

Choosing to Become an O&A Woman

Conduct this program after you've recited the Objects and Aims. Give each member a copy of the program and go around the room having everyone read a paragraph. You'll probably find you have a lot to discuss when you finish.

I encourage each and every P.E.O. to become an O&A (Objects and Aims) woman.

The O&A woman operates in three general areas:

those things that she says *shall be*,
those things she *seeks for*, and
those things she is simply *aiming at*.

For the O&A woman, general improvement is a *shall be*. As P.E.O.s we are called to general improvement and we verbalize it every time we meet together. We are responsible to every sister in our chapter and in our state, to be a woman who is not content with maintaining the status quo. We are committed to constantly search for areas in which we can improve.

Consideration on the full importance of being a P.E.O. is another *shall be* for the O&A woman. In fact, it *shall be* her chief duty! That consideration includes having a true regard for the fact that she is to be an influence in her community. She is always mindful of the fact that the words she speaks affect the feelings of those she's speaking to and she is determined to express a loving concern for her sisters – anytime, anyplace, anyway, anyhow.

The next area for the O&A woman is the things for which she *seeks* – growth in love toward everyone she knows. She *seeks* both an understanding of and an adherence to the qualities of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth. She *seeks* growth in knowledge and in culture. The whole world is her palette as she *seeks* to obtain wisdom from nature, art, books, study and society.

Now, this one, I'm particularly fond of: she *seeks* to radiate all light possible – and hot flashes are not what I'm talking about. The O&A woman *seeks* to live her life in such a way that no one has any doubt about the fact that she is no ordinary woman. From the perpetual smile on her face to the bounce in her step, from an aura of caring for others, she is simply radiant! People recognize something special in her by her positive conversation, by the content of her writings and by the use of her talents whenever and wherever asked.

This next area is my favorite because here, she is only *aiming* for things. That's really important for me because while I am *aiming*, my success level can vary day-to-day and even hour-to-hour. I feel P.E.O. calls us to something higher. It calls us to be better women than we would ordinarily be. And while I know that I may not live on that higher plateau full-time, at least for the time while I'm around other P.E.O.s, I'm a better person!

So the O&A woman simply *aims* for self-control, equipoise and symmetry of character. Sometimes that *aiming* may be “close one eye and pull the trigger,” particularly as she's *aiming* for temperance in her opinions, speech and habits. Here's the really beautiful thing, *aiming* is all

that is required of her! And as every now and then she hits her mark, her fellow O&A women applaud her and encourage her to continue in her pursuit.

I don't know of any woman I would choose to be around more than a P.E.O. who is also a practicing O&A woman. I'm not sure if you caught that or not, because while all of us are P.E.O.s, becoming an O&A woman is a choice we make. An O&A woman chooses to make her difference, wherever she is and in whatever she does. Simply paying your dues each year will keep you an active P.E.O. But living as an O&A woman requires choosing to be called to something higher, choosing to live out the meaning of our letters, choosing to be a different woman than you would naturally be.

I've often encouraged chapters to be diligent in seeking new members. But before I could ask them to work on increasing their membership, in my own mind I needed to have a good reason. Why do we need more P.E.O.s? Is it just to assure that P.E.O. continues and is there for our daughters, granddaughters and great-granddaughters? That is a legitimate reason. After all, someone kept P.E.O. alive for us to enjoy. But I think there is a greater reason.

This world needs more P.E.O.s because we individually and collectively become better women, better sisters, better wives and mothers. We influence and touch the lives of all we meet, especially those in our own families. And our families, changed by our influence, change our communities. And our communities, changed by our influence, can change our nation.

Change a nation. I told you my dream was fairly grand! But it only happens as we choose to make our difference in our world – following the example of our sisters who, since our founding, have lived lives of integrity and purpose and proudly call themselves P.E.O.s. Challenging our sisters to become O&A women will change P.E.O.

I am convinced that any struggling chapter can be strengthened when its members decide to become O&A women. Because O&A women are magnetic, they draw others to themselves just because they are so nice to be around. And that can directly influence declining membership. When you came across that woman who was so very kind in her words and deeds, who was interested in and knowledgeable about so many different things, who made it a priority in her life to adhere to the values of Faith, Love, Purity, Justice and Truth, there was a call to your spirit that said, "I want to be like that. I want to surround myself with women like that. I want to join an organization that nurtures those longings in me and in others."

An O&A woman has stumbled upon a secret. She knows the P.E.O. business meeting is not the reason women join P.E.O.! She knows the business meeting isn't even listed as an object or aim of our sisterhood and it shouldn't be the focus around which our P.E.O. is built. She knows that times of bonding and fellowship and fun will cause a woman to take time from her busy schedule to attend a P.E.O. meeting. She knows that interesting programs that touch us in some way, that make us laugh, make us cry, make us question or think about something in a new way, or teach us something that we didn't know, will cause a woman to find a babysitter and drive across town, if necessary, to be with her sisters.

I share this challenge with each of you, and I'm going to be so bold to ask each of you to do the same.

What will happen to my life and my chapter when I choose to become an O&A woman? What will happen when living out the Objects and Aims of our sisterhood makes me a magnet to the women with whom I associate? What will happen when my chapter initiates new members who choose to hang around me because they see something special in me and they don't want to miss an opportunity to be with and learn from other O&A women? What will happen to my chapter when I stop simply reciting the Objects and Aims at each meeting and start living them everyday?

I believe that they will find there is no area of their life that won't be enhanced by living as an O&A woman, there is no goal too lofty that can't be reached by taking that first step, there is not a life that can't be made a little better for having spent time in the presence of the rarest jewels – an O&A woman, a woman who *is* P.E.O.

Let's take the challenge and *be* O&A women!