

by Laura Vasilion

# Enid Borden: Behind the Wheel of MOWAA



Few of us will ever have the opportunity to be a world-renowned chef or the head of a multi-million dollar corporation. Success in life, however, is relative. We can all attain our personal goals if we work hard and persevere. Mentors and role models can help us on that journey.


In this new column, we will profile leaders and luminaries in fields relating to the food industry, management, and leadership. We hope their insights and stories will give you the motivation and inspiration to reach your full potential.

Our first interview is with **Enid Borden, President and CEO of Meals on Wheels Association of America (MOWAA)**.

MOWAA is the oldest and largest national organization composed of and representing local, community-based Senior Nutrition Programs in all 50 U.S. states. The vision of MOWAA is to end senior hunger by 2020.

As President and CEO of this well-respected non-profit association, Enid Borden is faced with leadership decisions that are daunting in their scope and significant in their impact on the lives of millions of our country's senior citizens. Here, she answers questions about MOWAA, her career path, and her philosophy about leadership.

### EYES ON THE FUTURE


 *What is the biggest leadership challenge you face as President and CEO of MOWAA?*

“The biggest challenge I face is preparing for the future. I am concerned that we are not looking forward enough and we are, therefore, shortchanging those seniors who will be in need of our services in the future. My challenge, then, is to help my organization refocus, retool, and reengineer itself to meet the needs of the future. It is difficult because we are a membership organization and the last thing in the world that anyone wants to do is to think “big picture” when they have so many issues to tackle in their own programs. We, as an organization, must look for ways to make the organization relevant and member-worthy. The give and take of the non-profit world makes it that

much more important that we do this right. Our programs expect much of us as a membership organization, and my biggest challenge is to get them to understand that we must expect something in return besides dues. We must all understand how high the stakes are—not only locally, but nationally, as well.

We are serving in excess of 1 million meals a day to hungry seniors through our Meals on Wheels programs. While this is an enormous amount, we estimate that if we had the necessary funding, we could feed at least two million more a day who are hungry. We've got a lot of work to do.”

### FACING THE FEAR OF LEADERSHIP

 *What, in your opinion, are the leadership skills that are most needed today?*

“I think leaders must lead and not be afraid. Far too many people worry about the consequences of decisions that they have to make and end up making no decisions at all. The fear factor in leadership is a prohibitive one. Too many are scared stagnant. They just get by. I think a good leader sees the edge of the cliff and gets excited at the challenge of what awaits. I think a great leader figures out how to get to the other mountains by figuring out how to build a bridge over that cliff.

I think leaders must be able to earn the respect of their staff, their peers, and be respectful of the organization they lead.

I think today's leaders must be able to articulate their story. They need to be able to communicate; they must have a passion for what they are doing and they must believe in what they are doing.

A leader must take that leap of faith that says to his or her staff, do as I say and do as I do.”

## A PROFOUND EFFECT



*How has technology changed your industry?*

“Technology has had a profound effect on our industry and it continues to do so. It has allowed us to automate routes. It has allowed us to reach broader audiences. It has enabled us to tell our story and seek donations from a much broader audience. But it has also made us lose a great deal of one-to-one communication. It’s so much easier emailing someone that we very rarely sit down and jot a note or pick up a phone. That’s the bad side of technology.”

## THE POWER OF MENTORS



*What is your advice to someone considering following your career path?*

“Do it. Stick to it. Believe in it and then go for it. I hope that I am mentoring the person who will eventually sit in my chair. Learn, shadow, pick up advice any way you can get it. And then, take this job. There probably is no better job in Washington.”

## EMBRACE YOUR TALENTS



*What is the most surprising thing you have learned about yourself?*

“That I can juggle. I can work on two or three things at once and don’t often drop the balls. I guess, in today’s parlance, I would say that I am a fairly good multi-tasker.”

## A CONSTANT LESSON



*What personal failure have you faced and learned the most from?*

“That’s easy. Not ending senior hunger. I have failed...so far. But I’m not done yet.”

## FORMING BONDS



*How vital is your connection with ANFP?*

“My connection with ANFP is basically with Bill St. John. We are two CEOs of what I like to call sister organizations. Bill has always been there for me when I needed some advice or even a shoulder. We’ve shared many thoughts about management and leadership, etc. I read with great interest ANFP’s emails and certainly the magazine. I have now been more involved in the restructuring of the magazine and I am proud of my affiliation with ANFP. I actually think that MOWAA and ANFP should work more closely together and perhaps we will. There is, in fact, a vital connection.” ☺

## SNAPSHOT

### Enid Borden

**Education:** BA, Alfred University, Alfred, NY; MA, Adelphi University, Garden City, NY; Continuing Studies, Harvard University

**Current Position:** President and CEO, Meals on Wheels Association of America, Alexandria, VA

**Years in Industry:** 21

**Annual Budget:** In excess of \$14 million



## A LITTLE BIT MORE ABOUT ENID BORDEN

*These questions are just for fun, to let our readers get to know you a little bit better. Are you game?*

“Absolutely.”

*What’s the worst job you ever had and why?*

“I was hired to poll people as they left movie theaters and get their impressions of certain movies. For example, the movie Billy Jack. In between viewings I had nothing to do, so I ended up seeing Billy Jack—an awful movie—67 times. At least if it were Citizen Kane it might have been interesting to try to memorize the dialogue.”

*If you were unable to work in your given field, what career path would you pursue?*

“I would be a director in the theater. Or, the commissioner of baseball.”

*If you could be mentored by anyone, whether living or dead, who would that be?*

“Without a doubt, Steve Jobs.”

*If you had the chance to meet your personal hero, whether alive or dead, who would that be?*

“I would love to meet Golda Meir. Her strength and courage helped build a country. She was called the Iron Lady. I like that.”

*What actor would you want to portray you in the story of your life?*

“If I could choose anyone, I guess it would be Meryl Streep. She’s the best actress alive today and she could probably play me, although Barbra Streisand’s got my accent down perfectly.”