



## **Loss Reinforces Life's Lessons**

**By Mary Ann Miller**

**President/CEO, Tempe Chamber of Commerce**

I lost a very close friend last week.

Many of you knew Mary O'Connor. She was Tempe's transit manager until 2004, when she left to lead Scottsdale's transportation department. I met her when I first started at the Chamber in January 1995, and we became friends nearly immediately.

Mary had more friends than anybody I've ever known. She was everyone's favorite traveling companion – me included – because she was easygoing and willing to go off in any direction you wanted. She worked long hours, but still made time for the people in her life.

Death always prompts an examination of life, especially when it comes suddenly and at a young age, as did Mary's passing. And in these days of seemingly unrelenting social and economic stresses, I want to share with you what I learned from Mary. I hope that I can carry them with me in the future, and that they add perspective to your life as well.

First, work hard and believe in what you do. Accept both compliments and criticisms, but differentiate which are directed at *you*, and which are directed at *what you do*.

Savor what the world has to offer. Food, wine, art, music, books, travel – find those things that you enjoy, not necessarily what the experts tell you to enjoy.

Any experience is made better with friends. If a friend asks you to a Thai restaurant, go even if you don't care for that cuisine.

Cherish your family. Help those who need you, have fun with those who don't, and mentor the next generation.

Share what you have. Be generous and open. Try new things. Offer help. Accept the help of others with gratitude. Respect people and cultures. Know that your way is not the only way. Let people know that you care for them.

And never leave your friends without a great big hug.

Best regards,  
Mary Ann Miller