

Lessons from the Geese

When I was in South Africa, speaking at the MOSS Conference 1994 in Durban, I was given this inspirational piece. I was told that it had been handed over from one group to another so many times that no one knows from where it had originated.

At present, a lot of time is spent within the voluntary sector defining 'What is a community? What is a network?'

I have come across no other piece that speaks so eloquently about what a community and what a network is about. Let nature tell us, through the geese!

Judy Ling Wong FRSA. Director BEN

As each goose flaps its wings, it creates an upward lift for the bird following. By flying in a V formation, the whole flock adds 71% more flying range than if each bird flew alone.

Lesson : People who share a common direction and sense of community can get where they are going quicker and easier because they are travelling on the thrust of one another.

When a goose falls out of formation, it suddenly feels the drag and resistance of trying to fly alone and quickly gets back into formation to take advantage of the lifting power of the birds immediately in front.

Lesson : If we have as much sense as a goose, we will join in formations with those who are headed where we want to go.

When the lead goose gets tired, it rotates back into the formation and another goose flies at the point position.

Lesson : It pays to take turns doing the hard tasks and sharing leadership - with people, as with geese - interdependent with one another.

The geese in formation honk from behind to encourage those up front to keep up their speed.

Lesson: We need to make sure our honking from behind is encouraging - not something less helpful.

When a goose gets sick or wounded or shot down, two geese drop out of formation and follow their fellow member down to help provide protection. They stay with this member of the flock until he or she is able to fly again or dies. Then they launch out on their own, with another formation, or to catch up with their own flock.

Lesson: If we have as much sense as the geese, we'll stand by one another.