that fancy British accent. Usually when someone, I don't know, makes fun of you or

maybe insults you a little bit or laughs at you or teases you, you come up with a great response, a very snappy comeback. It takes about three days. But you've got it.

(Laughter.)

And when she laughed like that, it just triggered something in me. All of a sudden, I thought, "I wouldn't be impressed, either." I looked down at my résumé. "Who cares?" And I realized that we are much more than we can ever articulate on one piece of paper. We're more than a job description. We're more than a title. For me, the reason that this job is the best job in the world isn't because I'm up here, but because you're in here. And I get to look at all of you. You say amazing things and you have fantastic energy and you have wonderful ideas, and then I steal them and I take them somewhere else.

So I'm looking at my résumé, and I had this moment of -- I just felt so powerful. I said, "Wait a minute. Let's back up, Miss Fancy British Accent Lady. I get it that you're not totally impressed with my résumé and that's really cool. That's fine. You don't have to buy into what I'm selling. I have to tell you that I'm totally impressed with the experience that I have because I get to be with exceptional people from all walks of life every day and I learn so much from them. And it's a lot more than I could put on a résumé. So I may not be able to make you happy as far as credentials are concerned. I don't have a bunch of fancy letters after my name. I am not a Ph.D. I'm not a CPA. I'm not an MCSE. But I'll tell you what I am, Miss Fancy British Accent Lady,]. I'm a DIVA.

(Laughter.)

And she said, "Diva? Diva? What is that?" And I said, "Oh sister, if I have to 'splain it to you, you ain't never going to understand!"

Am I the only diva in the house? Gentlemen, please feel free to raise your hands.

(Laughter.)

And this is the truth of it. Actually, in addition to the 15 years that I spent in corporate America working in high-technology organizations, where primarily what we did is was launches, upsizings, downsizings, crisis all the time, I also spent several years singing professional opera. Is anyone a professional opera fan? Raise your hands. I want a count. I just want to see among librarians how many people like opera.

(Laughter.)

For those of you who had your hand up, do you actually like it or do you just go because someone you love makes you go?

(Laughter.)

Here's the deal. Opera, like so many things, is just a way that we have creatively put passion and language to the drama that we have in our lives. Opera is just a sound track for all the drama we have in our lives. How many people in this room have drama in their lives?

(Laughter.)

Who in this room is responsible for the drama in your life? Yeah? So here's the deal. Opera is just a sound track. It's just one of the ways that we have used art to illuminate how we feel on a day-to-day basis. So if you've never been to the opera, life is a lot like an opera.

My favorite is *La Traviata*. If you go at the beginning, the curtains are dark, the hall is quiet, there's a sense of anticipation. Life's like that, isn't it sometimes? You don't know what's going to happen next. At the beginning of *La Traviata*, the curtains pull open and the room is set for a beautiful party. All the ladies have on their finest evening gowns and the gentlemen have on their tuxedos. There are waiters with trays of champagne. Life's like that sometimes, isn't it? And the hostess walks in and she sees all of her friends are there for a party. She's so delighted. They

are so beautiful and they are ready to celebrate one another.

To welcome them, she opens her arms wide and she sings.

(Singing in Italian.)

(Applause.)

And this party goes on and on. This party goes on and on, and it's absolutely fantastic. There's drinking and dancing. There's gambling over in the corner. There's prize baskets. Kind of like the expo.

(Laughter.)

And that whole fun part, that lasts for about 10 minutes. The rest of the opera, huge drag. Four hours. It's like this.

(Singing.)

Do you ever feel like that?

(Laughter.)

Like when you're going to work?

(Singing.)

This group is from everywhere, yes? Who has traffic? Yeah? If you're from Wyoming, you cannot raise your hand. Are you from Wyoming? No. So try this. The next time that, you know, you're not really in the mood, there's traffic, you're trying to get to where you need to go, try this out for me. Get behind the wheel of your car. Grab on tight. Pull out into traffic. Just when it starts getting thick, do this.

(Singing)

"Good morning, good morning, it's great to stay out late, good morning. Good morning to you. And you and you and you." It's not going to make you feel any better necessarily and it won't get you there any faster, but it'll totally bug all the other drivers.

(Laughter.)

See, here's something about opera. It's one of the ways that we illuminate what goes on in our life. Life isn't easy. Life is a drama. Life is a complex tapestry of what happens, what we wish

would happen and how we feel about it in between.

So, for me, I'm not necessarily married to you liking opera, but I do want you to understand what happens at the end of the show. No matter how long it took for the soprano to die --

(Laughter.)

. . .people hang in there. And at the end, when they walk out, people are humming a tune from the opera. Which song do you think they're humming? Yeah, the first one, the happy one. That's our natural default. We like to default to a place of joy in our life. So for me, I don't care if you love opera. You might like country music. You might like jazz. You might like rhythm and blues. You might like rock. You might be the guy with the Christina Aguilera CD in your car that you listen to over and over. I won't tell anyone. It will just be between us. Somewhere in everyone in this room is a piece of music that you would elect for the sound track of your life. Your own theme song. The song that when people walk away from you, they're humming.

If you could pick any piece of music as a sound track of your life, what would you pick? You've got 30 seconds to figure it out and tell the person next to you. Go. Okay. Here we go.

(Moves into the audience with a handheld microphone. Holds the microphone to an audience member.)

Wait, wait, stand up. Stand up. Jennifer leapt to her feet and the room went crazy!

(Audience member sings)

(Applause.)

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: My life theme song is "I will Survive!"

>> DEENA EBBERT: Why did you choose that?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, I've been through serious health issues. I've been through being dumped by a husband. I've been through job downsizing. I have survived.

(Applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: (Moves to another audience member) What's your name?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Peggy.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Peggy stood and the room went crazy.

(Cheers and applause.)

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Sings) It's the place for you, it's the place for me, it's the local public library.

(Laughter.)

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: (Sings) They have books on foods that they loan for free. It's the latest, it's the greatest, it's the library. Information all educational. Entertainment that's sensational. It's a way of life, it's for you and me. It's the latest, it's the greatest, it's the library."

(Loud cheers and applause.)

(Standing ovation.)

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do you know what? The last time I was singing I was walking into the ALA office and a very kind guard there said, "I have a special request for you. I'd like you to sing someplace very far away from here."

(Laughter.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: Actually, I think there's nothing more beautiful than someone who is brave enough than go and put their voice behind what they feel.

(Applause.)

My husband is powerfully bad at singing. And I love it when he sings because it's so beautiful. That's one of the ways that we talk about what's in our heart.

You know, a lot of people say, "Why do you ask that question?" I mean, give me a break. We're all grownups. We have big serious jobs. It's a dumb question. Well, there's a reason I ask you that. Because it is an unexpected question. We've become so accustomed to asking the questions that are okay to ask or that are prescribed,

that help us fill in our spreadsheets or answer the questions on our reports, that we may have forgotten that when we ask an unexpected question, a silly question, we create some spaciousness to bring more of who we are, more of the beauty of who we are as unique individuals, to bear on the world around us.

'Cuz, do you know what today? I don't have anything for you that you really need. I mean, you know, I may say something funny, I hope. I might give a little toy out here and there, but I don't have anything for you that's going to change your life. You already walked in with it. When you walked in here, you walked in with everything that you need to lead exactly the life that you want.

So my question to you is: You've got it, what you going to do with it? And that's a hard question to be asked because we do have this spreadsheet to fill in. We do have the rules. We do have the regulations. And sometimes we just need to shift our perspective a little bit.

And so that's why it says out there, "Deena will provoke you." That's about as provocative as I was going to get. So if you were worried, that's it.

What we're going to do today is leverage an awesome group of people down at Pike Place market. Some of you have had the chance to go there. I highly recommend it, even really early tomorrow morning. They're getting ready to go around 6:00 in the morning. It's worth a wander down there.

Pike Place Market is an outdoor farmers' market. You can get all kinds of stuff. Fruits and vegetables. Beautiful bouquets of flowers. Sometimes on the weekend there are special vendors who come in with handicrafts. Imported goods from all over the world. Occasionally you'll meet some street performers who are there playing their violins or singing or whatever, trying to get you to throw a couple of bucks out for them. You can also do a lot of your grocery shopping there.

Right in the center of the market, in a beautiful little fish-filled slimy jewel is this place, Pike Place Fish Market. I mean, these guys are the reason that tour buses full of tourists from Minnesota with luggage show up.

When was the last time you took your roller bag to the grocery store? But it's true. Tour buses full of people show up just to watch these guys work.

And what they've done is they've chosen to create an exceptional environment that's truly inspiring for people.

So what I'd like to do is I'd like for us to watch them in action. My friend Jacques, who is like the most amazing AV god on the planet, plus he'll really cute -- he's totally got my back and he's going to show my film right now. And then what we're going to do is talk about how we translate the conversation that goes on at the fish market out of that environment and into your environment. So we're really having a conversation about what is meaningful to you.

Ready to rock and roll?

All right. Here we go.

(Video presentation)

>> EXCERPT FROM VIDEO: We can make a difference for people. They leave in a better mood. We made their day. If you love your job, it's going to show. If it shows, obviously it will affect somebody. When they see we're having fun, it's like a feeding frenzy. The fun we have behind the counter, the fun we have among all of us, you have to let the customer in on that, as well. Different customers, different people will have different reactions to it. Get the feel for other people. Say something. Acknowledge them. Make their day. Have people walk away with a smile on their face. They want to work here. They want to be here. People will

come to see what the commotion is about. When it's exciting, time goes by fast, people are having fun and they are also buying our product.

You have to always "be there." and by "being" I mean constantly be aware of what the customers are saying, whether you're on the phone or actually dealing with them face-to-face. When you're present with people, you look right at them and it's just like when you're with your best friend. You're there. You're just being with them. With just them. Everything else is going on around but you're taking care of just them. Who are you going to be? Who are you being while you're doing it? You're going to do something differently when you're being world famous than if you are impatient. Be with the people from moment to moment because they are future shoppers. If they're not buying now, they will buy later. Acknowledge them when they walk by even if they're just looking. They like that. Don't ignore them. You're here now, do what you have to do.

Choose where you're going to be as soon as you get out of bed. Consciously make that choice every day. You can instantly change how you are right now inside of you. Make the choice to be happy today. Are you going to be upset all day or happy all day? There's always something you can laugh about. It's unacceptable to be in a downer mood. It's a simple choice. That's all it is.

(Applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: I wish I could take credit for that, but I can't. The film that we made of the fish market was a happy accident. The company that I work for, do you know what our claim to fame is? We make industrial training films. Like "do not stick your hand in the wood chipper."

(Laughter.)

In the 80s, we made the Joel Barker Paradigm Series films. Is anybody in here having an 80's flashback? Swiss watch. We were

actually out here -- well I wasn't, because I was in corporate America toiling away and filling out spreadsheets at the time. But the company was out here and we had come out to do a film of David Whyte, who wrote *The Heart Aroused*, which is one of the most beautiful books I've ever read in my life. It's not an easy read, but it's a beautiful book. There's a lot going on there. We were filming David because he's a corporate poet. He takes the corporate experience and retranslates it into a unique language. So we were out here filming David. He's a terrific guy. We had a bunch of guys out here. We did the Saturday night stayover because we're cheap. We're thrifty Minnesotans. We're sturdy Norwegians. So we were done with David's stuff, and we had some time to mess around in Seattle and we had some extra film. We went out like tourists, wandering around the market, and we stumbled on this fish market. They were wonderful and engaging and everything about them just lit us on fire inside.

And so we decided to extend our ticket. We hung out, we shot some film and then we went home. We spent nine months editing our film and at the end of nine months, we came up with four points. What are they? "Play," "Make their day," "Be there" and "Choose your attitude." It took us nine months to come up with this.

I really actually love this stuff. I used this in my corporate experience for several years before I actually defected and became an independent contractor in my basement in my pajamas. "Play," "Make their day," "Be there," "Choose your attitude," these are really beautiful truisms that are translated into many different iterations about how we can show up at work. But it in no way can really embody everything that they're doing at the fish market, because what they're doing is involved in so many precise and unpredictable choices that they've made to be alive and to use all of their gifts, to bring beauty to the work that they do.

So, really, "Play," "Make their day," "Be there," "Choose your

attitude," this is the start of our conversation, this is how we find out what you can leverage in your own environment. But, trust me, after six months of "Play," "Make their day," "Be there," "Choose your attitude," you're going to be having one of those days, and Little Mary Sunshine, you know who she is, she comes skipping up to you with a basket of happy. She's going to want to sprinkle glitter on you and she will want you to choose your attitude. You will start looking for something heavy to hit her with. Okay? Don't hit her. "Play," "Make their day," "Be there," "Choose your attitude," this is where we get to recreate a lexicon of what this means to you and what I've discovered with people that I've met.

So let's start with this one. A four-letter word that nobody above the age of seven really wants to admit they know anything about.

What are they doing at the fish market to play?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Throwing fish.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Who said "throwing fish?" What's your name? Sharon? Yeah.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Do I get something?

(Laughter.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: Has anybody trolled the expo already? How many people here got one of the pens with a troll doll on it? Those are cool. Yeah? The pens with the troll doll? Secret society, the Pens with the Troll Doll Society. Later on there will be a skit just for people with the pens with the troll doll.

(Throws toy fish.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: One fish flying to Sharon.

>> AUDIENCE: One fish flying to Sharon.

(Cheers and applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: Now, I need to really confess something that you probably already figured out: I'm a totally shameless woman. I have no compunction whatsoever about bribing you for audience

participation.

(Cheering.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: Obviously people want these. And do you know what? If you don't want it, your spouse wants it, your kid wants it or your dog wants it. All right? Now, you must understand, I do not have one of these for every person in the room. But we all know that scarcity breeds desire, so please do not push, shove, elbow, body check or poke your neighbor in the eye. If your neighbor gets a fish and you don't get a fish . . . (To audience member) God, you get one just because you're laughing so hard. Can you totally come on the road with me? Just hang out. Make people think I'm funny? I love you. Live canned laughter. It's perfect. Do not poke, elbow, body check, or pull your neighbor's hair. If you don't get a fish, y'all just have to negotiate it later, okay?

What, in addition to throwing fish, are they doing at the fish market to play? Who said joking around? What's your name? Tammy? One fish flying to Tammy.

>> AUDIENCE: One fish flying to Tammy!

(Cheers and applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: The other thing that you should probably know is that I'm really not that good of a thrower. I'm a little bit cross-eyed. I may not be looking at you. If you got hot coffee or cold water, you got to hold onto that with one hand. You've been warned.

Tammy, what's the joking around thing for? What does that do for them?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Change their attitude.

>> DEENA EBBERT: It changes their attitude because it gives them a little bit of a permission slip to have some fun. Thank you very much.

Who else? What else are they doing at the fish market? They're making the fish talk. What does that do for them when they make the

fish talk? It entertains their customers. They're using what they have at hand to create an experience that's unexpected and engaging in a little bit of a different way. What else are they doing?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Personality.

>> DEENA EBBERT: What about personality?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: They're showing their personality. My theme song is "Celebrate."

>> DEENA EBBERT: Stand up. What is your name?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Stacey.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Stacey, you rock. Turn around.

(Applause.)

Which color? Orange to match your bow tie. Yeah, this is what I like. Not every place you go will someone be willing to dress to express their personality. I love the way you show up. I think that the way you have clothed yourself is an outward manifestation of who you are as a person.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: It is.

>> DEENA EBBERT: It is, isn't it? Nice. Awesome. Cool. I got hugs, too, and everything. Librarians are so hot! God, they're hot. What else are they doing at the fish market? Who said laughing?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I did.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Are we allowed to laugh at work? No! There will be no laughing in zee library. And if we must, talk very quietly and you may check out zee book, but you may not touch it.

(Laughter.)

What's your name?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Chrissy.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Why do you laugh?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why do I laugh? I laugh because I have fun. It's the same thing they're doing. They made the decision to be there. They're going to laugh. They're going to make it go as quickly as possible by doing what they need to do.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Can you all hear what Chrissy said? They're going to laugh because they've already chosen to be there and because it makes time go faster for them. So as long as they have already chosen to be there, they might as well enjoy doing what they're doing. Thank you very much.

Who else? Stand up for me, please. What did you say? You said they reach out to people.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I walked by today, and the guy that was on the corner put his arm around me, asked me if I wanted some fish, told me about the books that they had and who wrote them. They were interacting. He turned to me, walked over and handed the fish to somebody and said, "Take it." And then there were five girls lined up with fish.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Yeah, thank you. Your name is Shirley?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jane.

>> DEENA EBBERT: You're Shirley. Jane. Now, see, the experience that Jane had is, they invited her in to what they're doing.

What they're doing isn't necessarily sexy. Okay? It's not. I mean, let's look at these guys. They wear orange rubber waders to work and what they get to touch all day, what they handle, what they purvey is dead stuff out of the ocean. It's cold and it's smelly. Well, usually it's kind of fresh so it doesn't actually smell that bad. But what they've done is, they've created an environment that is based on invitation. For them, play is about inviting you in. "Come be a part of what we do. It may not be perfect every day. It may be chaotic. It may be unpredictable. It may be slimy, but come be a part of it." And that's what we love about that experience.

So, how do we transition that sense of invitation, that unbridled joyousness? How do we translate that into the work that we're doing? They have rules. They have OSHA regulations. They have safety issues. They have hairnets. And they're choosing to

bring so much richness of their unique and individual personalities to create an environment that's absolutely irresistible. Think about what happens to your environment when you bring the irresistible ingredient of you. That's what it is.

I know I asked a couple of questions before. Now I have a very specific question. There are a lot of possible answers. But I'm looking for just one answer to this question. The prize is the elusive blue fish. Ooh. Come on. I've got 600 people in here.

>> AUDIENCE: Ooh.

>> DEENA EBBERT: All right. That was good. For the elusive blue fish, I have a question. Why? Why? Why? Why? Why? Why do they throw the fish?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Why not?

>> DEENA EBBERT: Good answer, but it's not the one I'm looking for.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: To engage people.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Wonderful. It's not the answer I'm looking for.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because they love what they do.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Wonderful answer. It's not the one.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because they have fish.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Excellent answer. It's not the one I'm looking for.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because they want to be unique.

>> DEENA EBBERT: It's very, very true. It's an excellent answer because this is how they differentiate themselves from the other fish markets that are there. But it's not the one I'm looking for.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: To be world famous?

>> DEENA EBBERT: True. Not the answer I'm looking for.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because they want to sell fish.

>> DEENA EBBERT: What did you say?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: They need to get it to the register.

>> DEENA EBBERT: What's your name?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Joe.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Joe. Got it. They throw the fish. Joe leapt to his feet and said the right answer and the crowd went crazy.

(Applause.)

>> DEENA EBBERT: Wow, we almost had a knighting ceremony there. I felt a little bit like Margaret Thatcher. That's cool.

You know what? These guys would crawl over the counter to get to the customer. And they have.

I'm not sure exactly how this happened, but in my wonderful imaginary life, I made a story about it -- that one day tour buses full of people showed up, wandering around with their roller bags, and one of the guys walked out front to get a fish, the same thing that he'd done day after day after day. Walk out front to get the fish. Walk back and ring it back at the cash register. Walk out front to get the fish. Walk back, ring it back at the cash register. Sometimes on Saturday mornings they walk out front to get the fish and they'd walk back, ring it up at the cash register. It took them 32 steps to do that. How do you think they know it took them 32 steps to do that? Because they counted it. Out loud. Because they were bored. Is there anyone in this room who has a repetitive task this they do at work over and over again? 17 of you.

So, one day, everything went wrong. Tour buses full of people wandering around, Minnesotans with their roller bags clogging up the work. The guy can't get back with all the tourists. He looks back to one of his buddies back there and says, "Hey, hey Joe, Joe, catch this." And he throws the fish. And Joe leaps to his feet and Joe catches the fish. And all of the tourists go

(Loud cheers and applause.)

And all the fish guys go "hmm." You know? It became their signature move. It became the reason that tour buses full of people show up to watch them work. And it was a happy accident. It came

out of an experience that was so routine and so boring and so tedious and in an instant, with a slight shift in perspective, everything changed. So for me, when I'm talking about play, I'm not talking about wacky wig Wednesday. Nobody likes wacky wig Wednesday, okay? Well, I don't know, maybe a couple of people.

(Laughter.)

Uh-huh. What I'm talking about -- play, for me, translates to innovation and creativity. It's the way that we use our opportunities. I love it when stuff goes wrong. It's the way we use our opportunities to shift our perspective and reinvent our experience so that we can be prepared to look at new vistas.

So, what are you doing with the stuff that's boring? What are you doing with the stuff that goes wrong? Are you using those incredible opportunities to create new things in your space? Are you using those incredible opportunities to bring all the gifts that you have to bear on the experience? Because you've got it. What are you going to do with it?

After 15 years in corporate America, I'm no fool. I know that work is full of customers in crisis. How many people here deal with customers in crisis? How many people here are customers in crisis?

(Laughter.)

Yeah, me too. My husband calls that "high maintenance." So far, what we've got now is that I'm a high maintenance diva. Are you guys good with that? Am I the only one here? No.

My husband's a computer programmer. It's wonderful because we created this whole right-brain, left-brain thing. He comes home at night. We speak Binary Code for an hour until he gets back around to speaking English. And then sometimes I must emote and do an impromptu dance and figure out what the heck I'm talking about. It works out, for the most part, beautifully, unless I do something to break a computer, which happens pretty regularly. I'm the Typhoid Mary of computers.

I broke one of my laptops. I had this blue screen. I believe blue screen is bad and then blue screen with the red box in the middle -- is that worse? Yeah, blue screen, red box in the middle and then it did this: Bing! And then it went black. I said, "Hey, honey, the thing's on the screen with the black and the bing." And he said, "What?" He came down in the basement and he said, "What did you do?" I said, "Nothing, I just did this a whole bunch of times and it stopped." He said, "Sweetheart, I can't fix that." I said, "Why did I marry you? You're a computer pro. Fix." He said, "Baby doll, you need professional help. And you need to get someplace and get your computer fixed."

So the next morning, I did what any person would do who had a 9:00 flight. I hysterically scanned through the phone book and found the only place that was open at 7:00 in the morning. I needed to get my data off my computer. I was really passionate about it. I was a customer in crisis. And at this point the only place that was open was this grimy little dingy place called Geek Squad. Nobody had heard about it. What a dorky name. Geek Squad. Give me a break. They had some cheesy little sign in the window. It was down in the warehouse district in Minnesota. And I'm thinking, "Okay, I don't care. I mean, they're open, I think." And I'm standing at the door and I've got my computer under my arm. I've got my hand on the glass and I'm kind of looking through to see if someone will let me in. This guy walks up and he's got a darling little face. He puts his hand on the glass and he's looking at me and I'm like, "Open the door!" And he does. He opens the door. And he has this smile on his face and he reaches out and grabs my computer and he runs off. And I'm thinking, "I hope he works here."

(Laughter.)

I could see he ran back to where all the equipment is. He plugs things in. "What do you need?" "Data, 'C' drive." "Okay. I got it." I'm up front checking my watch. Big problem. Big problem.

And he saunters up after a couple of minutes and gets up real close the me and leans down and says, "Ma'am, we usually do the paperwork first, but you look real freaked out."

(Laughter.)

"OK, I've got your computer going. It'll take 20 minutes and the paperwork will take 20 minutes. Do you want a cup of coffee?" "Yeah, I want a cup of coffee." Okay, 20 minutes, good to go, I'm out the door.

I mean, really, it was a great experience. I'm feeling terrific because this young man is just a pistol. He's a hoot. This is a person who totally was able to diffuse all of my freak-outedness and a true professional who really took care of me. Josh Capellan is his name. Josh Capellan is a professional. He is highly trained. He is truly adept at what he does. He cares passionately about the standards and excellence of his work. Josh Capellan takes his work very seriously.

Look at the man! This is one of the people who is responsible for that outfit. And now that the Geek Squad has taken over the world and they're no longer stuck in some dingy little warehouse district, they're all dressed like that. That short-sleeved shirt with the pocket protector and the pens and the rulers and the protractors and the night vision binoculars and the X-boxes. They all wear that tie short on purpose. Every single person on the team carries a badge. They all wear black loafers and black pants, but they hem their pants short so you can see that they're wearing white socks. White socks! Mmm. There's nothing finer than a man in black pants and white socks. Why do you think I married my husband?

So what? Who cares? Yeah, yeah, happy, happy, get off me, okay. I've got a job to do. Does it matter if we do our job with technical expertise and we get the job done, does it make a difference how we show up? What's this lighthearted thing? Does it really work?

I went back to check on Josh and they said, "He's not here." I was really crushed. I thought he got canned for being too lighthearted, breaking the rules, having a little fun. Chatting up the customers. They said, "Oh no, we sent him out on a gig. We had a band in town and their equipment wasn't working. Josh went out and got it all figured out. They liked him so much they asked him to be their road geek. Josh went on the road with U2.

Big nerd boy has a hard time getting a date? No.

So we ask: what's in it for us? We have the right to ask that because we work hard. What's in it for us? I don't know. What's in it for you? Look what happened to their organization. Total world domination. They're everywhere, like lemmings, okay?

What's in it for you as an individual when you bring the unique beauty of who you are to bear on the world around you?

What you've got is awesome. What are you going to do with it?

That is in there to scare me. And there's a very long story attached with it that I might tell you later. But we'll move on. Actually I'm thinking about going skydiving next week. Yeah. Three things I'm scared of. Ladders, roller coasters. How do you face your fears? How do you bring your fear to benefit you? At work sometimes, that's where play exists. How do you bring your fear?

One of the best suggestions I ever got was from Steve Lundin. He's an awesome guy, he's a Ph.D. He has very fancy initials after his name. He's one of the guys who wrote the FISH! books. He's a wonderful man. He's one of my mentors. And he came up to me one day and said, "I totally double dog dare you to sing during your presentation."

I said, "Nobody wants to hear me sing. It's opera. Nobody likes opera." He said, "Give it a whirl." He's always taught me lean into your fear and bring that to work because usually that's where some of your greatest opportunities lie.

So I do encourage people to lean into your fear because that's

where you'll discover some of the greatest opportunities for what you can bring to your group.

Okay. "Make their day." Yeah, this is easy, right? All about customer service? Yeah. All customers. All the time.

I, unfortunately, think that the concept of customer service has become a little bit outdated and that's okay with me. I mean, when was the last time you got out and got really, really wonderful service?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Today.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Who from?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Nordstrom.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Oh, Nordstrom. Let me get this straight. You were out shopping at Nordstrom?

(Laughter.)

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Busted.

>> DEENA EBBERT: You're so busted. And what was the other place? Coldwater Creek? I thought you said cold pump creamery. So what happened when you had great customer service?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Well, at Nordstrom I said I need really comfortable walking shoes.

>> DEENA EBBERT: She said I need really comfortable walking shoes.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: And this woman spent quite a bit of time looking at shoes with me and hearing all my gripes about uncomfortable shoes. I got the shoes, which I wore last night and got a blister, so I took them back today and I found the same salesperson and said, "I'm really sorry, but these aren't the right shoes." She was so nice. And at Coldwater Creek, we walked in the store and this guy said, "Hi, come on in, have you been here before? We've got a great sale going on." We started talking with him. The woman who was helping with us with clothes brought us different sizes. I got a great shoe sale. So I had two great sales

experiences.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Good. Now I'm just going to recap. I know that not everybody could hear you. I'm just going to tell the Nordstrom part. Went in last night, bought some shoes. Got a blister. Went back today and guess what the salesperson said? Guess what the salesperson did not say: "Well, nobody else has complained."

(Laughter.)

Don't you love that? Well, nobody else has complained. Well, guess what, I'm complaining. The salesperson said, "Wow, what a drag, I'm really sorry. Let's get those taken care of. Let me listen to you. Let me help you."

For me, this is about making a difference. The little things that we do that make a tremendous difference in the lives of people around me.

It's stuff that happens right close to home. This stuff is around us all the time.

I see a lot of it in my neighborhood. I do not drink coffee on a regular basis because I wake up like this. So coffee must be doled out sparingly and with discretion, like a prescription. I get it like once a week. It's my treat. I usually get it when I'm mad because when you're mad, you need a treat.

In my neighborhood, there are five little coffee shops. I live in an urban neighborhood. Within a couple of blocks, I can go to five different coffee shops. I go to Starbucks. I don't go to Starbucks because the coffee is any better or different because, you know, I don't know. I'm not a connoisseur, I don't know. I can't taste the difference. I don't go there because it's cheaper, because it isn't. I don't go there because there's some kind of spectacular advertising campaign, because Starbucks doesn't advertise. I go to Starbucks because of Sarah. Because I can walk in and Sarah will look at me and she'll say, "Deena, how are you?"

And I'll say, "Oh, me. I'm okay." She goes, "Well, would you

like a tall skim hazelnut with whip mocha?" "Yeah. How'd you know that?" "Well, you've had that every time you came in here since you went to Puerto Rico. You come in every Sunday with Christopher and you get a tall skim hazelnut with whip mocha and he gets something else. In April you go for a walk at the arboretum." "Are you stalking me?" No. She's not stalking me. She's listening to me. She's listening to me. The little things make a big difference. That's what it is.

What are some little things that make a big difference? Should I bribe some more people? Who said eye contact? Love that. Thank you. Who said brag? You said brag? Tell me about brag.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Brag people.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Here's something that I think is really important. Are you ready? Little things that make a big difference. This doesn't come up very often, which is why I like to stop and point it out. It's so critical for me. It's when you brag about other people. When you are proud and you articulate your pride in the people around you, that's really critical and it makes a wonderful difference in the lives of people around you. Thank you very much.

What else is a thing that makes a big difference? Smiling. Excellent.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Go the extra step.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Follow-up.

>> DEENA EBBERT: I love that. Let's stop. There are two things that came out from over here. One was go the extra step and the other one was follow-up. I think a lot of times we get into the position of making people outrageous promises just so they'll go away. But the art of following up with them and rounding out what we've committed to I think is really critical. So thank you very much. What was yours?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Find out what their name is and say it

often.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Find out what their name is and say it very often.

What is your name? Belinda. Thank you Belinda. I love what Belinda just said. That was really smart.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Say thank you.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Who said say thank you? What's your name?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jean.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Thank you, Jean. Make connections? Who said make connections? Making connections? What does making connections mean?

I love this. This is really wonderful. What's your name? >>

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Barbara.

>> DEENA EBBERT: I love what Barbara just said. She said making connections, and then she articulated a little bit further and said have a common experience.

Have a common experience. So often when we do engage in what is traditionally known as customer service, it feels kind of transaction-based, doesn't it? But what I see happening down at the fish market is that it's a common experience. It's an invitation. Come and be a part of what we've got going on. People want to be included! People want to be invited. People want to be a part of that wonderful, mysterious and arcane knowledge that only you have.

Do y'all understand that you are intimidating? No, don't laugh. Well, you can laugh because you're my laugh track.

When we are experts at something, we intimidate other people.

I wandered around on the expo floor today. I went up to a couple of people and said, "Hey, can you tell me how the whole publishing thing works because I don't get it and I kind of have a couple of books that I kind of started but I'm too embarrassed to call people at Hyperion because I didn't want to say anything wrong and look like a dufus."

So I sat and talked to a couple people for half an hour and they explained it to me. But it took me four years to have that conversation because they're experts in something that I don't get.

Think how scary that might be for someone to come and approach you. So how do we create the invitation so that the approach is irresistible? That's what it is. That's what it is. You've got it. What are you going to do with it?

Now, granted, every day doesn't go well. We have bad days. What do you do at the end of a day when you get home from work and you have had a bad day? Eat ice cream. What else?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Jack Daniels.

>> DEENA EBBERT: In front we have a Jack Daniels Lynchburg lemonade. Over here they're just eating ice cream. Here in the reserved seats they're drinking cold drinks. What else do you do? Go for a walk? Kick your dog? Pet your dog? Kick your husband? Go for a run?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Stand up, turn around three times and shake it off.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Stand up, turn around three times and shake it off. Okay. So I had this bad day at work. I mean bad day, this is back in the dark days, the corporate America days, the black suit days. Black sweater and slacks days. Bad day at work. Got to work late. Had emails, voice mails. Oh joy, oh rapture. Went to a meeting. Wasn't prepared. Embarrassed. Didn't have my stuff. This is before lunch. Okay, there is no lunch because I'm working through lunch. I look down at 3:30 and I have one black sock, one brown sock. Very nice. Work late. For some reason everybody else in the planet is working late. I'm stuck in traffic. And I'm almost home and some other driver makes an expressive hand gesture at me. I take those personally. So this has just been a bad day. So I walk in the house, I take my briefcase and I throw it on the floor. And I kick it. And when I kicked it, my shoe came off and it spiraled up in the

air and then landed. And then I was so mad about that, I took my other shoe off and threw it on my first shoe. Then I looked around my house and realized my husband wasn't home yet. It's no good throwing a tantrum without an audience.

(Laughter and applause.)

You know, so I figured I'd save my energy. I went in the kitchen and I sat down at the table and I pulled over this big stack of bills. I'm already having a bad day, might as well pay bills. Third bill in I look at it, it's my cell phone bill. It's \$300.00 Hello, 21st century. This should not be \$300.00. And I realized that I was holding in my hand the key to all of my frustrations. I'll call customer service.

(Laughter.)

I'm going to take it out on them. And I was in the process of being particularly not delightful when my husband walked in the door and he walked in the kitchen and he went, "Baby." "Go away. I'm on the phone with customer service." And I continued to increase in volume and hideousness. And he came back in and said, "Baby doll, what are you doing?" I said, "Christopher, can you totally not see that I am so on the phone with customer service? Can you just give me some space?"

The customer service rep took that brief moment to hang up on me. My husband thought that was fabulous. I was really mad. I started heading for the front door. I grabbed the car keys. He comes between me and the front door and he said, "What are you doing?" I said, "I'm going over to Troy Smather's house. He runs customer service. I'll talk to him about it when he's having dinner." My husband said, "Baby, no, no drive. Give me keys." I said, "I'm mad." He said, "No, you evolved. Go back and call customer service and be nice. Apologize." I said, "I am not calling back customer service and being nice. They just hung up on me." He goes, "No kidding? Go back in there and call customer service and be

nice." And I love my husband, so I'm back in the kitchen to call customer service and be nice.

The phone rang and I got Mike on the phone. There's no picture of Mike because we only ever talked on the phone. I said, "Hey, you probably know who this is. I'm the lady that just got hung up on." "Oh yeah, we all know about you here." I said, "Don't hang up on me. You probably want to pass me off to a supervisor." He said, "Oh, you'd be so surprised. I'm actually really good at my job. I can probably help you without handing you off to my supervisor." "Okay. True. Okay, yes. "I'm sorry." I have no political capital left. "I'm sorry. I'm a big fat jerk. Please help me with my phone bill. I don't get why it's \$300.00 and I was having a bad day and I was having it out on you." He said, "Let's try something. Why don't we try to be partners and see if we can't figure this out?" What partners? I thought it was customer service? I'm the customer, I get the service. But as previously mentioned, I have no political capital left, so partners is a good option.

In two minutes Mike had resolved everything that wasn't working with my phone bill and went on to teach me stuff that I hadn't managed to figure out myself after working in the telecom industry for 15 years. Mike, what's the deal? 15 minutes ago I was evil lady and now I'm having the best customer service experience I ever had in my life. He said, "You know, I take a great deal of pride in my work. I chose this line of work. When somebody appreciates what I do for them, it makes me feel worthwhile. When somebody appreciates me, it makes me feel worthwhile. So do you know what I did? I set myself up for feeling worthwhile. I ask people to partner with me in creating a solution. Then they feel like they have more control over the experience. They feel like a participant. They feel like they have some say in what will happen when they're engaged in an interaction with me."

So for me, customer service doesn't mean standing on one side of

the counter or the other. Customer service means creating an interaction. Think of all of interactive possibilities you have during the day. Across counters, whether it's with a co-worker or with a client, whether it's at the dinner table with your kids. How are you showing up for those interactions? What kind of impact are you making? You got it. What you going to do with it? Think about all the people whose lives will be worthwhile when they walk away from you.

Let me ask you a question. Is there any such thing as too much customer service?

I think we all have our tolerance levels. You know, I mean sometimes I go shopping and I just really, really want to be left alone. So what? Am I supposed to expect people to read my mind? I think we have a responsibility as customers as well as providers of service to show up and articulate really what we need.

So now what I've found is that if I am in an experience and there's something that I desire to have as a result from the transaction, then I let that be known. If I go into a restaurant, I say, "Hey, do you know what? I'm really tired and super hungry. Can you stick me in some really quiet corner and come over once to take my order and then once to drop the bill so that I can be antisocial?" I get really good customer service if I ask for what I need.

I think that when we're providing customer service, it's important for us to be perceptive. And there's nothing wrong with asking someone.

In your perfect world, how would this transaction turn out? There's no crime in that. I think we have forgotten that we have the right to talk to one another outside of the prescribed conversations.

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: I had this experience last night with exactly your spin about the restaurant person. It was good.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Too much in your face? So did you say please leave me alone?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Actually I did not. The person across the table that I was talking to did.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Good. Honestly, I think that the days of transactions are over. If we're going to interact effectively as human beings, we just need to be really brave, say what we need and sometimes ask other people what they need if we're in a position where we can help them.

"Be there" is a fabulous concept and not what I'm talking about today. If I could -- I told my boss that I want to do this -- I would totally get rid of that and make it "Be here." "Be here" is awesome. "Be here" is wonderful. "Be here" is amazing. Sometimes being here is itchy, scratchy, it's too hot, it's too cold, I don't like it, it doesn't fit right.

Have you ever noticed how incredibly efficient you are on the day before you go on vacation?

(Laughter.)

Why is that? 'Cuz you want to "be there" on vacation. Being here? It's hard to do.

Being present is a constant practice in which we must engage.

How many people here, when you go to get gas, pay at the pump? Why?

>> AUDIENCE MEMBER: Because you have to.

>> DEENA EBBERT: Because it's faster, it's easier. They make you. Yeah. Some places you have to. Some places -- if you're from Oregon you're not allowed to pump your own gas. I pay at the pump because in Minnesota, you have a choice. You can pay at the pump or pay inside. I pay at the pump. I do not pay at the pump because it is quicker. I do not pay at the pump because it is easier. It certainly isn't any less expensive. I pay at the pump because I can see the kid who works inside that Quickie Mart and I'm not going in there.

(Laughter.)

That kid's a freak. God. Every time I come here, he looks weirder. What has he done to his hair? Is that hair? That's not a hat. Look, it's a hairdo and it sticks up like this. It could put an eye out. That's an OSHA issue. I'm not going in there. I'm paying at the pump.

(Laughter.)

And I can see him. He's got tattoos and piercings everywhere.

Well, here down I have no idea. Here up, there's a lot of hardware. I'll stay here and pay at the pump. Then I realized what a hip hypocrite I am. I travel all over the world and say, "Oh, let's have a hug and let's have meaningful interactions." I'm standing out here at Pump 5 because I'm afraid of the kid inside the Quickie Mart and I have never met him. I already decided what he was like before discovering who he is.

So I thought, all right, I'm going to go in and pay inside. Straightened up my sweater set. Walked in. And I can see him. He's watching me walk in. He's watching me watch him watch me walk in. Do you know what he's thinking? "Oh, that lady's coming in here. She's a freak! She's one of those sweater-set ladies. She's going to come in here. She's going to want to sell me Avon." So I walked up to him and said, "Hi. I like your hair color this week." It was pink. Like pink! And he looked at me and he said, "Do you really like it?" And I said, "Yeah, actually I really do. I mean I saw it all the way from Pump 5, that's why I came in. It's a lot better than last week, that yellow that you had. You looked kind of jaundiced." And he said, "Well, you know, I've been having a hard time getting the color to stay this pink. It kind of washes out. So I was thinking about going back to black." "No, you should totally use this color-stay shampoo, it's fantastic." And we started talking about hair products. I find out that Scott and I have a lot more in common -- that's his name, by the way, not "freak kid who works in the Quickie Mart -- that Scott and I have a lot more in common than I

ever would have imagined if all I did was stand outside at Pump 5 and look at him through the glass. Makes me think: How often do we decide before we discover? What are our opportunities to reinvent the way we invite the world into our perception? That's being here. That's being present. A lot of people call that diversity. I call it an awesome opportunity to learn what's around you.

So, you know, like I mentioned earlier, we all have our way that we show up for work and the way that we show up on the weekend. We have our little costumes that we wear to work and our little costumes that we wear on the weekend.

I'm a motorcycle mama. I'm proud of it. My husband Christopher and I, we ride Harleys on the weekends. It's fantastic. I mean, when we pull up to the Quickie Mart to get gas, usually when we go there, I'd go inside, the sweater set and the car, and I pay at the pump. But when we pull up on the motorcycle and he pumps the gas and I go inside to pay, I'm all in my leathers, people get out of my way. I go to the front of the line because I'm suddenly intimidating and scary. I am transformed from "completely mild-mannered sweater-set lady" into "motorcycle mama."

Am I the only motorcycle mama in the house? No! Stand up, motorcycle mamas. Stand up. Stand up. Everyone look at them and be afraid. Be very afraid. You thought they were just mild-mannered librarians. They're renegades, demons. And do you know what? We all are.

So how do you bring the thrill of the little bit of renegade, the little bit of deviant, that unique nature of you, to work? Bring it in. It's cool. It's amazing. It's different. Don't leave it out in the car. Like David Whyte said, sometimes we get to work and we leave our personality out in the car. Crack the window a little bit so we can breathe inside. Bring it on in. It's amazing stuff.

What is that? Paintings. Cave paintings. Cave drawings. What does it say? Moo. What do you think it says? That's their menu.

Tonight we're having thing with horns. What do you think it says? It says I'm here. Why do they do it? To make a mark. For who? Anybody who came by the cave.

We revere this. We love this. I was here. I matter. Look at me. I have value.

What is that? Graffiti. Our version of cave paintings. What does it say? I was here. I matter. You know?

I live in a neighborhood where we get tagged. I have a blue garage. It's a perfect palate. It's "please come tag me."

And so, being an urban sweater-set wearing homeowner, I always disliked graffiti until the day that I ran across this picture. I realized that it was exactly the same conversation as this picture. "I'm here. I matter. You may not understand my language, but I have something to offer. I have something to say. I make a difference. I exist. Do you see me? Do you hear me? Do you know who I am?"

I love this conversation because I realize that I have gotten really self-righteous with myself about what was artistic, what was worth talking about, until I really looked at that and realized that someone was trying to have a conversation with me and I wasn't willing to meet them halfway. So how do we meet people halfway for the conversation? And understand, I'm 41 years old. I'm a 41 year-old white woman who lives in Minnesota. I'm married. I have no kids. There's a lot I don't know about having a conversation with you because your life is completely different from mine. So how do we meet in the middle and what are we going to discover when we get there?

This is why I think libraries are hot. This is why I think librarians are sexy. Because you create that platform. You allow people that blank canvas and you give them access to a variety of conversations that can illuminate their perspective on life. You safeguard my right to learn something that I don't even know yet that I wanted to learn. To help fill a craving in my life that I haven't

even discovered. Thank you for doing that. Dang, you should be proud of yourselves. You should be really proud of yourselves. You choose to do this. When you did, you made a difference for me. So thank you.

The "choose" part. Man, the "choose" part's easy. Choose. You wake up, look in the mirror and a lot of people choose -- and then they come to share that with you. You can choose absolutely anything you want. I mean, "Choose your attitude" doesn't mean choose a happy attitude.

I was in the basement and the phone rang. One of my friends called and said, "I want to talk to you about this 'choose your attitude' thing." I said, "Okay, let's talk. What's going on?" "Well, people have started coming in and they started choosing their own attitude." I said, "Okay, got it, and?" "Well they're not choosing the attitude I want them to choose."

(Laughter.)

I said, "Okay. Let me get this straight. People are choosing their attitude and it's not the attitude you want them to choose." I said, "What are you doing?" "I'm assigning them a different attitude."

(Laughter.)

I said, "Sister, we need to talk. You can choose any attitude you want. You cannot actually assign someone else an attitude. But you can definitely influence it."

This is Nemo, my next-door neighbor. Our neighborhood is quaint, which means the houses are really old, really small and really close together. I grew up in Arizona and then emigrated to Minnesota.

This is my first house. I'm oh so grown up. I moved in in February. I looked outside one morning and it was precious. There was a little Courier & Ives scene. The snow is falling. All my neighbors are out there with the hats and pompoms on the top. They

are shoveling. As cute as it is, I have no intention of going out there. I don't have a snow shovel and I will not go out there with a teaspoon. I see that my next-door neighbor has shoveled his walk and then he started to shovel my walk. And I said to my husband, "Babe, there's a guy out there and he's shoveling our sidewalk." My husband said, "Good." I said, "Well he's wearing a propeller beanie." And my husband said, "Leave him alone." I went outside and said, "Thank you so much." He said, "You can get me back tomorrow. There's a hardware store down the street you can get yourself a shovel. We've been trading off snow shoveling now for seven years."

Here's the weird thing. Every time I see Nemo, he's wearing a propeller beanie. I see him leave for work in the morning. Beanie. Coming home at night. Beanie. Spring turns to summer, backyard, inflated pool, grandkids. Beanie. Fall comes, raking leaves. Beanie. One night his wife Sue comes out the front door. She has on a dress, she was beautiful. She stands to the side, Nemo walks up. He's got a suit on. He looks so handsome. He puts the key in the lock and turns the key and turns to his wife. He holds out his arm. She puts her hand on his arm and he escorts her to the car. And he is wearing a propeller beanie.

Finally I went up to him and said, "Nemo what's the deal with the beanie?" He said, "When I was a kid I always wanted one of these. I never got one. 10 years ago Sue and I were out shopping for toys for our grandkids. She was over on the other side of the store and I saw this display of propeller beanies and I kind of waited until she wasn't looking. I got one. Started getting to the cash register." Gentlemen, as a point of interest, this is not sneaky enough. So Sue saw him and said, "What are you doing?" "Well, I love this." "Well, for Heaven's sakes, go and buy it." He went to the cash register. He paid \$6.99, cut off the tag and he has worn one ever since. He has 152 propeller beanies. He wears them to work. He wears them to parties. He wears them to do chores. He

wears them to church. He wears them to funerals.

Now, if he's in a house of worship, he takes off the beanie because that's the respectful thing to do. Invariably, if he's at a funeral, somebody will come up to him afterwards and they'll say, "Nemo, will you put the beanie back on? Because today is a sad day and I need to see something to give me hope."

This man is a one man attitude epidemic. And most of the people whose lives he touches won't actually even get to speak to him. They'll just be stuck in their car in traffic wishing more than anything that they purchased the laser blaster option on the front of their car. And they'll look and look away and look again. There will be Nemo totally blissed out, driving with a big old green Suburban wearing a propeller beanie.

I said, "Why do you do that? I mean, it's weird. Where are you going to keep 152 propeller beanies?"

And he said, "I have a really great life. I have a wonderful, incredible, blessed life. I'm not saying it's been easy every day, but it's really a wonderful life. And I forget that. So I wear this beanie as a reminder. It's my symbol. It's what I choose to remind myself of the extraordinary nature of my life."

So what would you choose if you could choose anything to remind you of the extraordinary nature of your life? Would it be a theme song or a silly hat or white socks? A blinky button? I don't know what it would be. But what would you choose? Because you have absolutely everything you need. And I hope you choose to use it.

Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

>> LESLIE BURGER: Thank you, Deena.

The Chinese philosopher Lao Tzu said, "The journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." I hope that this program has given you some ideas on how to take that first step, and I hope that you will join me on a journey towards a transformed future for our

libraries, for ALA and the profession.

Thank you for coming this afternoon.

(Applause.)

CAPTIONING PROVIDED BY:

CAPTION FIRST, INC.

P.O. BOX 1924

Lombard, IL 60148

1-800-825-5234

This is being provided in a rough-draft format. Communication Access Realtime Translation (CART) is provided in order to facilitate communication accessibility and may not be a totally verbatim record of the proceedings

* * * * *