

MY VIEW



Founder Wayne Fortin



A MISSION FOCUSED LEADER

Recently, TIP of Orange County was the recipient of a very large grant to conduct a Secret Santa Campaign. Thanks to our national board chair Rose Hancock for making this happen! This campaign is a partnership between TIP and local police departments who distribute money to needy families during the holidays.

Because I've coordinated Secret Santa campaigns in the past, this Orange County campaign piqued my interest. The more I learned about it the more interested (and concerned) I became. I know from my own experience what an organizational challenge it is to coordinate Secret Santa campaigns, especially when a large amount of money needs to be distributed in a short period of time as in this case.

I expressed my concern in a brief conversation with MaryEllen Lowrey, Executive Director of TIP Orange County and the Secret Santa Coordinator. I talked to her about one potential difficulty after another. I asked her how in the world was she going to pull all the pieces together.

MaryEllen politely acknowledged the challenges I brought up and replied in her usual low key way... **"This is an opportunity to help lots of families."** This simple one-line statement stopped me dead in my tracks. I realized I had completely forgotten the mission of the Secret Santa campaign: to help families financially during the holidays. I was lost in the procedural weeds. Fortunately, MaryEllen was focused on what was important.... helping families.

I talk frequently in leadership seminars about the importance of keeping TIP'S mission in the forefront as we make decisions and as we take on challenging projects. And I talk about how easy it is to lose our focus on the mission as we deal with the hustle and bustle of our jobs. In this case, I was exhibit # 1 for someone who lost focus on the mission. On the other hand, MaryEllen was an example of a leader who could have easily lost her focus but didn't.

Because of MaryEllen Lowrey's singular focus on helping families during the holidays, she along with her staff and volunteers will overcome all of the obstacles I worried about. The Secret Santa Campaign will be a great success.

On a personal note, it was a privilege witnessing a mission driven TIP leader in action!