

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



A SERIOUS ORGANIZATION

Over the years I have heard many positive comments on TIP... *“What a worthwhile cause” ... “TIP helps so many people” ... “You're training is the best” ...*

But the positive comment about TIP that has stuck with me since I heard it 15 years ago was very simple and not very dramatic: *“You are a **serious organization**. You guys are very serious about what you do.”* This feedback was given to me by a graduate of the volunteer training academy. When I asked him what he meant by a **serious organization** he said *“You dot all your I's and cross your t's, and you really expect a lot of yourselves and volunteers.”*

I don't quite understand why the remark about being a **serious organization** struck me, but I do know it has been something that has guided and motivated me as a TIP leader. I decided soon after hearing the *“you are a **serious organization**”* comment that I wanted to make sure that TIP continued to live up to the perception of the gentleman who provided that feedback.

Ensuring that TIP continued to be a **serious organization** became (and continues to be) a goal of mine that can be expressed by this statement: *“We have such an important and serious mission (helping vulnerable suffering human beings) that we need to be extremely serious about everything we do to achieve that mission. We can't accept mediocrity. We need to strive for excellence, always and in all activities.”*

I don't think organizations become **serious organizations** and automatically remain so. In fact, I believe that over time there is a tendency for organizations to get lazy, to not make the effort to improve and to lower their standards. I think that over time there is an inevitable pull toward mediocrity. We need to be constantly vigilant to avoid this *“mediocrity trap.”* Here are a few ideas about what all of us (leaders and volunteers) can do to continue to be a **serious organization....**

- Continue to learn from our mistakes and what we do right.
- Continue to learn to be better leaders and more effective TIP volunteers. TIP leaders can learn from each other (best practices) and TIP volunteers can learn on every TIP call.

- Continue to improve our volunteer training program based on what we learn in the field.
- Keep the bar set high in everything we do.
- Avoid the “just volunteers” trap and expect our volunteers to maintain high standards so they can remain the Swat Team of human service providers.
- Give feedback to each other when our performance is excellent and also when our performance needs improving.
- Continually evaluate our performance. Improve what needs improving and eliminate programs and procedures that may be “good ideas” but that don't yield results.
- Use new technologies to improve how we do what we do.
- Focus on doing a few things right, especially those activities that affect our core service (emergency response).
- Sweat the small stuff. Be detail oriented in all our activities (fundraisers, training academies, printed materials...). Those outside of TIP judge our “seriousness” by how well we do the little things.

It's not easy being a **serious organization**. But our mission demands it.