

A message from the President—You Can Make a Difference!



James C. Hawley, Jr.
President

The title of this President's Message is a statement. "You Can Make a Difference!" By simply rearranging those same five words, however, it becomes a question. "Can you make a difference?" It is sometimes easier to look at the accomplishments of others to recognize the genius within ourselves and then, sometimes we feel our differences pale next to others.

Did Thomas Edison, in making one more mistake in his quest for a light bulb (as we call them) make a "difference?" Mr. Edison called this process the elimination of ways that do not work, so each mistake did make a difference! Maybe it is not just our perceived "correct differences" that matter. Maybe all our actions can make a difference one way or another!

This is why I love the story of the starfish so much, which goes something like this. An old man walked along a shoreline littered with thousands of starfish, beached and dying after a storm. He saw a young man picking them up and tossing them back into the ocean. "Why bother?" the old man scoffed. "You are not saving enough to make a difference." The young man then picked up another starfish and sent it spinning back into the water. "It made a difference to that one," he said.

Two years as President of AFA seems like a long time, yet I just blinked twice and here I am with two more years ahead of me. I hope I have made a difference, and I will continue to strive to do so. Thank you for your vote of confidence.

One of my childhood secrets that I have looked forward to all my life was told to me by my mother. She said that I was destined to make a difference. I always interpreted this to mean I would be president of the United States, or even governor of the state of Arizona, or singlehandedly save a burning orphanage, or help Batman put away the Joker forever. Instead, I have had to wonder just like most everyone else, have I made any difference?

I have spent my life serving on boards of directors, serving as a CFO many times, serving the Boy Scouts and school districts, seeking the great "Kwan." My conclusion has been that my mother was right. All of us are destined to make a subtle difference right where we are standing at the moment.

The American Federation of Aviculture has made a difference over the last 35 years, but what is AFA? (I will discuss this further in a future message.) A lot of people confuse this simple question, forgetting that it all boils down to, "WE ARE THE AFA" and, as such, we make a difference, protecting our privileges to have and keep birds, sharing our passion with future members and leaving a legacy for the future generations of how they, too can make a difference!



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