

Outgoing Speech by 2024-2025 KSC President Aidan Koster

I will admit, I've had a hard time writing this speech. I don't know if my writer's block was caused by the impending finality of this convention (at least in terms of my service on the board and my year as the captain of this starship), or the five-year-long to-do list that felt like it got longer every day during the last two months, or what. But I can always come up with SOMETHING to talk about—just ask Chris Koster. He's been legally required to put up with me for 23 years.

Yesterday, I asked you to think about and maybe write down the ways that your chapter has changed in the last year, and how your own life in P.E.O. has changed. Here are some of mine: My chapter started using GroupMe almost exclusively for chapter discussions between meetings, like reminders about small group gatherings and me begging for help with crazy convention-related craft projects (they really are the best). We tried a completely new-to-us fundraiser, and Susan, who you heard from earlier today, took the bull by the horns as the chair of that project. And I, just this year, really figured out what it means to be part of a sisterhood. It may have taken 5 years of board service, but I'm proof that you really can teach an old dog new tricks. Most of what the board does probably seems like a mystery to you—I assure you, a large part of it is just paperwork—but you should look at us as almost a mini-chapter. We have business meetings, we socialize, and we have random text conversations when we think of things between meetings that need to be discussed. But we are there for each other. And this year, we have really had to be there for each other, and that's what sisterhood is. My Chapter JP sisters have been there for me, and have been forgiving of me for my horrible attendance over these past 5 years. And that's what sisterhood is.

So, what's Step Two?

Step Two is taking it further. Evaluate and progress, or maybe rinse and repeat. Think about the ways that your chapter changed this year. Were the changes good, or maybe not so good? Did you try something new and totally crush it, or did that new thing fall totally flat? Did the good changes leave room for improvement, or do they even need improvement? Now, turn those questions inward. What did you do this year to allow P.E.O. to have more meaning in your life? Did you develop a closer bond with members of your chapter? Did you find new excitement about one of our projects as you helped guide an applicant your chapter was sponsoring? Did you make space during a meeting to really think about our Objects and Aims as you recited them, and analyze what they are really trying to say? Did you grow in charity, knowledge, and culture? Did you radiate light? Did you aim at equipoise? Did you consider the full import of P.E.O.? Are you expressing a loving concern for each sister regardless of the circumstance? That is Step Two. To more fully incorporate P.E.O. into who you are individually and redouble your efforts as a chapter to be the best possible version of your chapter. And I have every confidence that Jan will do so much as your Kansas State Chapter president to continue to push us forward to be stronger than we are today.

I'm sure you're wondering how we did as a state with our goals. Well, as the board can tell

you, I love Excel spreadsheets, and I absolutely made one. Before I get into the nitty gritty, we're going to practice something. When I say "three claps", I want everyone to do three claps in unison. Ok, are you ready? THREE CLAPS! Ooh, that was a good first try. We're going to do it one more time to solidify how awesome we are. Ready, set, THREE CLAPS! YAY!!

Our first goal was Sponsor Project Applicants, and if your chapter did that, you have a red star on your recognition bling pin, which I hope you're still wearing. Specifically, I asked us to sponsor 2 percent more project applicants this year than we did last year. I had to enlist the Kansas Project Chairs to help me calculate that information, and what we can get isn't perfect. But, from the looks of it, last year, we sponsored at least 149 applicants, and this year we sponsored at least 156 applicants, for a total increase of 4.7 percent. Additionally, 120 chapters reported sponsoring at least one project applicant in their President's Letter. Way to go, us! THREE CLAPS!

Our next goal was Try Something New—this is your orange star. I will be honest, it was pretty easy for chapters to get credit for this goal—the Chapter JP sisters who helped me chart our success with goals were told to interpret letters generously. We did even better with this goal: a total of 144 chapters described something in their President's Letters that sounded like they tried something new. There was a Part B to this goal—you were also supposed to brag about the new things you tried. For instance, the Executive Board (except me—it wasn't new for me) went out for ice cream at Syllas and Maddy's in Lawrence after we had our board photos taken in August. Because it was a million degrees outside. Chapter IF, Pratt, held their April meeting at noon instead of in the evening. Chapter AG, Newton, made fused glass art. Chapter T, Neodesha, added a cookie exchange to their December meeting. And there were so many more. THREE CLAPS!

I asked our chapters to Activate Inactives, aka reinstate inactive sisters, which earned you a yellow star. I also double-checked the membership report to make sure we didn't leave any chapters out. We also gave credit to those chapters who reported making specific efforts to reach out to inactive sisters to encourage them to reinstate. Seventy-nine chapters reinstated inactive sisters or actively worked to bring back inactive sisters, totaling 46 sisters returning to active status. Though this is not a larger total than last year, remember that last year was the beginning of the You Add 2 P.E.O. campaign, which Kansas ABSOLUTELY ROCKED. Reinstatements are a fantastic way to strengthen chapters and reconnect to our sisters—our lives are better because of our sisterhood. Spectacular work, chapters! THREE CLAPS!

The fourth goal, for a green star, was Reinvest in your Chapter. There were two layers to this goal—the first was finding ways to reinvest your time, talent, or treasure to your chapter, or for your chapter to reinvest in itself by finding ways to improve and grow. Some chapters held family meetings for the first time. Others did internal surveys. Some chapters donated more to the projects this year than they did last year. There are 183 green stars floating around this convention—more of our chapters accomplished this goal than the other four goals! The second layer was to increase our project giving, as a state, by 5

percent over last year. One hundred fifty-seven (157) chapters increased their giving by at least 5 percent from the 2024 P.E.O. year to the 2025 P.E.O. year!

Well, we made it! Our total giving to projects from the 2025 P.E.O. year was \$430,191, for a 68 percent increase. Holy moly! Though there were large gifts in honor of Sophia Zetmeir and the successful effort to build the Sophia Gymnasium, we filtered those large gifts out of our total. You should be incredibly proud of yourselves! THREE CLAPS!

The final goal, signified by a blue star, was Seek New Sisters. A total of 147 chapters initiated new sisters between last year's convention and this week, and another 28 chapters reported actively pursuing new members, for a total of 175 chapters seeking new sisters!

That represents 273 new sisters by initiation this year. As a matter of fact, 115 of our chapters met the 2023-2025 biennial You Add 2 P.E.O. goal by adding two or more new members by initiation or reinstatement (if you had a magnet at your spot, that's why)!

For those reasons, Kansas P.E.O.s are MEMBERSHIP SUPERHEROES! At this time, please put on your superhero mask so we can do a really big group selfie!

Way to be superstars! THREE CLAPS!

The final star, the purple one, signifies that a chapter met all five state goals. There are 36 chapter delegates with purple stars on their bling. If your chapter got a purple star, please stand if you are able. Now, I want everyone to look around at these delegates. OK, you can sit down. They may be the ones who were here to be recognized, but I assure you, they didn't accomplish all 5 goals by themselves. It takes a whole chapter to accomplish goals like these.

And that's what I want you to remember. Whether your chapter accomplished one goal or all five, it was an activity that required SISTERHOOD to accomplish. Together we can do hard things. Together we can move forward. Together, we go TO THE STARS THROUGH P.E.O. THREE CLAPS!

This time last year, at the end of that speech, I asked our Kansas sisterhood to celebrate the ways we are different but focus on the things that bring us together. In some ways, that seems like an oxymoron. Why would we fix our eyes on one thing only to cheer for its opposite? I promise you, those are two sides of the same coin. In my five years of doing official visits, I have tried to remind every chapter that each has its own personality, but there are some P.E.O. things that look the same no matter what chapter you're visiting. Those things are true at the same time, and they are also the two things that help make our sisterhood stronger. Think of it this way: if each chapter were an exact cookie-cutter copy of the next, we would run out of sisters. Because we would all be competing for exactly the same members, and leaving out exactly the same women. But that's not who we are. Some chapters meet in the evening and some during the day. Some meet from September to May, and others year-round. Some chapters are open to wine (shoutout to Chapter JP), and some serve tea. Some chapters recite the Lord's Prayer and others do not. And that's

not just OKAY, I would argue it is GOOD. We have to represent the entire spectrum of womanhood because there is an entire spectrum of women who deserve to have access to educational opportunities and the chance to be part of a sisterhood built on love and encouragement. Those new members who earned 174 chapters blue stars are all unique individuals, and they all help make the fabric of our sisterhood stronger. We have to be the entire rainbow.

Before I forget, there are people I need to thank for these last 5 years on the board, and especially this year as your president. First, I give my love to every single one of the sisters I have served with on the Kansas State Chapter executive board: Susan Smith, Carol Warden, Linda Kekina, Lori Havens, Jan Guevel, Mary McGehee, Carie Johnson, and Joyce Smith. I also would not have survived without the four exceptional executive assistants I have worked alongside: Chris Pannbacker, Lezlee Heryford, Kasey Griffith, and Sharon Leatherman. I've already thanked my Chapter JP sisters, but there is truly no way to express how much they mean to me and how important their support has been. And finally, my family. Our two girls, Emma and Claire. The exchange students who have been "home" with us while I was on the board: Hanna, Shane, Emma P, Ania, and sweet Mar, who just went home. And finally, my favorite person, my BIL, that handsome devil, Chris Koster.

I'd like to leave you with a quote from Tom Hanks as Jimmy Dugan in *A League of Their Own*: "It's SUPPOSED to be hard. If it wasn't hard, everyone would do it. The hard is what makes it GREAT." Thank you so much for this last year. It was hard, but we did it!

THREE CLAPS!