



# The Culture Chronicles

...of the Franklin Companies

January 2015

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To The Franklin Companies Team:

At our State of the Company address in December, we announced our new operating mantra for 2015, **FOCUS**. This guiding principle will provide us intentionality as we as a company strive for excellence in all that we do, each and every day. This year, the **FOCUS** of the Franklin Companies will include:

1. **Freedom** – We are empowered and should have the freedom to make decisions that are in the best interests of both our residents and the Franklin Companies.
2. **Ownership** – We need to own the situation with which we are dealing, understanding that both our actions and decisions are reflective of our performance as professionals. We do not shirk responsibility as we seek out opportunities for professional growth.
3. **Commitment** – We are committed both to addressing the situation and to communicating our planned course of action with other staff members, as well as our residents' family members. We strive for excellence in all that we do and will settle for nothing less.
4. **Utilize** – Regardless of the concern at hand, we will utilize every measure available to us including monetary resources and staffing responses to rectify the situation. We will do whatever it takes to solve the issue.
5. **Shepherd** – We will take the resident and family member by the hand and walk with them as we go through the problem solving process.

We are excited to embark on our second year of *The Culture Chronicles of the Franklin Companies*. Each month we will highlight stories of Franklin Companies employees living out our 2015 operating mantra. We cannot wait to see how we all **FOCUS** this year!

To kick-start 2015, we are featuring reactions and comments from Franklin Companies employees who attended the Annual State of the Company Address. We hope you enjoy hearing from your colleagues as they share their reflections from 2014.

Luke Classen  
President

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## **Gary S. McLaurin, Executive Director, Rancho Sierra**

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I have always found the State of the Company Address (SOCA) to be an exciting and enjoyable experience. I believe it gives the employees a sense that they belong and are a part of something important. I also believe it helps to build our company culture and makes us more like a family. It provides us the opportunity to talk with our peers, swap stories, information and make comparisons. It does not matter if they are from Corporate, senior management, maintenance men, or the office staff from the other properties. I believe it is comforting for us as employees to know we are not in this fight alone, and that we have a corporate office that cares about us. I will never forget the first SOCA I attended in December 2012. I was excited and nervous at the same time. When I arrived and got to see everything that was going on around me and with the Company, I knew I was in the right place.

Personally I like the way the SOCA is structured. I always enjoy the guest speaker and the pin presentation for the tenured employees. I think the most exciting part is hearing how successful the Franklin Companies were during that year. And I always look forward to hearing about the current and upcoming projects. This event embodies everything that makes me very proud to be an employee of the Franklin Companies, and also gives me things to tell my family and friends. I also enjoy hearing the speeches given by the people in the corporate office. I realize that other employees may not get to communicate with Luke, Karl, Ryan, Edgar, and Mr. and Mrs. Franklin as often as I do. So for them to make themselves available during presentations and afterwards is a big deal to us employees. It gives us a sense of comfort and lets us know that we are all part of the team. I can honestly say I have never met the CEO, CFO, Owner or President of any other company where I have worked. I also do not feel that any of those people ever had a desire to meet me.

In closing, I would like to say that the SOCA, in my opinion, is a great way to close the year. We get to cover all of our accomplishments as a team. It also allows us to see what is on the horizon and start to set goals and new standards for the coming year. Every single year the food is amazing and the slide show is a very nice touch to end it all. I look forward to staying with Franklin Companies and attending many more State of the Company Addresses for the foreseeable future!!

### ***Elizabeth Kirkpatrick, Regional Operations Director***

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There are often times we get lost in the day to day and spend more time managing and trying to stay on our feet and less time leading. For me, the SOCA is the trigger that initiates checking the navigation tools. It is the time when I take a gut check on our team. I consider if we are on course, where we have been, where we should have been, and where we are going. I find that listening to the various departments discuss their course helps me better map mine. The SOCA always leaves me asking myself the following questions: Am I managing or leading? Am I doing my part to get Franklin Companies where it should be?

I enjoy the event as it is a performance review, a strategy session to plan for the future of the company, an opportunity to network and “rally the troops”, all while enjoying a deliciously prepared menu. But, I mostly look forward to the weeks following the SOCA as I soul search and remap my course for the upcoming year. I find that I experience professional growth during this process as I recognize my wins and failures from the past year and get recharged by reflecting and learning from my mistakes. Every aspect of the State of the Company Address is great, from the visiting speaker to the photo recap of the year -- but my favorite part is the growth as a professional I experience because of the event.

### ***Richard Almaraz, Maintenance Director, Artisan on the Bluff***

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#### **I left feeling like I was on cloud nine!!**

The SOC address was over and I sat thinking about all that had been said, when Aubra Franklin walked by. Mr. Franklin asked, “How you doing, Richard?” I told him that I thought it was a great presentation, and that it made me think about the different challenges that go on throughout the day at each property. It is amazing how many hats each employee needs to wear every day. They could find themselves being a counselor, policeman, taxi driver, and a big brother, all in one day!

The conversation continued with us discussing the death of a mutual friend in 2014 and how much he will be missed.

I had an opportunity to thank him for the vision he had that became reality, which has provided a job for me for almost nine years. I am grateful to God and I pray for Aubra and his wife, Susan, every day. Without his vision and their faith, where would we be?

It was an awesome feeling that Mr. Aubra Franklin would pull up a chair and take the time to talk to me. I am so proud to be a part of the Franklin family.

### ***Yaritza Rodriguez, Property Accountant***

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I was excited to attend the State of the Company Address in December. I was rather moved by Aubra’s humbleness and his gratitude. After my several years in the multifamily industry, I had finally encountered the sincerity of a successful entrepreneur. For me, Aubra defines the terms *enthusiasm*, *motivational leader*, as well as *inspirational*. How is that possible? Watching Mr. and Mrs. Franklin hand out the two- and five-year awards was personally heart-warming. What I see in the Franklin Companies is not just growth. I see an established and well-maintained foundation. This is achieved through Aubra’s keenness to serve his community as well as his wonderful support system.

When I first interviewed with Cary she defined Franklin as a “Cultural Company.” At first I did not fully grasp what she meant. Then the second interview came and once again I heard about how Franklin is a “Cultural Company.” For a moment I thought to myself, “Okay. Okay. Maybe there is something special here.” It is now that I understand how Franklin Companies lives up to its vision. Here at the corporate office I hear Aubra interact with his employees and it is

unlike any other office in which I have worked. The acknowledgement from Aubra is a nice feeling. He communicates his appreciation and respect to those who work in the office with him. A large part of our culture is actually the language of appreciation and respect, and that is what sets Franklin Companies apart. We all strive for success, and yet we stay humble. Our roles may be different but we are all treated equally here. I am beyond thankful to Luke, Cary and Randy for allowing me to be a part of this wonderful team. Longevity here I come!

### ***Michael Duncan, Executive Director, Franklin Park at Lewisville***

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While in attendance at the 2014 State of the Company Address, I found the message on humility of particular interest to me in large part due to how it spoke to the type of leader I strive to be, a leader that inspires followership. Not only to demonstrate accomplishments, but to demonstrate character as well.

A sense of humility is essential to leadership because it authenticates a person's humanity. We all have our faults. Recognizing what we do well, as well as what we do not do so well, is vital to self-awareness and paramount to humility.

I know that I can take pride in my accomplishments and use that as a platform to bring people together to do greater things. Things that might include increasing sales, improving quality or even save the planet!

I also found the video on "Empathy" very powerful and an eye-opening experience.

We have all heard the phrase, "Walk a mile in someone else's shoes," but this video really brought it home for me. It not only tugged at my heartstrings but it made me reflect on the past few weeks and particular situations that were uncomfortable. I took a step back and put myself in the shoes of others in an attempt to view the world from their perspectives. In doing so, the awareness I have come to know will forever help me to identify and maybe understand the reasoning behind someone else's behavior. I learned that the ability to empathize with others largely depends on a person's capacity to fully identify and understand one's own feelings. This will help me be a more compassionate person and leader.

### ***Kareika Powell, Executive Director, Franklin Park DeSoto***

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I would like to say first and foremost that it is an honor and a privilege to work for Franklin Park; a company that values their employees and understands the different challenges we face on a day-to-day basis. I was excited that I was able to attend the State of the Company Address. But more so, I was thankful that a couple of my directors were also able to attend. It is one thing when I talk to them about how great a company we work for, but it is more powerful when they are able to see it for themselves!

This year's SOCA really hit home with me in a couple different ways. The first being Luke's presentation on *humility*. For me that was a very powerful presentation. I think it touched on something very important which is the need to sometimes sit back and evaluate yourself as a whole. Humility is the ability to know that it is not always about you, what you want, and how you want it. It is the ability to be able to receive and be receptive, whether the information is positive or negative. It is the ability to listen and not always having to be heard. I feel that in my day-to-day operations I try and humble myself in knowing that it takes a team to make it happen. I have also learned that you get more with honey than you do with salt.

The second topic that really hit home with me was when we were shown the video on "Empathy." That video is one that I feel should be shown to bring people back to reality on why we do what we do. What I received from that video is that you never know the impact you may have on someone's life. We never know that the smile we give may be the only smile that person receives all day. We never know what someone is going through and the challenges they are facing. That is why we need to take every opportunity we have to make that difference, to be that person to shine a light on those who might need it. We should always be mindful that no matter what we are going through, that person walking through your door could be going through something much worse.