

# **Failures, Flops & F\*ck-Ups: What We Did & What We Learned**

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Yeli Boots, Margaret Harmon-Myers, Cheryl Hill, Aimee Meuchel, Kate Schwab, Lauren Simon, Kathy Street

Lauren S. will do intro

## **Why are we talking about our mistakes?**

- Conferences are usually a chance to talk about what has gone well, but this is a chance to connect honestly about our mistakes and how we grew.
- We would like to share our experiences, so you don't need to reinvent the wheel/repeat the same mistakes.
- Reminder to connect with OLA members to reach out for advice when needed.
- We've all made mistakes. We're all in the same boat. And we still have jobs!
- We want to try new things - and failures are a part of that experience.

Lauren S. does the reason why

# Failure

A failure is where you planned everything, but something along the way got messed up. Maybe something didn't arrive on time, or something broke.

Aimee introduces Failures

# Flop

A flop is where you planned everything, were well prepared, and no one showed up (or very few).

Kathy S. will share the definition.

## **F\*ck-Up**

A f\*ck-up is where maybe you made plans, but things weren't tested as well as they should've been.

Cheryl H. will introduce

## Questions for Presenters

After each presenter, we'll have an opportunity for you to ask the presenter a question.

We'll take three questions before moving on. We'll have time at the end for you to ask additional questions and to share your own failures, flops, and f\*ck-ups.

We're asking the audience to focus on clarification or details, not fixes.

For example, "How many cakes did you buy from Fred Meyer, Aimee?" (stay tuned!)

Not "Did you try purchasing cakes from other bakeries?" or "Did you make your own cake?"

Yeli will present this slide

# **Yeli Boots**

Children's Services Assistant

Hood River County Library

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Librarian Kryptonite: When the coffee runs out and Public Speaking

# Failure

## Movie Matinee @ the Library

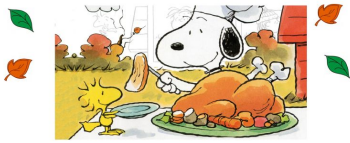


When we first started hosting movie matinee at the library we had no idea we would have such a huge turn out. We had a laptop that would connect to the projector up above, small speakers, lots of cords, and duct tape. We didn't realize that trying to show movies through a laptop would cause so many hiccups! For example; the laptop would fall asleep after a certain amount of time so of course during the movie everything would go dark! We had to make sure ALL the cords were taped down so that people wouldn't trip over them. Timing it perfectly so the room would be dark enough. It always felt like "hopefully things go smooth this time". We also had someone complain because on our flier we had a picture of popcorn and we didn't actually serve popcorn. We went through a lot of trial and error with movie matinee! Luckily, we now have a beautiful home theater that was graciously paid for by the Friends of the Library! Playing movies on a laptop is such a PAIN and a lot to set up and take down!



If your library has the means and shows movies, I'd highly recommend taking advantage of today's current technology! Give in.. it's worth it.

# Flop



## PARKDALE LIBRARY

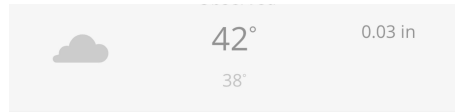
### Thanksgiving arts & craft project

Make a place at the table by  
decorating your very own  
THANKSGIVING place mat!



Supplies & cookies provided  
*You may bring your own photos*

**Tuesday November 24<sup>th</sup>**  
**5:30pm – 7:00pm**



39°

28°

Snow

0.77 in

Record High

58°

Sunrise

7:31 am

Moonrise

11:11 am

Record Low

15°

Sunset

4:25 pm

Moonset

9:28 pm

6

Observed

29°

0.07 in

Every year we have holiday programming and this specific program was “decorate your own Thanksgiving placemat”. Normally I will shop for all the materials for the placemats and pack it all up. Mind you it’s about 2 crates worth of stuff including chocolate chip cookies and a laminator. The travel time to our Parkdale branch is about 20 minutes and as you can see here on the slide the weather predicted snow and although it had been snowing for a couple of days now I had one very loyal parent bring her two older kids. It was a very cold night! The year previous to this we actually had a great turnout of 73 people at our very small branch and but of course there was no snow around this time. Every year the weather changes and sometimes we have no snow or just an overwhelming amount. When it comes to the weather we just cannot compete and have no control over these types of situations. I try not to stress or be so hard on myself because this is out of my hands. So what I ended up doing is hosting the placemat program at the Hood River branch the next day from 2:00 - 4:00 pm. Unfortunately, not too many parkdale families were able to join us which did make me feel bad but I was still able to put the materials to good use! Sometimes

it's just the way it goes.

## F\*ck-Up

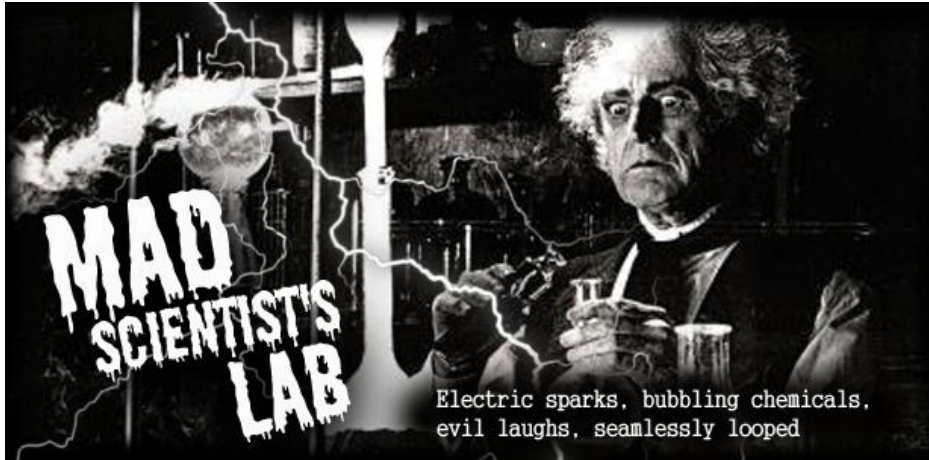
ASSUMING EVERYTHING WILL GO AS PLANNED IS NEVER A GOOD IDEA.



It was my first year of being in charge of the Parkdale Summer Reading Program and my job was to ensure that things went smooth. Well it didn't end up going so smooth on this occasion. It was our first year partnering with the local school and staff. The plan was to hold the Children's Summer Reading performance in the school's gymnasium. The BIGGEST mistake I made was I didn't touch base with the school staff person or performer the night before because I assumed we were ALL on the same page. The school staff person didn't show up to unlock the building. The performer was at the Library and not the school. So there I am in the parking lot of the school on a super hot day stressed out making phone calls trying to figure out an emergency plan B and as this is happening a family is pulled up. So I decided that the best solution was to hold the performance at the Library and not make the performer move. I had to put up a sign at the elementary school redirecting families back to the Library. Unfortunately, we had a

small group. My advice is: **ALWAYS** check in with people the day prior, even if you feel like you're bugging. Communication is so important on a first run of things especially when it involves multiple people. We're human and tend to forget a lot. The performer was Angel Ocasio that year and he was so kind, so patient, and understanding! He is also very FUNNY!

## What I Learned



About 5 years later and everything in between here I am. I want to share with you something that has always stuck with me, something our previous director said: “We’re like scientists, we experiment, if that doesn’t work we try again”.

To put it another way the cycle of ***action, reflection, and consultation*** ensures progress. It is a foolproof formula. Try something, reflect on it. Consult with each other on what works and what could be improved and you will no doubt progress. THEN DO IT AGAIN.

# Questions?

We'll take three questions and then we'll move on. People can save more and ask at the very end.

# **Margaret Harmon-Myers**

Adult Services Library Assistant

Eugene Public Library

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Librarian Kryptonite: Procrastination, Telephone communication, lack of self confidence



## Failure

*Think like a queen. A queen is not afraid to fail.*  
--Oprah Winfrey



NOT

*I am  a blogger!*

Years ago, I was all set to teach my blogging class, which I had taught twice before with no problems. Off we went, the class and I, through the introductory lessons, until we got to the place where you set up your blogger account. Suddenly, Google was now requiring a phone number to receive a verification code before you could even create your blog. A few people had cell phones and were able to proceed; the majority of the students at that time did not have cell phones with them so were dead in the water. Three people out of twelve created a blog that day and left happy at the end of the 2 hours. The rest were frustrated and grumpy and left early with no

blog.

## Flop



After several years of teaching genealogy classes on Saturday mornings at my library, fewer and fewer people were attending. Finally I had a class where no one at all came! I decided to cut back on the number of classes I taught, thinking I had saturated the market, but people would come into the library and ask when the next genealogy class was, or they would say the class was recommended to them and they were disappointed to find they'd have to wait a month or two, or even longer, for the next one. Then I discovered that the local genealogical society taught classes every Saturday on different topics. I changed my classes to Wednesday or Thursday

afternoons and once again they filled up!

## F\*ck-Up



ended up standing to the left of the laptop (instead of the right as I do in classes at my own library) because the peWhen I did a presentation at OLA one year I never saw the room until the time of the presentation. I was completely thrown by the different style tech cart and the tech setup at the front of the room. I rson I was presenting with stood on the right. I was five minutes into my presentation before someone raised their hand to say that I was blocking the screen, and had been since I started! I got so flustered I lost my place in the powerpoint. Needless to say, I learned my lesson the hard way; I spent the rest of the day mortified every time I

thought of it.

## What I Learned

***Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts.” - Winston Churchill.***

(Failure) - We can't control the ever-changing internet and its websites, just remember that it DOES change, and check your sites and services the day of the class/program in case there is some new wrinkle in the process since the last time you used it.

(Flop) - Do some research on what's offered in the community so you are not duplicating classes or information, or offering things to the same audience as another organization is at the same time.

(F\*ck-Up) - When doing a presentation at an unfamiliar venue, try to get into the room ahead of time to test the equipment and familiarize yourself with the layout. If working with a partner, communicate clearly ahead of time so you can make the physical space suit your style and hers and you are not "vying" for the same space.

**Questions?**



# **Cheryl Hill**

Adult Services Librarian

West Linn Public Library

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Librarian Kryptonite: Detail-challenged presenters/authors/musicians/artists

# Failure



The library's attempts at conducting a community-wide reading program resulted in plenty of people showing up to grab a free book, but attendance at the accompanying programs that month was never very good.

# Flop

## **Introduction to Self-Publishing**

With Susan DeFreitas and Vinnie Kinsella

Tuesday, October 25, 6:00pm



“I would like to  
learn how to  
\_\_\_\_\_.”

 West Linn Public Library

After years of patron requests that we hold a self-publishing class/workshop, we finally offered one. I managed to get two people from Indigo Editing & Publications to come give a 90-minute presentation, but only five people came. The presentation was great and those five people enjoyed the program a lot, but the low attendance was disappointing after getting so many requests.

Last November the Deschutes Public Library did a Facebook post asking people what they'd like to learn how to do

(<https://www.facebook.com/deschuteslibrary/photos/a.10150436782130462.634581.185915185461/10157649504455462/>). They got 28 comments with some great suggestions. I tried the same thing at my library and my post got zero comments.

# F\*ck-Up

23	24	25
	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY	THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY
	LIBRARY CLOSED	LIBRARY CLOSED



*Photo credit: Amy Ross*

The library closed early on November 23rd (the day before Thanksgiving) but I forgot to put it on the monthly calendar. The calendar had been proofed by several other colleagues too. None of us caught the mistake! I didn't catch the mistake until the 23rd.

I worked out a great program with a local cookbook author who was going to come demonstrate how to make three dishes with local seasonal ingredients. Library management at that time insisted on a 10% commission on this author's book sales, something I neglected to mention until after we'd already planned everything. After learning about the commission she declined to come do the program.

## What I Learned

- It's impossible to predict what will succeed and what will fail, so you have to learn to just go with the flow and learn from your mistakes and failures.
- Weather is a good scapegoat for poor program attendance.
- What works for other libraries may not work for yours. But it might!
- Create checklists for things you do regularly - such as booking presenters - so you don't forget important details.
- "Life is trying things to see if they work." -- Ray Bradbury

**Questions?**

# **Aimee Meuchel**

Teen Librarian

Tualatin Public Library

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Librarian Kryptonite: Vomit, the word moist, and smelly books

## Failures pt. 1 (When we were innocent)

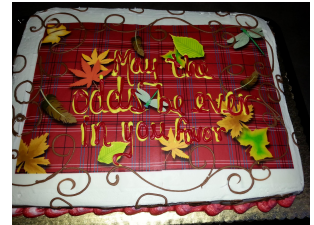
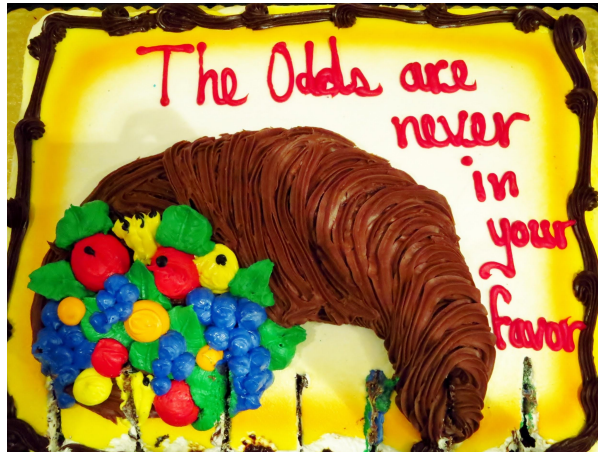
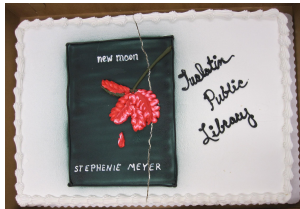
Winning cake from Fred Meyer





## Failure (cynicism begins)

Ordering cakes from Fred Meyer is always an adventure.



Cakes. Cakes. Cakes. Many years ago, Fred Meyer won our Cake-off contest (best tasting cake, not best looking) and we agreed to purchase our cakes from them for a year. Two years later, I finally stopped ordering cakes altogether. That is a cornucopia in the center--not a giant pile of poo shooting fluorescent fruit.

# Elop

Fall 2008

Brilliant plan-Zombie\*Ninja\*Pirate Party

2 participants--just enough that you must do something, but also enough that everyone there is uncomfortable.

Adults 4, teens 2.

If photos were taken, they disappeared, just like this awesome idea.

## Zombie\*Ninja\*Pirate Dance Party



**Saturday, September 26**  
**7:00-9:30**  
**Van Raden Center**



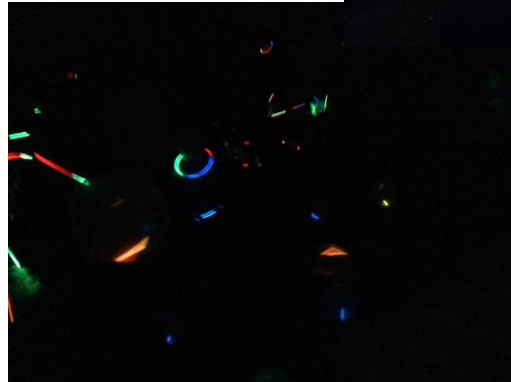
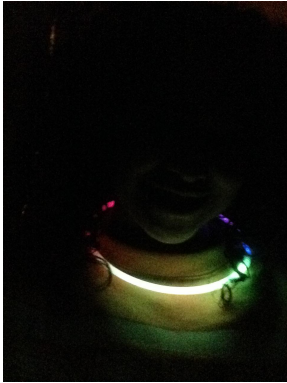
What are you? Pirate? Ninja? Zombie? All three? Dress up as your favorite crazy character and join us for a night of music, dancing, games, prizes and fun! This will be a night of fun you won't want to miss!

Sponsored by the City of  
Tualatin  
For more information  
call 503-691-3082 or  
503-691-3083



## F\*ck-Up

Turns out some programs need testing.



Charging--just like the directions said--didn't work.

Only thing that worked was the cheap glow-in-the-dark necklaces from Dollar Tree  
Teens thought it was a rave.

Was supposed to last 2 hours--lasted 30 minutes then we went and watched a movie  
in the teen room. (The 30 minutes included them eating.)

It was dark. Really dark.

## **What I Learned**

Luckily, I don't perform brain surgery.

Since I work with teens, you can turn most losses into wins with humor and then make them a tradition (see cakes).

Form a teen council and get their ideas for programs. You'll have a guaranteed attendance by just doing this.

Except when that idea is a glow-in-the-dark party. Then don't listen to them.

\*You can break a teen and you won't get sued by the parents.

**Questions?**

# **Kate Schwab**

Librarian, Central Library Information Services

Multnomah County Library

[kates@multco.us](mailto:kates@multco.us)

Librarian Kryptonite: All things scheduling. I'm calendar challenged.

## Failure



I have a special focus for my position to develop outreach and programming for people experiencing homelessness. Until recently, our outreach service to unhoused patrons was limited to deposit collections at shelters and transitional housing sites. That's a great program, but it was time to branch out. All this is to explain that this is a new service for our library, at least in this decade.

Looking at these photos, you wouldn't think there's anything wrong with this library card set and magnet. However, as we realized at our first visit to a large day shelter in town, these lovely magnets with our contact information aren't useful to most people

experiencing homelessness who don't have a fridge to stick it on.

Also, our library cards have two pieces: A wallet and a keychain card. Most people who are unhoused don't have keys and can't keep track of the tiny card.



## Flop



I haven't had a lot of luck with POV screenings, but you shouldn't let my experience deter you. POV stands for Point of View. It's a PBS program that showcases new documentaries that are high quality and usually provide intimate portraits and illuminate complicated topics. POV has a great community engagement and education program with lots of support for public screenings and even for teachers.

I hosted a film about sex trafficking and its consequences in Cambodia, a topic I feel strongly about. I spent a lot of time preparing for the discussion and printed out related materials from the POV partner website. One person showed up.

I did more promotion including many fliers and a prominent book display for another screening and specifically invited people I knew and thought would be interested. Five people showed up.

For a third screening, I added another screening to some community calendars in addition to other promotion in the building. The building was unexpectedly closed for a tree removal.

## F\*ck-Up



Music programs are really popular at the Central Library. Performances are usually in our third floor gallery space, which opens to the stairwell that goes to all floors. One Sunday, we had a Dixieland jazz band for a program called When the Saints Go Marching In! that had a large band. They brought their own amplification. We don't usually have amplification for full bands. It was SO LOUD throughout all three public floors! I could even hear a murmur of music at my desk one floor away behind three fire doors.

We've had Tibetan monks travel to the library to create a sand mandala a few times over the last 20

years. It's an amazing and very popular program that usually lasts a couple of weeks. During one visit, a patron walked up to the mandala in progress and destroyed it. The monks were totally unflappable. They just swept up the sand and started over. We had staff guarding the mandala during all open hours after that.

## **What I Learned**

Really, really know your audience.

If you're going to do the same (failed) thing over and over, at least tweak it.

Keep an *informed* staff presence in the room during programs.

**Questions?**

# **Lauren Simon**

Community Librarian

Tualatin Public Library

[lsimon@ci.tualatin.or.us](mailto:lsimon@ci.tualatin.or.us)

Librarian Kryptonite: Feeling overwhelmed. Parasitic bugs.

# Failure

Hispanic Heritage Month 2014

Event started at 2pm

Band forgot the time and showed up at 4pm, despite a reminder phone call earlier in the week.





**Flop**

Washington County Museum  
Presentation for Hispanic  
Heritage Month

1 attendee....me!

**Braceros: The Men of Migrant Labor**

Saturday, October 10th at 2pm

Adults & Kids 3rd Grade & Up

**Braceros: Trabajadores Migrantes**

Sábado el 10 de octubre a las 2pm

Funded By the Friends of the Tualatin Public Library  
Fundado por los Amigos de la Pública de Tualatin

Una presentación de historia presentado por el  
Museo de Condado de Washington



Too many events in one month, advertised as a bilingual event. Lack of advertising in advance. Not as much interest in a cultural/educational program. Something I thought would be interested in in the community, rather than a need or interest the community had expressed. A community needs survey indicated a preference for family events, information about ESL, citizenship, cultural events related to dance/music etc.

# F\*ck-Up

Solar Cars Activity in a School Visit - Forgot a set of the wheels



## **What I Learned**

- Have a sense of humor
- Double-check/triple-check your supplies
- Call / email performers the day of....or don't rehire the ones who don't remember what time the event starts
- Keep trying new things

**Questions?**

# **Kathy Street**

Library Director

Oregon Trail Library District

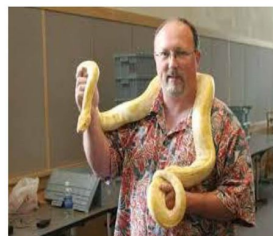
[otltdirector@centurylink.net](mailto:otltdirector@centurylink.net)

Librarian Kryptonite: Icy Sidewalks and Pack Rats!

# Failure

Two out of three ain't bad.....**OR**.....

Cell service not guaranteed in all areas.



## REPTILE MAN!

See snakes and reptiles up close

**FREE!!**

Oregon Trail  
Library District  
Boardman  
Irrigon  
Heppner

Friday, September  
23<sup>rd</sup>

**OREGON TRAIL  
LIBRARY DISTRICT**  
Boardman  
Irrigon  
Heppner

<http://oregontrail.libid.org/>  
Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>  
9 am, 11 am, 2:30 pm

## FRIDAY, SEP. 23 REPTILE MAN

### 17 Reptiles!

Come to the library for a one-hour Live Reptile Presentation by Rich Ritchey. Reptile Man has 40 years of experience with reptiles. Come to the library for this FREE program.



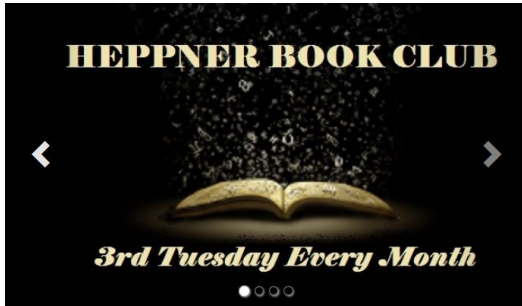
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T  
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Boardman 9am  
Irrigon 11am  
Heppner 2:30pm

Reptile Man was scheduled for three performances on a Friday. The first two were well attended. The third performance was well attended by everyone but Reptile Man. The time was changed by his manager/wife written on three calendars but not on his personal calendar. He was in town early actually and was just killing time waiting to come to the library. Lack of cell service was also a factor. His wonderful wife and I were on our cells trying to track him down.

# Flop

A Book Club of 1



Oregon Trail Library District

TED Book Club

1st Meeting

*Quiet*

*the Power of Introverts in a World  
That Can't Stop Talking*

Wed, August 31st

7:00pm

Irrigon Branch

Last Wednesday of  
every month



Book Clubs! The Friends of the library asked me to start a bookclub. The book club was promoted through all channels; posters, newspaper article, facebook, website, personal invitations... One attendee, ever, every month for 6 months. She and I have become good friends. Many people picked up copies but never attended.

# F\*ck-Up



Lego Afterschool program. We were asked to participate in the afterschool program at a local elementary school. I confirmed with the school that we would use Lego Storystarter for our classes. I ordered the Storystarter kits 6 weeks early and they arrived 3 weeks into the program. I was told we would have access to iPads and the school provided Chrome Books--not the same! We recovered by running to Walmart and purchasing buckets of Legos and rounding up all the iPads from our branches.



## **What I Learned**

- Always have a plan B
- Keep trying, don't give up
- Trust your instincts
- Clubs work best if started by interested participants
- Stay Calm
- Take notes for next time

**Questions?**

## **What We've Learned: Group Wisdom**

- Double-check / triple-check the technology
- Communication (with community, performers, coworkers)
- Trial and error - You can try again
- Sometimes things go wrong and you can't control everything
- You can't experience success unless you've experienced failure.

Kate S. will share Group Wisdom

# Want to share your failure, flop or f\*ck-up?

What happened? What advice do you have?

**Failure** - A failure is where you planned everything, but something along the way got messed up.

**Flop** - A flop is where you planned everything, were well prepared, and no one showed up (or very few).

**F\*ck-Up** - A f\*ck-up is where maybe you made plans, but things weren't tested as well as they should've been.

Margaret will share this slide, 20 minutes for people to share.

Kathy will moderate - call on people, invite them to share.

# Thank You!

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