

## *A message from the President*

# *Making a Difference—One Act at a Time*



**James C. Hawley Jr.**  
President

“Fate rarely comes at a time of our own choosing.” That quote reminds me of the tradition we have been continuing with the American Federation of Aviculture “Starfish” Awards presented at each convention. I am sure you have heard about them or even have received one over the years. They are not fancy, but more of what they represent establishes a considerable value.

At this time, I would like to share the whole story behind the AFA Starfish Award. It was started many years ago when it was brought to my attention that most people in this world are asleep and unaware, walking around with their eyes closed, while a few of us with our eyes wide open live in constant total amazement! That is when the idea came to me to present something to the individuals who were identified by their state coordinators and regional directors as having done something that made a difference to AFA.

The story goes like this: Not that far in the past a very busy older corporate executive lived by the ocean. He enjoyed taking early morning walks along the beach by his house, preparing mentally for his daily schedule. One morning, after a severe storm, he was out walking the beach as usual. He noticed a great deal of debris had washed up onto the shore because of the storm. As he walked, looking off in the distance he thought he could pick out a thin silhouette of a person who seemed to be dancing on the beach right at the water’s edge.

As he got closer he started to realize the silhouette was a young man. The young man wasn’t dancing, he was reaching down and picking something up from the sand then running and throwing it into the ocean. As the older man got closer, he could see the young man was actually picking up beached starfish that had apparently washed up onto the shore by the storm. The young man was throwing them back into the ocean before the sun came out and the fog lifted, when they would die.

When the older gentleman got close enough to assess the whole situation, he saw hundreds upon hundreds of starfish all over that portion of the beach and the young man scurrying about throwing them one by one back into the ocean. After a few minutes of surveying the scene before him, the older gentleman told the young man that sometimes starfish are washed up onto the shore after violent storms at certain places and times of the year.

The whole time the older gentleman was talking; the young man continued to pick up starfish and run them over to the water’s edge and throw them back into the ocean. Finally the older gentleman blurted out that there were hundreds of starfish and that it



was impossible for the young man to make any difference at all. The young man stopped, looked at the older gentleman, picked up a starfish, walked over and threw it into the water and made the comment (not rudely, but full of a firm conviction) to the older gentleman, “It made a difference to that one!”

The older gentleman thought for a moment and concluded that he had not been challenged to jump in and make much of a difference in anything in a long, long time. So for the rest of that morning, two silhouettes could be seen from a distance dancing on the beach making a difference one at a time.

You now know the Starfish Award is for those who are out there making a difference, one act at a time, and even attempting those tasks that seem so small that they could not possibly make any difference in this world at all.

Thank you to all of you who make acts of selfless difference day in and day out. All of your acts contribute to the success and good name of the American Federation of Aviculture.

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