

NOTE: This speech was given on January 13, 2024 during the Installation banquet by incoming 2024 National President Robin Davenport.

Everyone Has a Story and Honoring Our Stories with Integrity to Shape Our Future is so important to all of us. That is #RURITAN STRONG!

As Ruritan leaders our mission should always be "community first." Each day we are challenged with shaping a vision of success for all communities, creating, and maintaining a healthy climate, cultivating leadership in others, improving our communities, and managing people, data, and processes. Times have changed and we must rise to the challenges that face us.

"There is no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you." (Maya) Every day, I reflect on this quote, and it provides a reminder of the many unknown individual stories in the lives of our communities and their untold stories. As I reflect on my personal story and share my journey, four words power my life and work each day: communication, purpose, passion, and pride. Communication builds relationships and success. Purpose drives me to stay determined and focused on my goals. My passion provides the fuel to accomplish my purpose; and finally, I take pride in doing my job to the fullest with no regrets.

My stories, both personal and professional, have included challenges and successes and my active involvement in state and national organizations provided many rewarding and beneficial experiences, successfully guiding me through those challenges and successes. Locally, my experiences include valuable time serving my club, Creeds Ruritan, along with numerous other leadership and representative opportunities in the Holland District. My state involvement began with serving on the Association of Virginia Ruritans I served as Secretary, Treasurer, and President. At the national level, I served on several National committees and most recently completed as your 2023 President Elect. I have been fortunate and honored to serve our Ruritan National organization.

Now as I stand here, I am ready for the greatest job. Serving as your 2024 National President.

I am committed to Ruritan and what it stands for. I realize there are many topics important to all of us who serve Ruritan. My primary purpose will be to lead with my voice at the national level for all of you. I am not afraid to take risks for the betterment of Ruritan. I will speak truth to power, and question controversial issues, ideas, and topics to deepen discussions. I will do this to find better solutions, rather than assigning blame.

I want to promote national leadership and offer these ten important leadership characteristics for effective leadership in Ruritan.

1. Lead with honesty and integrity.
2. Lead with trust and empowerment.
3. Lead with communication, collaboration, and connectivity.
4. Lead with positive energy.
5. Lead with confidence.
6. Lead with commitment and persistence.
7. Lead with the willingness to learn, unlearn and relearn.
8. Lead with creativity and innovation.
9. Lead with insight.
10. Lead by inspiring.

I believe in Ruritan and its opportunities for our leaders, for you. My entire career has revolved around serving Ruritan and learning and leading with all of you. I am here today because of the opportunities through Ruritan and my relationships with you and across this nation.

Ruritan continues to offer learning opportunities for growth through professional development, mentoring, and leadership. As an organization that serves you, we must continue to provide support and services that are relevant to the issues we face each day. The stories I hear and learn about will be the evidence and feedback I will use to form our national platform to promote meaningful growth and common-sense change in our organization.

Now I have been asked by many as to why the Turtle is so important to me. The turtle, revered across cultures and mythologies, is a symbol of profound significance. Its deliberate and steady pace represents patience, resilience, and longevity. The protective shell embodies security and a retreat to introspection. In Native American traditions, the turtle is a symbol of Mother Earth, grounding us to our roots. In Eastern philosophies, it signifies stability and wisdom, with the world carried on its back. The turtle's symbolism reminds us to navigate life's challenges with calmness, adaptability, and a steadfast spirit. Embrace the wisdom of the turtle, and let its symbolism guide you on your Ruritan journey.

As many of you know, there has traditionally been a yearly fundraising activity. For my activity, I want you to give back to your local community. What I will do, I will be asking for the amounts you do in community donations and the number of Ruritan scholarships you have given with their totals. There will be more on this coming year.

Now, you know every Past President has a membership goal and I want to be the first in over ten years of a growth. First, we must remember those clubs that are struggling and set up to help them. Retaining the members, we have for retention is so important to our organization. Now, listen carefully, 5 and 1 gets it done. Yes, just five new members plus one new district club will get us on a positive track. Now, you are hearing a secret. I

will be challenging your, our National Directors, to start a new club or going back to the district they serve and restarting a club that folded. Guess the cat is out of the bag. They will be working closely with their District Governor in achieving this goal.

I am confident that I can meet your expectations as 2024 President of Ruritan. I will take your stories to those that need to hear them. I would be honored with the opportunity to support our National Directors and help establish a community of learners throughout our nation. It is with excitement, energy, experience, pride, and integrity that I aspire to honor each one of our stories to propel our organization as your next Ruritan President.

Remember #RURITAN STRONG!