

Dear Colleagues,

Welcome to the Florida ACDA website. My name is Wayne Bailey and I am the president of the Florida ACDA. In the coming weeks, you will see dramatic changes in the Florida website. Our website will be a place we can visit periodically to gather information about future ACDA events, but it will also be a place where we can discover interesting information about other colleagues in the state and even serve as a place where we can read of inspiring events that happen in the lives of our fellow directors or their students. Our website will be that and much more.

I would like to thank you for devoting your life to others through music. I am sure you must sometimes get very tired of the minutia that we all encounter. The tedium of all of the details sometimes weighs heavily upon all of our shoulders. Surely we must occasionally ask ourselves if we make a difference. What is it all about anyway? Is all of this work for nothing? Does anyone really care? Why do we do this anyway? Can't we just work on the music? Is it worth it?

Recently a colleague of mine shared a letter with me. It touched me deeply. The honesty and the sincerity of the person who wrote it were just overwhelming. It occurred to me that it might be helpful to you to read parts of this letter, too. Perhaps it might remind us that sometimes the smallest things we do might have the largest and the most lasting impact upon the lives of our students. It might remind us that a sincere, positive word or an empathic pat on the back or even a smile on a very bad day might be exactly what one of our students need. It could serve as a tangible reminder that more times than we could ever know that... yes, "it is worth it!" Lives can be changed through what we do and sometimes, even though all of the musical disciplines are vitally important in our classroom, sometimes it is the nonmusical things that are the most important things we do. People can be ennobled through what we do, and most assuredly, our part of the world can become a better place through what we do. Step by step...day by day...person by person. Let Sara's letter serve as a profoundly eloquent reminder to us that teaching is a magnificent opportunity. May we always remember and cherish this reality!

### **A Letter from Sara**

Dear -----,

Just a few thoughts ...

First, it feels strange to call you that. Even at 46 (yikes!), you are still my teacher, and I still have loads to learn from you. But with age comes a different perspective.

I never had a chance to say thank you for something you did for me one February long ago. It was 1980, and I was called home from my second semester at NYU after my 26 year old brother, and only sibling, killed himself. As a teacher and someone who observes young people in various states of readiness to face the world, I better understand now just how important that afternoon was. My parents, while supportive, were understandably numb and devastated, and ----- had taken me under her wing. I don't know if she called you or if you were there in the store

already, but she pointed to you in a little room at -----, and you and I sat down together for about 15 minutes.

Those 15 minutes probably changed my life.

Thank you for understanding, and for seeing potential, and for not being afraid to share that sometimes life truly does suck. But the worst thing we can do is to sell out on our dreams. You gave me a hug that afternoon and you were honest. When you are 18, and an adult whom you have idolized is down-and-dirty honest with you, believe me, you listen. I listened. You told me of a failed relationship; dreams of pursuing a professional career; the difficulty of balance; and the fact that it really is scary some times. But what was scarier was the thought of giving it all up and settling. You told me it was ok to be afraid, but it wasn't ok to quit, and what I tacitly understood was that when you quit, you die. You made it clear you hadn't thrown in the towel, and you didn't expect me to either.

That was a lot to take in. My brother, through his action, made the option of a choice readily apparent. One need not go on. Death, was indeed, an option. Whether one chose to make it immediate or to stretch it out over a lifetime running away, the end result was the same. I hadn't processed it all, but you made getting on the plane to Kennedy a week later possible.

It takes a while to gain perspective, to understand. I think I finally "get it." The best part is there are still dreams, and I am in the best place I have been in years. Right now, it is just good to *be*, and to let the adventure unfold. I wouldn't have it any other way.

I know this is out of left field, but it needed to be said, and it couldn't be said in passing on the way to the parking lot.

Thank you. You have been a great blessing in my life and someone who truly made a difference.

Love,  
Sara

On behalf of all of the students who may never have taken the time to write you a letter, let me say "thank you". Thank you for believing in students and adults who want to sing. Thank you for motivating your students to reach for excellence in their lives as well as in their music. Thank you for challenging your students to believe in themselves. Thank you for respecting your students as people. Thank you for listening to your students, because sometimes that is the most important thing we could ever do. Thank you for being honest with your students. Thank you for reminding your students never to give up and to always give their very best in whatever they do. Thank you for reinforcing the belief that together, we can become more than the sum of our parts...that in this "I" oriented society, a group still matters and making choral music still matters. Thank you for saying all of these things and a multitude of other things equally as important. Thank you for believing in the life-altering power of music. Thank you dear colleagues...thank you.

Sincerely,

Wayne Bailey