

How You Can Make A Difference in an Election Year

Happy New Year to you and your family. The Chinese lunar calendar states that 2002 is the year of the horse. For we "horse people," it is time to move out of the starting blocks and start running the entire year. Yes, we are ready, and this is our year.

As you may have surmised, I am a person born in the year of the horse. I have been champing at the starting gate and am ready to go. It seems that with all of the tragedy, sorrow and destruction we have suffered in the recent past, this new year brings with it an outlook of hope, joy, and endless possibilities of service. The characteristics of horse people are enthusiasm, an energetic demeanor, and being active among others. Building on these attributes can carry our profession a long way in 2002.

The Oriental medicine profession is building upon one recent success after another. Schools of Oriental medicine and acupuncture are growing in numbers and strength. These schools are graduating more students each year. The profession is striving for recognition and responsibility, and it is building a nationwide team of professionals to help educate the medical community and the public. Even though each state has its own laws and regulations, there is a basic underlying premise of what Oriental medicine is, what it does and what it can do. The practitioners in every state share a bond with each other. Their goals are similar: spreading information about traditional Chinese medicine and its impact on the health of the American people.

We have a desire for success. The ramifications of the word success are to achieve something that is desired, intended or attempted. Already, this new year seems to have a special openness. We want to help and share with others. This is certainly the ideal of Oriental medicine, and as horse people, we want to pull the wagon of success and service throughout the year.

The characteristics, likes and dislikes of the 12 animals in the Chinese horoscope should not restrict us or make us feel hemmed in by our weaknesses or inhibited by our deficiencies. Rather, we should be encouraged to explore our resources in varied and imaginative ways. We can learn to chart new courses, new ways of solving problems, and different approaches to meet with the successes we want.

As an Oriental medicine professional, you are a person who solves problems. When a new or established patient presents with a set of complaints, you immediately go to work to figure out what the problem is; where it is; how it started; and how you and the patient can solve it. Yes, you are a problem-solver. The more information you have, whether from the patient or an arsenal of knowledge you possess, the easier and faster you can solve these problems.

In many parts of the country, 2002 is an election year. For those of you who live in states in which an election will be held, I encourage you to join a service club; volunteer in your community; help a political candidate; be a public speaker at a gathering or event; or just get involved to help others solve problems. Share what you are doing with others. So many times a practitioner sits in his or her warm, safe office and just expects patients to walk through the door. It's your turn to take the

first step this year.

Walk outside your office and do something different. Meet new people. Bob Flaws, one of *Acupuncture Today's* columnists, recommends handing out 500 business cards in a couple of weeks. What a great idea to get your name out in the community. Send two business cards out in every piece of outgoing mail. You have no idea who will see your card. Maybe someone will see it and think they know a person that could use your help and expertise. This is the beginning of a new project for the new year, which is perfect for horse people. We love new projects and approach them with cheerfulness and excitement. I hope you approach this project the same way.

Another love of those born in the year of the horse is meeting new people - in fact, the more, the merrier. Set a goal to meet new people. Oriental medicine practices are built on strangers. After you meet them, though, these people are no longer strangers, but friends and patients. I recently heard an interesting idea from a local acupuncturist. He said that whenever he goes to a coffee shop or convenience store, when he puts out his hand to pay for something, he also hands out his card and says, "I'm the acupuncturist down the street. I hope you don't need me now, but if you do, here's my card."

When a person you meet hands you his or her business card, before you file the card away, write on the back where you met; when you met; and whether that person has a health problem. This way, you can remember the person and add him or her to your mailing list for information you might send at a later date.

I also carry copies of a small acupuncture book with me. When I meet someone new, I give that person a copy of the book. My name and phone number are already written on the back of it. I have had several people who received this little book call me to say they have one or more of the problems listed as conditions that acupuncture treats, then ask if they can have a referral for an acupuncturist in their area. What an experience it is to share our medicine with even one more person. I sometimes ask myself, "If I don't market acupuncture, who will?"

Horse people like changes of scenery. This August, the California State Oriental Medical Association will hold its expo in San Francisco, a place known for having some of the country's most beautiful views and unique architecture. The program promises to be both educational and inspiring, and a horse person will chair the event this year. I look forward to seeing you there.

The United States Post Office commemorates the Chinese New Year by printing a new stamp every year. This year, of course, they have printed a horse stamp. I am buying a block of them, and will have them framed and hung in my office. After all, it will be 12 years until it is my year again. Buy some stamps and use them on your outgoing mail. It makes for great conversation and provides a nice little segue into Oriental medicine.

It is time to make changes, build your character and commit to yourself, your family, your profession and your community. Best wishes to you in the Year of the Horse!

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