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Recommended Citation

Luxton, Andrea, "It Takes a Village" (2021). *Faculty Publications*. 4471.
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It Takes a Village

Andrea Luxton, *president*

THE TRUTH OF THE SAYING “IT TAKES A village ...” or, in the biblical context, 1 Corinthians 12 was never clearer to me than over the last few days. Graduation is usually the celebratory culmination of the year's activities. For 2021 it became something even more meaningful: the culmination of the challenges and rewards of a year living and working with COVID-19 restrictions. Graduation epitomized the astounding commitment and unified focus of the University toward its students and their success (academically, spiritually and personally).

There is no doubt that on the surface what we were able to do disappointed some. Families couldn't attend many of the indoor ceremonies. Graduates had to physically distance themselves for the graduation event itself. But if you scratched the surface of what could be seen, what you would find was truly heartwarming: creativity, unity, shared purpose, commitment and a willingness to go the third and fourth mile.

Let me give you a few examples of what our normally unsung heroes and heroines managed to arrange. Much of the initial creativity came from the core graduation committee, led by my truly amazing assistant, Dalry Payne. How could we have graduation under the restrictions we had and still make it personal? And so we decided instead of the usual Commencement speakers we would ask parents and friends of the graduates to send us videos. I had a message from an alumna who had no direct family graduating but wanted to tune in to see what we were doing. She told me she cried when she saw the videos, the families and lives behind our graduates. And then came the idea of the drive-in theater, along with personal delivery of goodies, water and programs to each car ... and a few balloons too. And of course there was the new handshake system that was particularly powerful for me. As graduates chose their form of handshake

and I responded in like (for example, the peace sign, the hand on heart, raising the roof) I was able to connect meaningfully, for me, with each person in a unique way.

Then with the planning team there was the team that carried everything off throughout the weekend. Patience was the gift of the weekend as staff went the extra mile and then another one and then another to help everyone be in the right place at the right time. And the tech team both inside and out worked wonders to weave together disparate videos and livestreaming to reach those present inside, those present outside and those in their own homes, all at the same time! On Sunday morning—our “rain service”—I went outside at the end of the event and there were all the staff, standing under umbrellas throughout the parking lot, still helping families.

The graduates may not have a comparison, but for me, knowing the personal thought that went into each decision and then the unified follow-through, this graduation will go down as the best one ever.

It takes a village to grow a graduate who is a World Changer. It takes every part of the body of the University working together to live the Andrews mission! Thank you, team.



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FOCUS (ISSN 1077-9345) is published quarterly, free of charge, for alumni and friends of Andrews University, an institution owned and operated by the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The magazine's address is FOCUS, Office of University Communication, Andrews University, 8903 US Hwy 31, Berrien Springs MI 49104-1000. Copyright © 2021 by Andrews University. Reproduction in whole or part without permission is prohibited. Printed by Holland Litho Printing Service, Holland MI. Periodicals postage paid at Berrien Springs MI, and at additional mailing offices. Please send address changes to FOCUS Magazine, Office of Alumni Services, Andrews University, 8714 E Campus Circle Dr, Berrien Springs MI 49104-0950, email alumni@andrews.edu or call 269-471-3591.



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