

President's Opening Remarks – TAMS Annual Meeting
Friday, January 28, 2011
Ann B. Stutes, President

*Life is not measured by the number of breaths we take
but by the moments that take our breath away. (Author Unknown)*

Last night Dr. Christopher Smith, Associate Professor of Musicology at Texas Tech University, provided some powerful visuals of the West Texas region in his keynote address – *Access, Advocacy, and Inclusivity: Campus Roles in Building Community*. Since I am also from this region it thrills me that we can share those visuals as a starting point in our brief conversation this morning.

The opening quote is my favorite and is placed in strategic places in both my office and my home. MOMENTS...let me tell you about a few of mine:

1. There is a phenomenon that occurs when traveling the back roads between the neighboring towns of Lubbock and Plainview – the actual roads you saw in the pictures we shared last night. Only on some very dark, clear nights when the atmospheric elements settle in precise alignment, you can see the lights from every small West Texas town across the horizon in a 360 degree circumference. There is a golden glow that hovers over the flat land and it is spellbinding. It only happens occasionally and when it does, when that MOMENT hits and I realize that it is happening, it is pure joy for me. I cannot wait to see if it is happening when traveling back and forth in the late-night hours. It is awesome and my response never fails to be both physical and mind-boggling.

2. Professor Smith discussed “vernacular music” and how we as music professionals function in the day-to-day world sharing our craft with others. I am a violist, theorist (two strikes against me!) and a church choir director. Our choir is very traditional and has about 30 members. We have a scholarship fund that provides a small stipend for several Wayland students to participate in the group. During a recent rehearsal I was attempting to get our men, most of who are 65 years and beyond, to understand and perform a syncopated section in an anthem. Purely by chance I did a good job of explaining the concept and we were soon singing with a suitably jazzy groove. I told the choir that we had just learned and performed “syncopation.” One of my tenors who has never formally studied music and who does not read a note of music asked out loud, “Did we really just DO SOME MUSIC THEORY?” Chris, one of our Wayland students in the tenor section, caught my eye and just beamed – he stared at me with a look of total understanding. He understood that we had just built a musical bridge that transformed how the choir felt about learning and performing. No lesson he would ever learn in a textbook or sitting in a classroom could teach him as much about being a music director than what he learned at that MOMENT – how to connect with others through music.

3. Last night we learned about Ivan and his pursuit of a collegiate music education as he traveled daily across the footbridge from Mexico to attend classes at UT Brownsville. When we heard him begin his performance and realized the significance of his talent and the impact the Clara Freshour Nelson Scholarship will have on him, it was our shared MOMENT. The most important thing we can take away from last night's gathering is this: IT ALL MATTERS. Every time we make a special trip up to school to unlock doors, when we track down an extra role of toilet paper right before a concert so our audience can use the restroom, when we counsel tearful students, when we mentor frustrated faculty, or when we work with community lay musicians, it matters. Everything we do as music administrators – no matter how large or how small the endeavor – drives us toward these MOMENTS that we share with others along our journey and that ultimately enrich our lives and the lives of others. Sometimes we say we are in the “music-making business.” I like to think that we are in the “MOMENT-making business.” It just happens that we use music to make our moments. My challenge to you today is this:

1. SAVOR THE MOMENTS – in your hurry to move on to the next responsibility, do not let them pass you by.

2. SHARE THE MOMENTS with students, faculty, administrators, all those within your sphere of influence – this is how you tell our story which, I am certain we can all agree, has the power to unite and inspire.

Through our MOMENTS we can create our own unique pathway to *Access, Advocacy & Inclusivity*.