It’s a New Year – Now What?

BY J. BRAD ROBINSON, CCIFP, CHAIRMAN

After celebrating the past year and looking forward to the year ahead, we settle into yet another round of New Year’s resolutions.

Why? Well, it’s tradition to reflect on the past year (as the song says, “should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind?”) while looking forward to the hope and promise of a better year ahead.

We often focus on self-improvement because it is a tangible result of change. Whether it’s spending more time with friends and family or losing a few extra pounds, we resolve to make adjustments to improve our lives.

We start with great intentions: During the first two weeks of January, the gym is packed, everyone is on a diet, and commercials are constantly reminding us about products that can help us achieve our goals. However, by the end of January, the gym is empty and the self-help commercials stop.

My New Year’s resolution for 2016 is the same as every year – to quit smoking. Those of you who know me are probably thinking that you didn’t know that I smoked. Well, I don’t, which is why I can keep my New Year’s resolution every year!

You might be thinking that this resolution is bizarre or that I may be a few bricks shy of a load. But I make this “no smoking” pledge each year to remind myself of what is truly important in my life. Sure, I could make a resolution to lose weight, but I probably would not keep it. I would be one of the people who crowd into the gym on January 2 and give up after two weeks.

Instead of trying to make one big self-improvement goal each January, I try to focus on improving the things in my life that I am better able to control.

For example, I want to be a good dad, so every January I schedule activities by month and by child to accomplish this goal. I am better able to focus on this rather than a traditional New Year’s resolution because it is easier for me to do something for them rather than for myself.

How can we make meaningful differences in our lives this year? I have a few ideas.

At work, focus on improving your leadership skills and how you can make the change that your company needs to succeed. Speak to your staff, but more importantly, listen to them. Learn what they need from you, and make change happen.

In your CFMA chapter, volunteer for a committee, get on the board of directors, or volunteer to be a chapter officer. There is no greater opportunity in our Association than the value that our chapters bring to members. Resolve to get involved and...take the time to reflect on what you can do for others – a family member, your spouse, a neighbor, or someone else.
make a difference. I promise that your commitment will more than pay for itself over time in relationships and opportunities.

If you have served in leadership roles at the chapter level, then try volunteering for a national committee. Committees are always in need of new people with fresh perspectives. It is not a huge time commitment, and again, you will more than recoup your time investment.

Finally (and most important), take the time to reflect on what you can do for others – a family member, your spouse, a neighbor, or someone else.

Look around for possibilities that you can create for others. Take the time to determine what is important to those you care about and do what you can to make their day. I can think of no other way that personifies what the change in the calendar represents. Go out of your way for a stranger and do something that he or she would not expect. You will be amazed at how it will impact them and you!

Don’t worry if you haven’t made (or have broken) your New Year’s resolutions by now. It’s never too late to make a difference in the lives of others. Make that your very obtainable resolution from now to the end of 2016. Make it a great year.

Your “non-smoking” CFMA Chairman,