

# The Tennessee HOME EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

*A Non-Profit Tax Exempt Educational Association*

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Meredith Flautt	Middle TN
John Burch	West TN
Dane Williams	Memphis

Mr. Cory Bennett, President  
Smoky Mountain Home Education Association  
925 View Harbour Road Knoxville, TN 37922  
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RE: Ministry Appreciation

Dear Cory,

Its hard to imagine that nearly ten years have gone by. Your step into a ministry of building families was quite a step of faith. For you to go from the secure nest of an established organization at the University of Tennessee to stepping out to work with families was bold. As you have often said, "Small dreams don't light a fire in the hearts of men."

You sir not only keep your own fire lit, but you also fuel the fire and fan the flame in the hearts of many thousands of families in SMHEA and all across the state.

The tools I see you use are thoroughness, discernment, enthusiasm, leadership and patience. Thoroughness is one of the delightful characteristics of a leader. You carefully analyze the opportunities which are set before you. You are able to correctly assess those tasks which are compatible with your objectives, the time required to complete the task in an excellent manner and evaluate current commitments which could be in conflict. Because of being thorough you are able to insure that tasks undertaken by you and the SMHEA leadership can be undertaken without overloading the schedule of volunteers and their families.

Using discernment you detect the real needs of the people you serve through leadership. You have done this with individual families, support groups and with the SMHEA board in its entirety. Your assistance to me in this has been invaluable. You save yourself and the time of those around you by comparing the purposes for which you operate and the objectives of those attempting to influence you to go in new directions. You have not been afraid to embrace a new direction and you have showed boldness in maintaining the course of action when pressed to go in directions contrary to objectives or prior commitments.

Enthusiasm, coupled with clear verbal communication, gives you the vehicle to maintain the focus and direction of the people you lead. You analyze a task, see what is right, and then use a flurry of wise sayings, engaging stories, real life examples and visions of the consequences of the success or failure of the venture. This enthusiasm is contagious and compelling.

I've even see you when you were unsuccessful in communicating a vision, step back. You evaluated the reasons for failure to communicate. Rather than assign blame, you are willing to look at how to effectively continue the discussion at a later time, perhaps a year later, but more effectively using appropriate idea introductions. This I call leadership. You are a skilled leader. You are willing to look at yourself and see how you could have behaved differently to accomplish the objective you have established. You typically don't step back and doubt the objective. Your norm is to continue to embrace the objective and analyze what could have been done differently to effect the envisioned conclusion. By maintaining the vision and looking inside at your self, at your efforts, at the efforts of those you can encourage or instruct, you clearly demonstrate leadership, the kind of leadership people are willing to follow, a leader who is a servant. You have selectively encouraged and instructed me and I thank you.

Patience is the key, the first part of the definition of love. An old proverb says, "Better is he who rules over his own spirit than he who rules over a city." The first person you work to bring under control is yourself. In quietness of spirit I've witnessed your love for your wife. This is the first part of obedience for a husband, to love his wife. I know you have committed yourself to this task and I have seen you do this. You patiently care for your children and it seems to me that you work to avoid "provoking them to anger", which Paul says we fathers have a tendency to do. When I see this type of love expressed particularly through patience, I know that a man has his priorities in correct order in his home. If he then is able to minister well in his home leading them in love, how great can be his realm of influence outside his home.

Paul also says that God the Spirit gives the variety of gifts to whom He wills and a variety of effectiveness of those gifts to whom He desires. It is our business to attempt to inspect fruit and determine to whom the "effects" of the gifts have been given that are large enough to encompass a group larger than their family.

Cory Bennett you are such a man. God has gifted you and you have consistently applied those gifts in serving Him and those whom He has put before you to serve.

I count it a privilege and high honor to have had the opportunity to serve with you these years. My earnest prayer is that we will yet have years to continue serving our King together.

Our King says in the Sermon on the Mount that we should so let our light shine that others may see our good works and glorify our Father in heaven.

May the only true God, the Creator, the King of Kings lead you and bless you. May those blessing flow through all your relationships, a fountain of blessing, encouragement and strength. May the Lord our provider abundantly supply every provision for you, your bride, your children and your ministry and may every heart, mind, soul and spirit so touched, be directed to worshipful, faithful obedience to the only wise eternal King, our God.

For Jesus our King,  
Claiborne Thornton