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## Shoes

*"I thought of you the minute I laid eyes on them. I knew they were meant for you!"* my friend declared.

But I hated them. They were neon pink with silver bows and completely outside of my comfort zone. I wouldn't be caught dead in those shoes so I tucked them away in the back of my closet. I'm still not sure why I kept them.

Every time I'd see my friend she'd ask, *"Why aren't you wearing the shoes I bought you? They would go great with your outfit!"*



Of course, I would make an excuse why I had on another pair. But I was running out of excuses. I knew I would have to wear them some day or tell my friend the truth. Wearing them seemed easier. So one day I gathered up my courage and pride and pulled the shoes out of the closet. I had a lunch date with my friend and decided to face the music and wear them. We were meeting at a diner outside of town. I probably wouldn't run in to anyone I knew. So I slipped on the shoes and thought *"Hmmm, they really don't look so bad."* The color wasn't as loud as I remembered and the silver bows were a great accent. And best of all, they fit! They just needed to be broken in. My friend was so happy to see me in her shoes.

*"They are so you!"* she exclaimed. Although I wasn't convinced of that, I did feel different when I wore those shoes. More stylish. More confident. More attitude. More vogue.

As I reflect back on my term as President, I can't help but be reminded of those shoes and how resistant I was to wear them. As I matured, I grew to appreciate the gift that had nothing to do with shoes but rather the change they brought about in me. And though I didn't realize it at the time, you also gave me a wonderful gift two years ago by



nominating and electing me as President Elect of our Association. Your gift gave me an opportunity to step outside of my comfort zone. Your gift gave me an opportunity to grow personally and professionally. Your gift gave me an opportunity to give back to an Association which has contributed to my education and success. Through your gift I was able to form relationships with industry peers and affiliates I would not otherwise have met. You gave me the opportunity to truly appreciate the value and benefits this Association provides its members. I am filled with gratitude for the gift you gave me. It was a gift that will keep on giving. Promise!



So, I ask all of you to break out and break free. Put on a new pair of shoes. Kick up your heels. Make a difference. Get involved. Give back. Be gifted. Walk a mile in my shoes. And even if you think the shoes won't fit, try them on. You'll grow into them. I did.



**Patti Shaw**  
CEO | ASEA President



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