



Dear Friends:

Happy New Year! I hope each of you had an enjoyable holiday season with friends and family.

2009 will be one of the most interesting and potentially challenging years in recent memory. There are certainly many questions pertaining to the economy which affect each and every one of us. While I am not an economist, there are a few thoughts I would like to share that I feel are important during periods such as these.

1. Create Value – People love sports, and during tough times many people cling to sports because they serve our passion and stir our soul. Kids participate in gymnastics with the support of their parents because of the value it creates and the values it instills. Focus on promoting these values, and reassure your customers that their investment is providing return on the future of their children.

2. Value your customers and other partners – Urge your staff to demonstrate to your customers and other partners how important they are. People are making difficult choices during times like this, and they will choose what matters most to them and where they feel the greatest sense of reward. Let your customers know you care about them.

3. Work together to increase market share – A weak marketplace is a great opportunity to increase market share. I encourage gymnastics clubs to cooperatively market their facilities and services. Right now, media companies are thirsty for advertisers. USA Gymnastics has advertising templates and videos immediately available for those who are looking for creative assistance.

USA Gymnastics enters 2009 with many reasons to be optimistic.

• **The new USA Gymnastics Board of Directors** – In December, we welcomed 1984 Olympic Champions Peter Vidmar and Mary Lou Retton to the newly restructured USA Gymnastics Board. Peter will serve as chairman, and together with other committed leaders, this group will provide important oversight and strategic thinking to USA Gymnastics. Thank you to Ron Froehlich who served as chairman of the board for the last eight years. We appreciate his dedication and leadership to USA Gymnastics.

• **The Member Club Task Force** – USA Gymnastics remains active with the Member Club Task Force to identify new ways to work together in four key areas: grassroots development, education, marketing the sport, and creating a gold medal standard for professional members.

• **Our Elite Program** - I believe the sense of teamwork and camaraderie is at an all-time high among our elite athletes and coaches. When we look back at the Beijing Olympics, I continue to be amazed at the number of historic benchmarks that were achieved. This success has only stimulated our athletes' desire to remain on the podium, and I applaud all of our Programs for their focus on a continued pursuit of excellence at the elite level.

• **International events for developing disciplines** – USA Gymnastics plans to host several exciting, new international invitations for Rhythmic Gymnastics, Acrobatic Gymnastics and "Gymnastics for All."

• **Chicago 2016** – Chicago, Ill., is one of four finalists for the right to host the 2016 Olympic Games. A final decision will be made in October 2009, and we should all share in the excitement and support Chicago in any way possible. USA Gymnastics is holding the Tyson American Cup on February 21 at the Sears Centre Arena in the suburbs of Chicago to show our support for the city's bid and to assist in showcasing the city to our international colleagues.

These and other new initiatives will be areas of emphasis as we head into the New Year. In today's climate, it is important to work together to achieve new levels of success. I also encourage you to let us know how your business is going. You can e-mail us at lgali@usa-gymnastics.org or publications@usa-gymnastics.org with any thoughts or questions you may have.

Lastly, I would like to express my regrets for the loss of Roberto Pumpido this past December. Though I only met Roberto a few times, I was always lifted by his sense of energy and enthusiasm for life. Roberto inspired me and I know he inspired many of you. He will be missed, but his spirit will live on.

I look forward to the road ahead and seeing many of you in Dallas, Texas, this summer for the Visa Championships and USA Gymnastics National Congress and Trade Show.

With great regard,

Steve Penny
President/CEO