

President Michele Foster's Installation Speech

December 10th, 2017

(at *Evviva Restaurant* in Narberth, PA)

We come together today to celebrate both the light of Chanukah and the beginning for a new executive board who will work together to carry on the light Hadassah brings to the world.

When I began my membership in Hadassah 36 years ago I never thought I would be standing before you as your new Regional President. The women who have had this job before me have inspired my awe, mentored new leaders and brought your executive board to this day where we accept the challenge of leadership.

Working closely with Past Presidents Joyce Laiter and Patsy Gruenberg as both a Vice President of Education and Development has inspired me, taught me, and gave me two great friends. I cannot thank them enough for nurturing me. The constant support of all my sisters in Hakol over these past years has also given me confidence and brought me to this wonderful day. I cannot thank Judy Ron, Patsy and my dear friend Adrienne Riff enough for arranging this beautiful installation. I so appreciate the attendance here today of old friends and new, my amazing family and my sisters in Hadassah.

Over the past year I have met with and spoken to over 15 chapters. I said at one that when I joined Hadassah, I came home. By that I meant I found a place where my love and support for Israel was respected and enhanced. A place where my desire to support issues important to women would matter. A place where research would cure not only the diseases that decimated my family, heart disease Parkinson's and MS, but skin cancer, breast cancer, ALS and many others.

Each day spent in Hadassah has led me to more and more respect for you, our members, our leaders, our donors and associates. Your generosity, hard work and enthusiasm inspire me. From the very first day Hadassah has stood with Israel, championed causes important to women, built amazing hospitals and funded life-saving research. Every day you have accepted the challenge of building our hospitals, supporting our researchers, standing up for women who have been human trafficked and abused. You have educated women about heart health and eating healthy. You have built a coalition of organizations advocating for equal federal funding for research in women's health issues. Together we have pushed for enforceable hate crime laws, and we have stood up on the world stage and demanded Israel's right to exist. In November Hadassah under the leadership of Paula Mann, Shelli Keeney and their committee chaired a forum that brought to the light the rise in Anti-Semitism, the growth of the Boycott, Divest and Sanction Movement and the pressures Jewish students face on college campuses.

When I think of all the light we have brought to the world I also think of the message we are bringing to our children and grandchildren. When my son Jason was nine he returned from the basketball court and told me he met another young man whose mother was President of

Hadassah. I asked him how he got to that subject and he said, "I thought that was the most important thing about you." When I asked my son Adam what he thought about my accepting this position he said, "think of all the influence the women in Hadassah have to bring politicians to support Israel." Think of all the money you can raise for life saving research. Think of all the ways you can bring people to support Hadassah's agenda. You would be good at it, you should do it! I imagine that each of your families think the same of you! Yes, you will be busy, yes, you will often be frustrated, yes, you will struggle to raise funds, but, in the end, they will see the light this effort can bring to the world!

Hadassah, always the first medical teams to arrive at every disaster, recently sending a team of psychologists trained in post- traumatic stress to Houston and Puerto Rico. Hadassah the first hospital to treat friends and enemies equally, Hadassah supporting women's health by fighting against defunding planned parenthood and supporting women and girls who have been trafficked and abused. Hadassah bringing together 300,000 women and men with the same agenda, to be leaders and influence our leaders. This spring Hadassah will be co-chairing a Health Summit in Washington, DC where we will be learning and lobbying our representatives on health issues important to women and sponsoring a bill bringing equal federal funding to research that affect women.

I would be remiss if I didn't thank my wonderful husband Dave who has been on this Hadassah journey with me for 36 years. He supported every event, he tolerated a million phone calls, he celebrated Hadassah 's 100th Anniversary at convention in Israel with me and he said, "go for it" when we talked about the Presidency. Dave and I were thrilled to be in Israel celebrating Hadassah's 100th Anniversary and you too can celebrate Israel's 70th anniversary with a Hadassah mission in 2018. It will be the experience of a lifetime.

When Elie Wiesel died I remembered commenting to Joyce that all we have to leave behind in life is the good we do in the world. By standing with us and Hadassah today I can only think that you will all be remembered for your singular contributions to making our world a better place.

"This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine, let it shine." I thank all of you for your faith in me and wish each of you a joyous Chanukah. And remember "this little light of yours, your gonna let it shine, let it shine, let it shine...."