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Stop! Consider the impact you've had

By Mark Robinson, President, Alaska, ACDA

Welcome back. I trust this finds you rested and ready to take on another semester of fostering the choral art in children. It is not, I know, always easy to stay enthused. In my school district, and in many others, times are difficult financially. It is easy to get discouraged and burned out in this job. Sometimes I ask myself why I do this. And then I remember - it's about the kids. Let me tell you a favorite family story.

In 1960, my father left his full time minister of music position in Louisville Kentucky for a new position in Indianapolis, Indiana that promised a bigger program, brand new church building and thus new pipe organ. His position in Louisville, was filled by a young minister of music (fresh out of seminary), who was anxious to do well. The young man inherited an established music program, quality literature in the files, and an organized structure all of which helped him develop on a path to success.

Fast forward 35 years. My father, long since retired and lonely after my mother's passing, was convinced by a colleague to attend a church music conference together. When they arrived, my father recognized the name of the primary clinician as the young man who had followed him in Louisville 35 years before - whom he had never met. At a break in a session, my father went to introduce himself and got no further than "you don't know me but my name is Bill Robinson" when the clinician exclaimed: "Bill Robinson! I have always wanted to meet you. You changed my life. When I was brand new out of seminary, your legacy taught me everything I needed to know about running a church music program!"

I have always loved that story and I think of it often. It reminds me that we may never know the impact we have on another's life. It goes without saying that as Choral Directors and Music Educators we are in the life changing business, but sometimes we may not know till years later - if at all. I know each of you has a story of a student who in one way or another reminded you of some lasting impact you had on their lives. Sometimes they tell you in big ways, but more often than not it is the smile they afford you in the store or the

letter from college, or the visit when they come back home. They may not say it out loud, but their message is clear: "You changed my life."

As you head into the new year, don't forget the impact you have. Reflect and rejoice in the influence that you have and then commit yourself to continuing the positive legacy of Choral Music Education. Continue to take extra time to work with students. Encourage those gifted ones to consider music education for a career. Continue to provide opportunities for excellence and lifetime memories. You are special - be glad in it.

Have a great remainder of the year.