

COVD 38TH ANNUAL MEETING

THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH

Who is COVD?

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Dr. Scott gave the following speech during the Installation & Induction Banquet at the COVD 38th Annual Meeting in Rancho Mirage, California on Saturday, October 18, 2008.



Good evening colleagues, friends, families and guests. I hope everyone has enjoyed this meeting, our excellent continuing education and this location. I remember the last time we were in Palm Springs for our 25th annual meeting and for the first time ever we presented some “basic courses,” which were well attended. This just reminds me of how much our organization has grown and what we have accomplished together. Now we have five Applied Concepts courses before our meeting every year! This year we added a

new course on Lenses, a subject near and dear to my heart. Thank you to the volunteers and presenters who have helped to accomplish this. I can imagine that as we continue to grow we will have other courses added, possibly advanced concepts courses for experienced clinicians. With a membership organization, getting things done is a process. Sometimes it is a slower process than we would like, but by working together we can make it happen. I remember asking that we develop something like the applied concepts courses long before we tried them in 1995, because when I attended my first COVD meeting I felt overwhelmed and unprepared to understand the main lectures. Thanks to the caring doctors I met there who love what they do so much, I still wanted to come back to the next meeting and try to learn more instead of being frustrated. I came back to each meeting for the continuing education and companionship. I get such great support and motivation from COVD members, and the relationships I have developed over the years are so important to me. Some of the best mentors and teachers that I’ve had, I met here. I could ask any questions, discuss patients, talk about practice management, meet the best developmental optometrists and writers in the country, and always feel like part of the “family.” I can’t thank all of you enough. For those of you who are here for the first time or the 30th time you probably know what I mean when I say COVD is like a family. We don’t always agree about theories, and may have different ideas about what the organization should be doing, but we do love what we do and care about each other and our patients. I really appreciate and care about all of you.

For me, COVD is all about the relationships. Helen Keller said, “*Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.*” We need to be united in purpose and action and we need each other to be accountable to the big picture. We are blessed with

a membership, Board, and staff that have unique talents that complement each other. This is a volunteer organization. As incoming president, I am just the most visible of the volunteers. I could never do this without the support of all the other volunteers who work on all our projects. At this time, I'd like to thank and recognize all of our volunteers, past presidents, past and present Board members, IECB members, committee members, our state directors, writers, and our advisory board members, especially Toni Bristol who generously donates so much of her time. Please stand up and be acknowledged.

I'd also like to thank our ED, Pam Happ, and our staff, Jackie Cencer, Penny Melkerson-Kirby, and Kristen Miller, at the international office who have done so much to help this organization and meeting be such a success. Knowing I have the support of all these people gave me the courage to take the position as President of COVD. Past AOA President, Kevin Alexander, said "*Few leaders set out to lead*" and I know that is true for me. I know many of you sitting out there think you could not do this, or could not lead a committee or be a Board member, but you all have the potential or you would not be doing what you are doing as a career. I encourage you to get involved and there will be a magic moment of leadership for you. You will have the opportunity to be involved with people with special gifts and will build relationships that last a lifetime. These relationships have built a very strong optometric community that is not only national, but international. Yes, you are just one person and may not feel very powerful, but Vince Lombardi said, "*The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual.*" So please look at list of committees and Board representatives that will be listed on our website, and see if there is a committee or project that you would like to know more about and contact that Board member—we'd love to have you involved.

I remember when Nancy Torgerson really started our PR project with her dream that vision therapy would no longer be the best kept secret. I also want to realize that dream. In fact, we've removed the words "*Optometry's Best Kept Secret*" from our website because we don't want to treat vision therapy like a best kept secret anymore!

We now have a great website that is continuously being expanded, we have blogs, we have email blasts, we have webinars. Although we have made significant progress, we still aren't there yet. We have some real

opportunities right now that are exciting and we may actually be approaching a tipping point. We have made some significant and important connections with the schools and colleges of optometry due to our Tour visits (thank you Lynn Hellerstein for your vision and continued commitment to this), and we have a chance to start to impact faculty and students with the need for developmental optometry and vision therapy. Our success stories from our child and adult patients are very powerful in showing this need. These stories are what motivate us all to keep spreading the word.

We have some exciting and significant research on convergence insufficiency that was presented at this meeting. Our small research grant helped to start this project, and this year we will help to begin an even more exciting project relating reading performance to vision therapy for patients with CI. If only we had more money for research! We had to turn down other very worthy projects, and we need the research for our practices and our PR programs. We need donations to support more research, our Tour visits to schools, and our PR projects. Kay Grace said, "*In good times and bad, we know that people give because you meet needs, not because you have needs.*" We want to meet the needs of our patients and all those children and adults who are struggling due to undiagnosed vision problems. I know you are as tired as I am of parents asking "*Where were you 4 years ago when my child was in the third grade?*" or "*Why didn't the teacher or my optometrist refer me?*" when you were always right there all along. They just didn't know it, they didn't know what was wrong or where to get help. We need to continue to build relationships with the optometry schools, teachers, and other professionals. We need these relationships so we can achieve our dream of vision therapy being practiced by more optometrists, and other professionals and the public knowing how important it is to access this care. If you don't feel you have time to donate, then please donate money for the Tour or for student grants or for PR, even just a small monthly donation from many will make a difference.

We want to help your practices thrive by offering mentoring and continuing education, see more associates become fellows and fellows help others learn and grow, continue to grow our membership, help with third party, practice management issues and marketing. We can do this with your assistance and involvement.

We have shared and collaborated on many projects with OEP. In addition, we have liaisons with: AOA,

PAVE, NORA, AAO, ACBO, IFBO, ICVC, and CSO. Our intraprofessional cooperation and respect between organizations is crucial and an important component in building the optometric community. I look forward to our continued teamwork!

As a Board member these last few years, I have had COVD members say to me: “*COVD should do this or that.*” But I want to ask you a very important question: “*Who is COVD?*” You are COVD! It’s you, the members - your money, your efforts, your time, your ideas. We all work together to accomplish our goals. Remember, alone we can do so little, together we can do so much. Please join us this year in doing much; let’s make this year the tipping point. I feel that the time is now. Let’s make the most of our opportunities.

As the great comedian, George Burns, stated, “*The secret of a good sermon is to have a good beginning and a good ending, and to have the two as close together as possible.*”

With that, I’d like to thank you all for your support and caring. Let’s enjoy this evening and each other!
