

ACCEPTANCE OF GRUENBERG AWARD

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Thank you very much, Eric, and special thanks to the GRA Board of Directors for this award.

I want to recognize and thank two people on our staff and the Chair of our Board of Directors for being here tonight and helping make this evening even more special.

Mebane Rash, our Director of Law and Policy, is the most talented person I've ever worked with.

Aisander Duda is our great Director of Development.

Leslie Walden is the Chair of our Board in a leadership transition year, and she also is Vice President of Public Affairs for Fidelity Investments in NC and flew up especially for this as a surprise.

And, the second wonderful surprise was having the love of my life, my wife Jane Kendall, flying up tonight for her first GRA conference. Jane is also the founder and President of the N.C. Center for Nonprofits.

One of my favorite novels is Zora Neale Hurston's "Their Eyes Were Watching God," and one chapter starts with the line: "There are years that ask questions...and years that answer." My first year at the Center in 1981 was a year that asked questions, and this award in 2014 is a wonderful answer.

The honors that mean the most are the ones from your peers – who really know what you do, and that's why this award means the most.

1. **Affecting Policy**: You know what it's like to have a great piece of research ignored by policymakers.

But you also know what it's like to see the Governor and legislature enact what you recommend.

2. **Raising Money**: You know what it's like not to get that foundation grant, or contract, or have an event rained out.

But you also know what it's like to get the funding to do the work that will mean so much to the citizens of your state or city.

3. **Dealing with the Media**: You know what it's like to do a great study that could raise the level of debate or change policy, and yet have it ignored by a media that focuses on info-tainment or on just the politics, and not the policy.

But you also know what it's like to develop the skills that allow you to be good with multiple media – on television, radio, newspapers, the blogosphere, and social media.

4. **Managing and Motivating People**: You know what it's like in managing people to have high hopes in hiring – that someone will reach the potential you see in them and then have them leave in 2 years.

But you also know what it's like to mentor and watch your staff grow beyond your wildest dreams, and begin to achieve the organization's mission together.

5. **Working with the Board of Directors**: And, you know what it's like to have a Board of Directors that looks at you and starts every sentence with "You should" instead of "We should..."

But you also know what it's like to have a Board with great leaders like Leslie Walden, who tap the talents of every Board member to work to fulfill your group's mission.

And that's why this honor from my peers in all these states and cities means the most to me. And, that's why, in accepting the award, I also want to honor all of you, who do this very important work every day.

At an occasion like this where you look back over a lifetime, I'm reminded of this motivational seminar I once attended where 3 people were asked to come up on stage, and they were all asked, "When you are in your casket and your family and friends are mourning you, what would you like them to say about you?"

And the first guy says, "I would like to hear them say that I was the greatest doctor of my time and a great family man."

And the second woman says, "I would like to hear them say that I was a wonderful wife and an excellent school teacher who made a huge difference in my student's futures."

And the third guy replied, “I would like to hear them say...Look, he’s moving!”

The Greek statesman Pericles said, “What you leave behind is not engraved in stone monuments, but in what is woven into the lives of others.” So in accepting this award, I pay tribute to what all of you have woven into the lives of the citizens of your states.

Thank you very much.