

# Words of Wisdom

What alumni leaders say about leadership

## APPLETON: BETTER TO ASK THAN ISSUE AN ORDER

By Amy Stahl

Take one look at his family home movies and you get a glimpse of Steve Appleton's no-nonsense, goal-oriented style. Even as a child.

"I'm out in the yard sawing up the tree limbs and stacking them — and my brother is just riding his bike around in the yard. And I'm still that way today," says the Micron Technology chief executive.

Since his first \$4.50-per-hour job as a Micron Technology line worker in the 1980s, the 1982 Boise State business administration graduate has scaled to the top of a computer chip empire with 16,000 employees and plants in Idaho, Italy, Texas, Japan and Singapore.

He's the scion of the state's largest employer, yet Appleton takes a studiously low-key approach to leadership. Yelling just isn't his deal. Rather, he uses a gentler approach borrowed from the Japanese: Never show your claws. Better to ask than issue an order. Be polite not belligerent.

"Good leaders — or good CEOs — don't ever really fully use the authority that they have," Appleton says. He would rather quietly build teamwork and focus on strategy than micromanage thousands of employees.

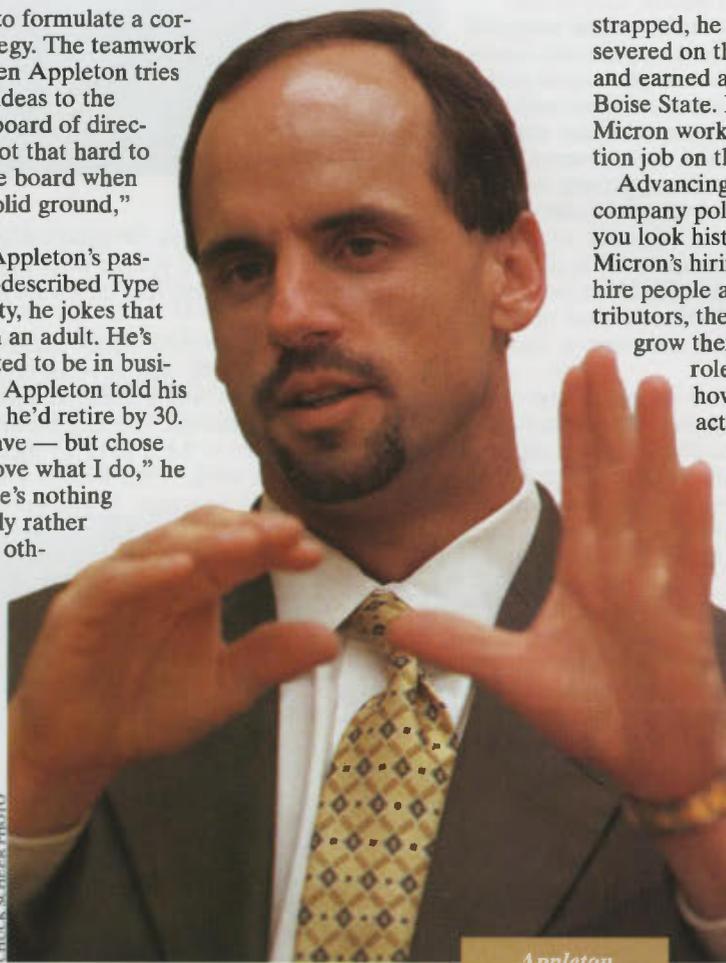
"My style is to really delegate a lot of authority," he says. "I listen to people and we get together as a team." Micron's officers meet every

six months to formulate a corporate strategy. The teamwork pays off when Appleton tries to sell new ideas to the company's board of directors. "It's not that hard to convince the board when you're on solid ground," he says.

Work is Appleton's passion. A self-described Type A personality, he jokes that he was born an adult. He's always wanted to be in business. At 15, Appleton told his mother that he'd retire by 30. He could have — but chose not to. "I love what I do," he says. "There's nothing else I'd really rather be doing — otherwise I'd be doing it.

"One of the key characteristics you see in leadership is that people like doing what they're doing. They like being leaders, they like being CEOs. They're doing it in all likelihood not because they're getting paid but because they enjoy it."

Plain and simple, Appleton owes his success to hard work. "I never thought it would be easy. I've worked hard at everything I've done. When I was in high school I was salutatorian — I had one B and I was crushed not to be valedictorian. But I was one of the top-ranked tennis players, I



Appleton

strapped, he nonetheless persevered on the tennis court and earned a scholarship to Boise State. He began at Micron working in a production job on the graveyard shift.

Advancing from within is company policy at Micron. "If you look historically at Micron's hiring practices, we hire people as individual contributors, then we train and grow them into leadership roles. We want to see how somebody interacts with our culture and our work force before making them responsible for managing people."

Even the most artful team-building, however, can't eliminate all the pitfalls faced by effective leaders. Appleton warns of the dangers of isolation. "One of the major mistakes [a leader] can make is to become a leg-

end in their own mind," he says.

When asked about the qualities tomorrow's leaders will need in the hard-charging high-technology world, Appleton doesn't hesitate.

"They need to be better than I am," he says. "They need to be smarter, they need to move quicker. They'll have to communicate more by virtue of the fact that companies have to be global." □

was drum major of the band, I directed the winter orchestra. I just did everything and I worked really, really hard at it.

"When I got to college, it was the same thing. Micron was the same story, different place. It's never really been easy. I've always been able to overcome what deficiencies I have through hard work."

Appleton grew up in a middle-class family in a suburb of Los Angeles. Financially

## MCMILLAN RELIES ON QUIET LEADERSHIP TO INSPIRE STUDENTS

By Justin Endow

In his three seasons as the Boise State football team's quarterback, Jim McMillan rewrote the record books. He set single game, season and career marks in passing yards, touchdown passes and total offense — records that continue to stand.

And while he no longer leads a college football team onto the field in front of thousands of screaming fans, McMillan hasn't neglected the leadership skills he honed on the turf. He uses them every day for quieter purposes. Over 15 years ago McMillan moved to Homedale and began to make his mark teaching and coaching at the high school level.

"I think a leader should always set the proper example," says McMillan, who led the Homedale High School

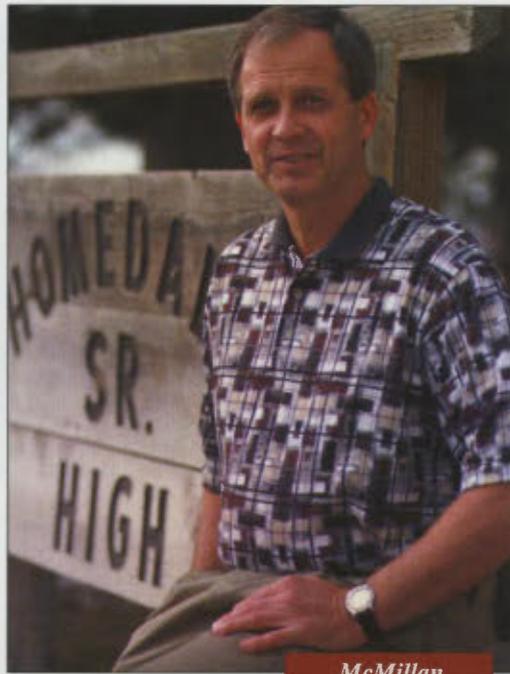
football team to five state championships and three undefeated seasons. More recently, his girl's softball teams have won three state titles.

"A lot of leaders feel the need to be vocal. I was always more quiet, which is something I learned from my parents."

His quiet leadership by example found no better arena for display than on the football field, taking the Broncos to two Division II play-off appearances. But rather than play the role of dictator, he just went on the field and showed his teammates what needed to be done.

McMillan says this is where many leaders fail. "No one knows everything about a subject or sport. As a fellow player, coach or teacher, it's important to listen to other students and players because they often have good ideas."

While he doesn't like to



McMillan

emphasize his skills and successes, McMillan is quick to praise the role models and leaders in his life. He says that without them, he never would have accomplished anything.

"My parents taught me to have a little humility," he says. "They also showed me the value of hard work. Then when I got to college, coaches like Tony Knap were always open to players' ideas, and I really respected that."

His teams have repeatedly displayed his knack for bringing together winning seasons, but McMillan would rather be remembered for other lessons.

"I hope my players and students leave having learned the game or the course material, and that they develop a strong

foundation," he says. "But if they remember something, hopefully they'll remember that they learned values." □

## DONNELL CONNECTS MERIDIAN SCHOOLS TO COMMUNITY

By Larry Burke

A new school year is about to start in the Meridian School District. The days are filled with impromptu meetings, constant phone calls and questions from drop-in visitors as administrators attend to myriad last-minute details before students return.

At the vortex of this activity is Christine Donnell, a 1973 Boise State elementary education graduate who was hired as the Meridian district's school superintendent last year.

Despite the hectic pace, Donnell says she relishes the job because it gives her an opportunity to improve the educational environment for students and teachers.

"I've always had a strong need to make whatever I'm involved in even better. In this job I can have an impact," she says.

The raw statistics are testimony to the complexity of her task. Next to Boise, the Meridian district is the second



Donnell

largest in the state. It also is one of the fastest growing districts in Idaho as housing developments fill the open spaces west of Boise. The district encompasses 100,000 people, serves 23,000 students, employs 2,500 people and operates on an annual \$160 million budget.

Dealing with the district's exploding growth, says

Donnell, means her job features a strong emphasis on public relations.

"We have to make sure the public is well aware and supportive of our needs. My responsibility is to communicate clearly where we are going and where we need to be," she says.

If a recent bond issue is an indication, the public is getting the message. A \$26.9 million bond for new schools passed last fall with an 82 percent approval rating.

For Donnell, leadership is about developing personal relationships.

"My involvement in the community has to be evident. I have to be a good listener in the community and develop a sense of mutual respect with people," she says.

Donnell's tenacious, goal-oriented style was evident early in her career. While employed as a special education assistant and secretary in the Payette school system, she

commuted 120 miles roundtrip to Boise State every day one summer to take the courses and student teaching required to earn a provisional teaching certificate. She eventually earned her degree and began to climb the education ladder as a teacher and principal at schools in Payette, Fruitland and Meridian.

Donnell didn't have to look far to find her mentor — just across the kitchen table. Her father, George Hunt, was a longtime educator who was the superintendent at Fruitland when Donnell was in high school.

"I'm following in the footsteps of someone I really admire. He has always been a guiding force in my life ... a source of advice and counsel," she says.

Donnell also has strong family ties to Boise State. Her husband, Bill, graduated in 1968 and is now in the marketing department at Intermountain Gas. And her mother-in-law, Betty, worked as a secretary for several offices on campus before retiring in the late 1980s. □

## PASSION FUELS SCHACHTELL'S LEADERSHIP ROLE

By Sherry Squires

Ana Maria Schachtell never set out to be a leader. She has just never been able to say no to a burning desire to help educate her community.

She is currently involved in her biggest education effort yet — to form a nonprofit foundation and raise money to build the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho.

The Idaho Hispanic Commission hired Schachtell, a 1991 Boise State graduate in bilingual and multicultural elementary education, several years ago as a cultural specialist. Part of her job was to determine the feasibility of building the center. Then the grant that paid her salary expired.

"I couldn't just drop it," she says. "It was such a wonderful idea. I told my husband I wasn't going to have a salary for a

long time, and I took it up as a volunteer. I want to take it to its end."

Schachtell points to high Hispanic dropout rates in high school and even junior high as evidence that something is lacking for Hispanic youth.

"A lot of kids are growing up embarrassed," she says. "They have no appreciation for their background because they don't know about it."

The cultural center would be a place for teachers to take their students to discuss Hispanic cultures and a place for the community to gather.

Schachtell formed a board of directors for the Hispanic Cultural Center of Idaho and



Schachtell

serves as the organization's chairwoman. The city of Nampa donated a site for the cultural center, but the organization must raise about \$2 million before building.

John Bertram, who serves on the board, says Schachtell is a natural leader for the project.

"I've seen Ana doing this tirelessly for several years now," he says. "She's been the spearhead, the visionary and

the continual dreamer. She wants to give these young people a vision of hope and opportunity. That gives us the desire to keep working on it."

Schachtell has served in several leadership positions. She was a member of the board of directors for the National Diabetes Association from 1993-96, president of Mujeres Unidas de Idaho in 1994-95, has served the past three years

as a commissioner for the Boise City Arts Commission and has been involved with the Boise Art Museum since 1981.

"I don't really see myself as a leader," she says. "But several times in my life people have looked at me and said, 'You're it.' So I say, 'OK, I'll do my best.'" □

## A LOVE TO LEAD GETS THINGS DONE

By Sylvia Dana

Effective leaders, asserts Eric Love, hold fast to their beliefs in spite of adversity, are driven by commitment and inspired by compassion for the underdog.

"I respect people who are so committed to their beliefs that they never stray from them," says Love, a 1991 Boise State social science graduate and aspiring higher education administrator.

Coincidentally, Love developed his leadership abilities when he rallied for the recognition of a man possessing the same qualities — Martin Luther King Jr.

"He accomplished amazing things in a short lifetime," says Love, who was Boise State's student body president in 1989-90. "Martin Luther King's mission was to make America true to her promise, that all people are created equal and deserve equal rights."

In 1988, Love organized support for the Martin Luther



Love

King Jr. holiday in a state that didn't recognize the civil rights leader's birthday.

Using tactics from the 1960s to attract attention to the issue, the then 23-year-old twice led the organization of a rally and march from campus to the state Capitol. The first year, 100 people participated. That number grew to 800 the following year.

"It was definitely nostalgic and modeled after the civil

rights movement itself," Love says. The university noticed, and so did the media.

Playing a major role in a statewide effort, Love lobbied senators and built support until the MLK holiday gained recognition in the state and at the university in 1990.

Today, Boise State's week of events has been recognized as one of the best programs that celebrates the MLK holiday in the country. "I am so proud," says Love, now 32. "The [university] does amazing things during the holiday, covering so many different issues. I'm thrilled to have anything to do with it all."

After graduating from Boise State, Love attended Idaho State University to earn a master's degree in counseling and student affairs. In 1995, he became ISU's diversity resources coordinator.

Besides leading the effort to name a Pocatello street after Martin Luther King Jr., Love's work at ISU focused on

recruitment and retention issues for students of color and encouraging minority and cultural campus organizations.

Love also helped develop a minority doctoral fellowship program, as well as a national student exchange program to bring students of color to ISU. In the past two years, Love has received numerous awards for his accomplishments and support of diversity programs and initiatives.

This fall, he enrolled in a doctoral program in higher education administration at Indiana University. Accustomed to college campuses, Love says he is driven to use his skills and talents to make positive change in university dynamics.

What makes Love an effective leader?

"Compassion and a strong sense of social justice," says Love, born of a white English mother and an African-American father in Liverpool, England. He also attributes his leadership abilities to his easy-going personality, communication skills and the counsel of many mentors. "I'm also very optimistic," he says. "Every mistake is a gift because I can learn from mistakes." □