

Tales from the Traveling Leadership Road Show

Student Leadership Director Susan Fortin shares an article she wrote when she first started back in 1991 — with updates from today

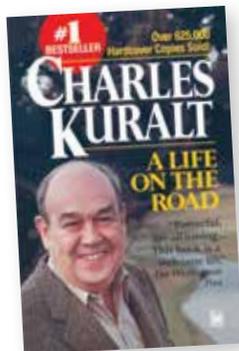
Susan Fortin

Student Leadership Director

Reflection is automatic when you spend a year preparing to leave a position. Cleaning files. Sharing items that might be worthy of our AWSL/AWSP archives. Finding the treasure of handwritten notes that later became the launch of middle level programs. While cleaning files I found this piece that I wrote six weeks into our jobs with AWSP. Marty suggested that the style was too casual for the “professional journal” that AWSP was publishing at the time, so I never submitted it as my article.

I guess I hung on to it as a piece that captured our new life with the association. I’m happy I found it in the purging of files. Reading it nearly 28 years later brings a smile and solidifies the work we’ve been honored to do and the opportunities we’ve been given through our work with principals, advisers and students. The text in the teal boxes are my 2019 thoughts and updates on my 1991 story. Thanks for the opportunity and the amazing ride!

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I recently questioned Marty’s purchase of the book, “A Life on the Road” by Charles Kuralt. I wondered if he was reading it to pick up a few tips on our new lifestyle, or if he was planning to write his own version in the upcoming months.

If the first six weeks of our jobs are any indication, his publication would have to be titled, “Tales from the Traveling Leadership Show.” Since our jobs with AWSP/Cispus officially began on September 3, we have traveled over 3,398 miles, have been to 15 locations, and have worked with over 1,012 students from over 75 schools.

Marty has become a master at packing a VW Jetta to maximize



AWSP Past President Kelley Boyd as a high school junior and participant at Camp Mivoden in 1981.

its capacity. My helpful tips go something like this, “Pack for two nights at Camp Mivoden (camp clothes, sleeping bag, towels and a pillow) and be sure you have a sport coat and tie for the Ellensburg Student Council training on the

way home. Remember, we included problem-solving initiatives in the Bi-County schedule, so we’ll need room for the *Beam Me Up Scotty* boards and the *Hot Spot* equipment. By the way, do you think we’ll have enough room in the car for a stop at Costco on our way back to Cispus?”

When we started, the student leaders we worked with were primarily elected ASB officers. Over the years the AWSL philosophy has expanded to reflect the important role of all students as leaders — not just an elected few. Encouraging schools to broaden their definition of student leaders has allowed more kids the opportunity to be change agents in impacting positive climate and culture within their schools. I feel good about that.

Our experiences have certainly been varied. One day I worked with 35 eager seventh- and eighth-grade room reps in Mt. Vernon. The following day we worked together on a program focusing on school climate with the



We finally donated the Explorer in 2004 when it reached 352,000 miles. Lots of great memories over the miles (and the years) as relationships became friendships with so many with principals, advisers and students! It's been a great ride. Thanks to everyone who has been part of it.

It was an important concept in 1991 and became part of our common language when we linked principal and student leadership through the eight criteria of the AWSP Leadership Framework. Using the Leadership Framework as a tool, student leadership initiatives continue to create culture, ensure safety, engage the community and close the gap

student leadership. The exciting new projects I'm working on include the development of regional middle level conferences to be held throughout the state this winter. Although we're in the office this week, our bags can be quickly packed for whatever adventure lies ahead.

entire North River Secondary School, (population 24, grades 7-12). A week later Marty spent the day on the Cispus Challenge Course with ASB officers from Battleground and Prairie high schools, and I walked over that evening from our Cispus house to join the group for further team building activities. Our extremes in leagues have taken us from the Narrows League, which combines 10 of the largest AAA schools in the Puget Sound area, to the Southeast Washington Activities District 9 League, which combines 17 schools representing some of the smallest in the state. We've worked with the vocational clubs of DECA, FHA, FFA, and VICA in everything from goal setting with a group of 10 to providing a keynote address for a regional meeting of 200.

It's hard to pick the high points, there have already been so many. We're

worked with so many enthusiastic students, committed administrators and energetic advisers. This experience continues to reinforce the idea that strong schools need strong leadership at all levels.

Now that we're back at Cispus, Marty's focus has turned to the expansion of the environmental education and outdoor programs at the site. My responsibilities continue to be in the realm of

As I hum a chorus of the Willie Nelson favorite, "On the Road Again," I offer one tip from the traveling Leadership Road Show: Don't leave Dayton without first getting gas. The station in Starbuck isn't open very often!

NOTE — November 1991: Since writing this we purchased a Ford Explorer that is much easier to pack and makes Eastern Washington travel easier with its four-wheel drive. Plus, there is always room to stop at Costco! ■

Leagues have changed, and CTE has replaced the old term of vocational education. The need for trained student leaders hasn't changed.

We celebrated our 27th year of MLRs this winter! We expanded in 1993 with Joe Fenbert taking lead on middle level programs. His creative talents also led to the development of K-6 leadership initiatives. With the vision of Vincent Perez, we added specialty programs to serve the bilingual needs of our emerging Latinx leaders. Other specialty programs have grown to serve Deaf and Hard of Hearing youth, Native and Tribal youth and other students who in 1991 would not have fit the "mold" of student leader. Today our programs are both robust and unique — tailored to meet the needs of all schools. The AWSL mission will continue to guide the work into the future... "providing leadership opportunities that support and increase the academic and social success of all students."

