Good evening, so wonderful to see you all tonight. Thank you, Dr. Hartnett for asking us to speak and spend a few minutes talking about our mentorship partnership. I will tell you, 6 years ago when Sherry asked me to be a mentor, I was like well, I don’t know, do I have the time, could I do a good job? And now, looking back, it’s one of my favorite things that I do every month. I learn as much from the students as, hopefully, they learn from me. Let me tell you just briefly about how my mentorship experience and then I will tell you about my unique partnership with BreAnna who I have come to know this year. One of the things I love about leading people at Cox or any organization that you serve is that you really have a chance to shape and influence their leadership walk and hopefully lead them to wherever they want to be in their career. I think that’s what we are all striving to be. I think about a book called “She Taught Me To Eat Artichokes”. It was a book that was written after my mom’s passing but it really was her legacy. She taught people and her children to eat artichokes. You peel away the layers and you get to know people better. Hopefully that is the relationship you have with your mentor. You get to the heart of the artichoke and really that’s the heart of the leader to be. Hopefully, as a mentor, I always hope that I can help them find their garlic butter, or whatever it is they want to put with their artichoke hearts. And for those of you who haven’t had artichoke hearts, I give you that task to go out and try because you just might like them. But I will tell you, over the years I’ve had a number of different mentees, 2 of which were swimmers, which was great because I am a swim mom. I was very familiar with the 4 am alarm clock calls and things like that. One of them was from Australia, which was super neat to get to know more about her culture and to take her to different community events. That was a lot of fun. But just like anything in the world, sometimes you have bumps in the road. I share this because I know that Dr. Hartnett wants us all to be lifelong mentors and I know you want to share details about your book where you share the importance of that. But, just like artichokes have thorns at the end, sometimes those partnerships can have bumps too. I think back to 2020 when we were all sort of figuring out what our new normal is. And I got my new mentee. And it was over Zoom and it was a challenge. A couple of months went by. And I was like, you know what, I’m falling off my game here, I am not making a difference. And this student was struggling, I think like all of us were with what was going on in the world. With virtual classes, virtual learning environment, not connecting with business calculus. Which, who can blame her? But some of the things I was suggesting, like “hey, how about that math lab?”, “Let’s go get a tutor”, and things were just falling flat. So, I started to question my ability as a leader to lead in a virtual environment and the truth is we all needed to figure that out, right? Fast forward to most recently and last summer when Dr. Hartnett and her team paired me with BreAnna, who has been such a blessing to me and I think to the Pensacola community as well. For those that don’t know BreAnna, she is the marketing communications specialist at the Chamber. So she is in the thick of everything that is going on in town. And I love that because we are at a lot of the same events together, we share commonalities, we know a lot of the same people and I know she has a heart for making a difference. I know she will go on to do great things when she graduates from her MBA program, which will be in person in May. But I guess she has one more class to finish in August. So, thank you BreAnna for our partnership this year and ongoing. I’ll turn it over to you.

https://www.amazon.com/She-Taught-Eat-Artichokes-Friendship/dp/1882835107