



wellness & safety

Schools Insurance Authority



Volume XXIX, No. 2 • November – December 2018

Gratitude: It deserves to be a lifestyle, not just a season

By Lyn M Poll, M.S., SIA Prevention Services

Sure, the holidays are a good reminder for all of us to be thankful and appreciate the people, moments and things we have in our lives, but how and when did gratitude become merely a “season”? Shouldn’t gratitude also be a lifestyle? Wouldn’t our lives be more fulfilling if gratitude became a way of life? Wouldn’t our community, workplace, family events, schools, and kids be better? What if we took a bold leap of faith and created an “ecosystem” of gratitude? What if we were to treat each of our days, and the people who move through them, as gifts and call each day the present? With that level of gratitude, every day would be a holiday, not just a passing season.



Practicing true gratitude has proven to benefit the mind, body and spirit in a number of ways. Research shows that people who make gratitude a lifestyle, and not just a gesture here and there, have lower stress levels, lower blood pressure, improved sleep, stronger relationships and stronger immune systems, to name just a few.

Of course, adding another task to the list of “to do’s” can in itself be overwhelming, but with many positives at stake, why not challenge yourself to build a lifestyle of gratitude in 2019 and add it to your list of “ta da’s”? If you’re like me and appreci-

ate a good challenge, then here are a few ways to help you step up and get started:

- 1. Say “thank you” to the everyday people in your life.** One of the simplest ways to embark on a lifestyle of gratitude is to think about those you encounter every day—co-workers, public transit drivers, your children, the person who makes your morning coffee—and then think about the last time you said “thank you” to them. If it’s been a while, then consider writing a nice note or taking time to stop and offer a genuine, detailed thank you. Follow up by trying to be consistent in expressing your gratitude every time you see them.
- 2. Say “thank you” for the things in your life.** Yes, things. It may seem awkward to say we’re thankful for our possessions but, in truth, we are. Maybe you’re thankful for your comfortable bed at night, the sweat-pants you put on after work or the kitchen gadget that makes your life easier. The next time you use these things, pause in the moment of gratitude. Also, don’t forget to say thank you for having a roof over your head, enough food to eat, a car to drive, and hot and cold water.
- 3. Keep a gratitude journal.** Start by writing down five or six things daily for which you’re grateful, and include the big things, like good health. Then the small ones, like delicious coffee, or perhaps a quote that struck you, or something you thought was beautiful. The sky’s the limit. Acknowledging what you’re grateful for will keep

(continued on page 2)

The SIA staff wishes you and your family good health, laughter, and joy this holiday season and throughout 2019.





Kings Canyon USD's maintenance team achieves accident-free goals

The dedicated maintenance team at Kings Canyon USD has helped its district achieve the impressive goal of going more than 600 straight days without an accident. While Maintenance Director Joseph Gonzalez and Custodial Manager Frank Carrillo acknowledge that their staff operates in conditions that sometimes can be dangerous, they say that guidance and encouragement have helped their team successfully make staying safe the top priority.

Eleven years ago the department saw frequent absences because of injuries and illness. "I believe there was a general feeling among the group that they didn't matter. That their work wasn't important," Gonzalez said. But over time, he said the message changed and so did the culture of the department. Gonzalez and Carrillo wanted their team to know they were important, respected and that they had a voice, something that would be repeated at every opportunity, such as at formal meetings and in daily conversations with the group. Working through some difficult discussions, the words led to actions and slowly the culture began to shift. The dialog in the department transitioned from conflict to service. Goals were set to reduce the number of open work orders, and emphasis was placed on closing out orders and providing excellent customer service.



Joseph Gonzalez and Frank Carrillo

Through the years, Gonzalez presented challenges to the team, such as showing up to work and having no injuries for 30 days. Despite concerns, the team achieved the goal. In recognition of the achievement, Gonzalez hosted a barbecue lunch – and then set a new goal of going six months without injury. The team has since surpassed both the six-month- and 12-month goals and is now focusing on a two-year goal.

Today, the maintenance team is a positive force. Ask any veteran in the department and they'll tell you that their priorities are "safety and students." Carrillo said that the team doesn't focus on the safety days number anymore, "they just focus on being safe." Now, when someone joins the department, the veterans introduce themselves and share their safety goals with the new team members to "build them up."

Congratulations to the maintenance team at Kings Canyon USD!

Thank you to KCUSD's employee newsletter The Intercomm for sharing their story.

Gratitude (continued from page 1)

you focused on what you have rather than what you don't have. Even when you're not having a great day, challenge yourself to find something to be grateful for and remember that each day has its gifts.

(Check out a free online gratitude journal at Thnx4.org and take the Gratitude Challenge.)

- 4. Say "thanks" to the important people in your life. While many of us are coached to say "thank you" for small things in our lives, we don't get many messages about saying thanks for the big things. For example, when was the last time you sat down and told a parent, sibling or close friend how truly grateful you are for what they've given you and continue to give you? Granted, they're probably aware that you're grateful, but articulating your gratitude adds to living a lifestyle of thanks. In fact, during my research I came across a video that made me laugh, cry and reflect on my own grateful journey, all in a matter of minutes. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oHv6vTKD6lg>).

Opportunities to show gratitude can pass as fast as a Thanksgiving holiday season. But with a little extra awareness, a small lesson, such as a father teaching a son to say thank you, or a quick thanks to someone who serves you coffee in the morning, can become a lifestyle where saying thanks for the smallest as well as the biggest kindnesses in life can eventually become automatic. Practicing gratitude can be as magical and uplifting as watching a child opening his or her first gift on Christmas morning. By creating a lifestyle of gratitude, you can make every day Christmas morning, if not for yourself, then for the others in your life.

Perhaps Ferris Bueller said it best: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

Resources:

- <https://www.naturespath.com/en-us/blog/what-is-gratitude-how-to-practice-it-this-holiday-season/>
- <https://kaplanclinic.com/articles/4-ways-to-practice-gratitude-during-the-holidays/>
- <https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/topic/gratitude/definition>

Online gratitude journal: Thnx4.org

Reducing property losses in your districts starts with awareness

A teacher leaves his or her classroom in a hurry after school to make an appointment. The next morning the laptops that the students were using the day before are gone. What could the teacher have done to prevent this incident from happening?

Unfortunately, the theft of laptops and other district property is not uncommon and each loss directly affects a district's budget. Our member districts have a minimum deductible of \$5,000, so every loss up to and including that amount comes directly from district funds.

As a member of SIA, your district is part of the group that pays for property loss claims. When losses are over \$5,000, the district pays the deductible and then the money is taken from the pooled amount. This in turn affects all other SIA members. For major property losses, the pool purchases excess coverage from insurance carriers. Nevertheless, all losses add up to increased district costs.

There are many opportunities to reduce property losses at our campuses, starting with becoming more aware of the surroundings. Here are some additional ways to make a difference:

1. Maintain the security you already have

- **Lock doors when away** from classrooms and offices.
- **Close blinds or curtains** when you leave to prevent others from seeing room contents.
- **Ensure that fire and security alarms are working.** Establish off-hour access policies and procedures so that only staff with prior approval are on campus.

2. Post warning signs

- **Use WeTip signage** to remind those who come on campus that crime-reporting tools are in effect. WeTip is free and available to all of our member districts. For more information contact tfranco@sia-jpa.org.
- **Use SIA's free labels to warn of alarm and camera usage.** Order forms for our warning labels are on our website at www.sia-jpa.org.

3. Maintain landscaping

- **Trim vegetation around buildings** to increase visibility and limit hiding spots.
- **Remove vegetation that might** be blocking camera angles.

4. Involve students, families and neighbors

- **Share goals of reducing campus crime with students, families and community.** Engage them so that they take ownership of your campus.
- **Encourage neighbors to call law enforcement or WeTip** if they see anything suspicious.

In our next issue, we'll share ways of reducing the opportunity for arson at your site.

SIA is a not-for-profit organization composed of school districts that have formed a joint powers authority for the purpose of self-insurance.





- WeTip in the winter
- Wet weather safety tips

WeTip in the winter

Don't forget to promote WeTip to help reduce crime on your campus during the holidays. WeTip is an anonymous hotline available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. The service is free to all SIA members. To help promote the program at your school or work site, request posters, wallet cards, magnets and more. For more information, contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org or 916-364-1281, ext. 1256.



Sign up for WeTip

For information and materials, contact Teresa Franco at tfranco@sia-jpa.org.

Hold hand rails, wear sensible shoes, slow down in wet weather

- **Wear shoes with good traction.** Avoid high heels.
- **Keep a reasonably slow walking pace** and don't turn sharply.
- **When navigating sidewalks and parking lots,** keep your hands free as much as possible to help maintain balance.
- **Walk on designated pathways.** Avoid taking shortcuts, as they may be slippery.
- **When using stairways,** be sure to hold the hand rail.
- **When coming indoors from wet weather, wipe your shoes on a doormat to avoid tracking wetness into the building.** If doormats are soaked, inform the facilities manager.
- **If you spot a building area that's slippery,** block the area and promptly inform appropriate maintenance staff.



The material in this newsletter should be part of your Injury and Illness Prevention Plan (IIPP).

Keep a copy of this newsletter in your IIPP binder and be sure all employees receive a copy.

"Reflect upon your present blessings, of which every man has plenty; not on your past misfortunes, of which all men have some." — Charles Dickens

Wellness & Safety is published by the Schools Insurance Authority, P.O. Box 276710, Sacramento, CA 95827-6710, (916) 364-1281, 1-877-SIA-KIDS. The SIA is a joint powers authority, composed of 37 members, that collectively provides workers' compensation, liability, property, and health benefit insurance coverage on behalf of its member districts. The SIA school districts are: Arcohe, Atwater, Buckeye, Camino, Center, Central Sierra ROP, El Dorado Co. Off. Ed., El Dorado High, Elk Grove, Elverta, Folsom-Cordova, Galt Elem., Galt High, Gold Oak, Gold Trail, Hayward, Indian Diggings, Kings Canyon, Latrobe, Merced City, Mother Lode, Natomas, North Bay SIA, Pioneer, Placerville, Pollock Pines, Rescue, River Delta, Robla, Sac. City, Sac. Co. Off. Ed., San Juan, Shasta-Trinity SIG, Silver Fork, Twin Rivers, Visions in Education Charter, and Woodland. SIA Officers: Executive Director — Martin Brady; President — Robbie Montalbano, El Dorado County Office of Education; Vice President — Bill McGuire, Twin Rivers USD; Secretary — Keyshun Marshall, Sacramento City USD; Prevention Services Director/Communications — Lisa Tremewan-Konarski; Newsletter: CG Communications

www.sia-jpa.org ©2018