

Changed ‘For Good’

By Mary Adcock
President, Multiples of America

I have an admission to make. Even though I live in Kansas, I never liked *The Wizard of Oz*. Tornadoes, flying monkeys, and wicked witches always scared me. So when I was a child whenever the show came onto television, I always ended up ducking behind our living room sofa for safety. In fact, I never saw the end of the movie...or read the book until I was an adult.

Now after doing both, I want to share with you what I’ve concluded. That is: Dorothy had it right.

“Right about what?”, you ask.

My identical twins, Holly and Noel, would say *Dorothy had it right* because she was dedicated to keeping track of her beloved pet. Like Dorothy, Holly and Noel do love dogs. But they have an even greater affection for cats. They live together with their three cats: Huey, Jewels, and Tofu. These cats don’t have to venture down any yellow brick road to get care. They have assigned spots for their multiple feeding times each day, several stockpiles of cat toys throughout the house, and outfits to fit every holiday.

My husband, David, would say *Dorothy had it right* because she found her way out of Kansas. David loves the mountains. Frankly, he could be the poster guy for the saying, “I’d rather be in Colorado.” So every summer, we pack up the car and head west. Once the snow-packed peaks of the Rockies come into view, David echoes Dorothy’s sentiment, “We’re **so** not in Kansas anymore!”

But those aren’t the reasons I say *Dorothy had it right*. I think Dorothy had it right because she understood that a group of friends is the key to surviving any situation, especially if it involves an encounter with flying monkeys. In fact, Dorothy’s band of friends reminds me a lot of a multiples club. Now I’m not saying we all look like a bunch of scarecrows, although I do admit my morning hair has scared the dogs a time or two.

I’m saying Dorothy had the luck...or perhaps the wisdom...to be the leader of a very unique team. They had different backgrounds, different strengths, and different weaknesses. One was focused on intellect and getting more “brainy.” Another thought all he needed was some “heart,” and the third was looking for “courage.” So the foursome started on their journey – each focused on a different agenda. But a strange thing happened as the merry band made their way down the yellow brick road. The team discovered that although they each had unique needs, they were learning from each other, and through each experience they were becoming bonded together more closely.

When I joined the Greater Kansas City Mothers of Twins Club (now Multiples of Kansas City) shortly after the birth of my twins. I wasn’t looking for Oz. In fact, the main connection I wanted to make at that time was to be able to shop early at the club’s garage sale. So you might say I came in search of....**clothes!**

I think I was pretty much the **fearful lion** at that time. I had found out I was having twins during an ultrasound I had when I was six weeks pregnant. I went home a little in shock – a little in awe – and a lot scared. I had just bled quite a bit, and was to remain on bedrest. In fact, the entire first trimester was a challenge. I remained on bedrest the entire time, and ended up in the hospital two times as a way to monitor the bleeding. Once I got past those three months, the remainder of the pregnancy went well, but in my heart, I was still unsure and fearful that I might lose the babies. So the birth of Holly and Noel was a relief, but inside I was still reeling from nine months of worry.

As time went on, I discovered the courage I lacked could be found in my fellow parents of multiples, on the local, state, national and even international levels.



For one, there's Stephanie Ernst from The Netherlands, the mother of 10 year-old identical twin daughters. She recalls delight at the news she was expecting twins, but that joy was tempered with concern when her twins were first diagnosed with twin-to-twin transfusion syndrome (TTTS), then with twin anemia polycythemia sequence (TAPS).

The experience led Stephanie to speak up for her children and for others.

"My diagnosis was lonely and isolating, and I knew that it was time to raise the profile of this rare disease," shared Stephanie.

So in 2018, Stephanie created a TAPS support website and Facebook group, which soon grew into [The TAPS Support Foundation](#).

"The financial, emotional, and psychological impact...on a family is huge," Stephanie noted. "Multiple births are at high risk of complications, and there is a very big need to follow up these babies that are often born pre-term, with serious conditions. Being a twin is a lifelong diagnosis. Having a diagnosis of TTTS, TAPS or SFGR should be a lifelong consideration. Prematurity is a lifelong condition."

Stephanie now speaks up day after day to connect families affected by TAPS with services, research, and hope.

If Stephanie can do it, I'm thinking I can find a way to speak up and offer hope, too.

So think of yourself and your club members. Are there lions in your midst? Those are the club members who help us see how to step forward, build connections, and spread hope.

Next, there's the scarecrow. He wants a "brain." In *The Wizard of Oz*, the crows say, "Brains are the only thing worth having in this world, no matter whether one is a crow or a man." I'm not sure if I agree, but I do know that information is very important. And like the scarecrow, members often look to their clubs for information and wisdom.

I know I've needed lots of answers over my years of parenting. In the beginning as I was facing the sleep deprivation of those first months with multiples, the questions were mostly about day-to-day survival.

"One baby keeps waking up the other. So how do you get any sleep at night?"

When my twins were nearing their teen years, the questions changed, but the need for answers still remained.

"How do you teach two children to drive...without losing your mind?"

Now that Holly and Noel are adults, questions still remain.

"What is the best way to support children once they reach adulthood?"

As these questions arise, I give thanks that there are informational experts in our midst, members that have the "brains" that come from having "been there, done that" in the world of parenting. Those "brains" also include an array of products and resources from local, state, and national clubs: booklets, blogs, brochures.

Then there are also those members who are informational inspirations.

For example, there's Dr. Susan Griffith, a member of Bluegrass Parents of Twins and More (KY). Susan has helped to author or oversee numerous Multiples of America research surveys over her more than 25 years as a National Worker volunteer. She has also led at least five international studies in her work as research chair for the International Council of Multiple Birth Organizations (ICOMBO). I say "at least five" because as Susan admits.

"I have lost count."

Amid all those topics and results, Susan says the study on postpartum depression is the most memorable.

"The one that stands out to me was the postpartum depression study because of how it clearly showed how much worse it is with each additional child," Susan noted. "With the addition of each child in a pregnancy, the likelihood of postpartum depression goes up."

“What we also clearly showed in our international study was that countries that have good maternal leave policies had much less postpartum depression,” added Susan. “Whereas countries like, sadly, the United States who do not have good maternal leave policies had the highest rates in the world.”

So, I’m thinking if Susan can do it, I can find a way to share my knowledge and skills, too.

Think of yourself and your club. Are there scarecrows in your midst? Those are the club members who help us answer questions, locate information, and resolve problems.

Then, there’s the tin man. The tin man in *The Wizard of Oz* was in search of a “heart.” But he didn’t want just any heart; he wanted a “kind” heart. Likewise, some who join a multiples club are looking to find caring and support, to find friendship, to encounter the “heart” of another. There are members who are masterful at offering their “heart” to other members.

There’s the members of the Southern California Mothers of Multiples. Last fall at their workshop, they donated funds toward the work of Robyne’s Nest, a local non-profit that provides support to at-risk and homeless teens. Or consider the member clubs of the New Jersey Association of Twins’ Mothers Clubs. At their latest convention, they donated toward The Valerie Fund, a non-profit that provides comprehensive care to children with cancer and blood disorders and their families. And there’s the member clubs of the Texas Mothers of Multiples. Many of those clubs donate funds to the state’s Betty Ade Scholarship Fund which awards scholarships annually to multiples and parents of multiples. Examples from state organizations and local clubs could go on and on.

And sometimes giving “heart” just means giving a listening ear. Greater Orlando Mothers of Twins and Triplets (FL) make sure members get that listening ear by posting two questions on their members only Facebook page each week. One question lets members describe current challenges in their lives and the second asks them to share any exciting news.

Think of yourself and your club. Are there some “heart” people, like the tin man, in your midst? Those are the club members who help us recharge, relieve stress, and renew our hope and optimism.

Last, there’s Dorothy. Personally, I think there’s a lot of Dorothy in every one of our members. After all, we have all had multiple munchkins that followed us around at one point in our lives!

But more importantly, Dorothy found herself in the position of being a leader. She wasn’t planning on it. In a way, you might say she fell into the job...when her house landed right on top of the Wicked Witch of the East. But once she stepped into the “shoes” of power, she was focused on moving forward and reaching her goal. I can relate to that. I know there have been times in my local club when I’ve been handed a job, or perhaps, like Dorothy, I just happened to land in the right place at the right time. But whatever the reason, once I started on the journey, I found it was an adventure filled with opportunities for learning new things, for discovering my strengths, and for building lasting friendships.

So Dorothy had it right.
She understood that a group of friends is the key:

to courage,

to brains,

to heart;

to surviving any situation...
especially if it involves...munchkins.



And she understood that each of those friends was special and important to the attainment of their goal. So what about you: You have gifts to give to your club. *Are you more a lion, a scarecrow, a tin man, or Dorothy?*

Dorothy's merry band started down the road as individuals, each looking for their own dream. By the time, they got to Oz, they had listened to each other's fears. They had rescued one another from the dangers of the road. And they had laughed and sang together (at least in the movie and stage versions). In short, they had become a team. They had found a way not only to be *friends to one another*, but to become **"heroes" for one another**.

And like those travelers, **each of you are heroes** when you are there to help another parent on the journey, when you are there to help someone find the courage, the brains, and the heart to walk down the yellow brick road and follow a dream.

As the song "For Good" from the musical "Wicked," a variation on the plot of *The Wizard of Oz*, reminds us:

"I've heard it said
that people come into our lives for a reason,
bringing something we must learn.

And we are led
to those who help us most to grow
if we let them
and we help them in return.

Well, I don't know
if I believe that's true,
but I know I'm who I am
today because I knew you....

And now whatever way our stories end
I know you have rewritten mine
by being my friend....

Who can say if I've been changed for the better?
***But because I knew you,
I have been changed for good."***

