

Wow! Now *that's* Professional

A Look into Professionalism at The Eye Center of Southern Indiana

Jennifer Kuchta

WHEN CHARLENE ALLEN came across the book, *Professionalism Is for Everyone*, she could have flipped through it and tossed it aside. After all, she was a professional and she was the administrator of The Eye Center of Southern Indiana where she had worked for twenty-eight years. Not only that, she and Dr. Grossman, the founding physician of The Eye Center, always stressed professionalism and excellence. The Center even provides new white uniforms and shoes each year to every associate just to make sure everyone presents a crisp professional image.

However, as is typical of so many things at the Center, Dr. Grossman and Charlene saw *Professionalism Is for Everyone* as an opportunity. They decided to use the book to inspire everyone and provide tips and ideas for polishing their professional behavior even more. They wanted to get everyone involved in a fun team-building learning experience as well.

They began with fanfare and gave each of the Center's sixty associates a copy of *Professionalism Is for Everyone* as a gift and guide to reinforce what they have been taught all along.

Charlene reviewed the *Five Keys to Being a True Professional* in the book and assigned twenty-four sub-topics for the keys to the Center's sixty associates. She asked each person, working alone or with others, to summarize their thoughts and perspectives on their assigned sub-topics in a creative way. She provided starter questions like these:

- How and when did you first learn about this topic?
- Who were your role models for learning this topic?
- Why is this topic so important to us at The Eye Center?
- How do you share your knowledge of this topic with others?
- Give examples of how this topic applies to The Eye Center

Associates were asked to "write from the heart, research the subject, make a video, do a skit, read other material, or write a report." They were encouraged to "go crazy and have fun."

They did have fun and the results, which came back in all shapes and sizes, were fantastic.

Some associates got together and produced a skit. Others got their kids involved and created a video. Some individuals researched the web and summarized famous quotes they found. A few compiled beautiful notebooks with illustrations. Some wrote poems. Others submitted pictures depicting "before" behavior that is not professional and "after" behavior that is professional. A number of individuals wrote stories about how their parents or family members had instilled character, trust, respect, and other values in the book that they were reporting on. Many individuals provided examples of professional behavior demonstrated by colleagues at the Center.

Once they had completed their assignments, Charlene brought the associates together and had them present their professionalism "reports" to each other. Charlene then compiled a summary of each associate's work in a spiral bound report that she presented to Dr. Grossman.

Once again, The Eye Center of Southern Indiana moved forward on its quest for excellence.

"And to think," Charlene said, "It all began when I found *Professionalism Is for Everyone* on the website for The Goals Institute one morning. I went looking, wishing I could find inspiration to help us polish our professionalism even more. What a treasure I found."

