

AWARDS AND REWARDS

Ann Koufman-Frederick, June 5, 2010, Graduation 2010

Congratulations to everyone here – The Watertown High School graduates of 2010 before us, and proud parents and teachers in the audience. Congratulations to Mr. Noftsker on graduating from Watertown High School – a second time. Along with Mr. Noftsker's retirement, we are saying good-bye and thank you to seven other Watertown High School educators. They are: Miss Kazerosian, Mrs. Hanon, Mr. Sheehan, Mrs. Connors, Mr. McDermott, Mr. Petricone, and Mrs. Westgate. Collectively they have had a great and positive impact on Watertown High for 276 years. Congratulations to all of them. We honor them for their devotion to education.

It's very exciting to me to have my first graduating class in Watertown. I came to Watertown when you entered the high school. This evening, I want to share with you some thoughts that occurred to me over the past few weeks as I attended and watched many culminating events. My message to you is about the differences between Awards and Rewards.

A high school graduation is a critical life event. It is the culmination of ceremonies and celebrations which bestow prizes and scholarships to deserving students. As your superintendent, I've been honored to attend: the National Honors Society induction; the athletic banquets; the Girl's Field Hockey ring ceremony; - and awards night, where 393 awards, including over \$140,000 of scholarships, were announced and conferred. It's been uplifting to join in on congratulating all the recipients.

Graduating from high school is also both a time of hope and anxiety. You are probably looking forward to your future, and worrying about your future. This makes graduation exciting and unsettling.

In the midst of the excitement of this award season you should also reflect on, and take comfort from, the simple and profound rewards you all have earned along the way; as well as the rewards you can look forward to after high school. What is most important in the long run, is what is rewarding to you. The rewarding experiences are what you will remember most about high school. You may not have earned an award for these experiences and accomplishments. However, there were many things you did, and will continue to do in some form or another, because they were rewarding. These are the things that other people may not have recognized, but you have known.

I've watched you through the past four years play sports, both winning and losing. Practicing long hours and playing hard has been its own reward for many of you. I've watched the KwarQs - working late into the night and on Saturdays to build and compete with our robots. At this you have won various trophies but you also fueled your passion for learning to build those robots. I've watched some of you design and produce documentaries on subjects you really care about like Armenia, anti-smoking, and "I am What I Learn" (for which by the way you also won national recognition). Some of you pursued new courses of study and new ways of learning - such as Engineering by Design and Virtual High School. Some of you competed in science and math contests. Some of you did you first public speaking at Rotary. Some of you took educational excursions to Bonaire, Spain, or China. Some of you devoted a lot of time and energy to the Raider Times, and some of you expressed your creativity through Writer's Ink. I've been delighted to watch you perform in musicals, plays, and concerts. You may not have

received awards for these activities - but you have earned internal rewards, which will stay with you forever. You were intrinsically driven to do these activities well, you did them with passion and you succeeded. They were challenging and rewarding for you, and you will remember them.

So, I am not talking about getting a prize, or making a lot of money, or being awarded recognition - although that is certainly worthwhile and important. The distinction I'm making is that awards come from the outside, and rewards from the inside. Rewards are more defined by the journey you take, the experience of the journey, and the effort of that experience. Rewards remain after prizes fade and money is spent. They remain because they are like an attitude and a feeling that if I work at this, long enough and hard enough, I will get it - I will earn it.

I recently read a book called "Drive - The Surprising Truth About What Motivates Us" by Daniel Pink. According to Pink, drive is intrinsic motivation, and drive leads to rewards. He describes the recent research on the source of intrinsic motivation. He explains that ***"The secret of high performance is...our deep-seated desire to direct our own lives, to extend and expand our abilities, and to live a life of purpose."*** (Pink, 145). He tells stories that illustrate that drive and effort - lead to high performance and success.

I believe that the rewards you have earned in high school come from a deep seated drive within you to engage in various activities with passion, purpose and intrinsic motivation. In many of your activities you directed your own learning, you had feelings that you were getting better and better at something that mattered, and you were often part of a team that collaborated on something larger than yourself.

Maybe you received an award and maybe you didn't. Even if you didn't win an award, you earned a reward – which you will probably carry with you for the rest of your life.

Many of you have already earned the internal reward of competence or accomplishment or performing service for others. I hope that the experience of earning such rewards remains with you - and that you continue to work, accomplish and serve and be rewarded throughout your lives. Winston Churchill called this the "glory of the climb." ***"Every day you may make progress,"*** said Churchill. ***"Every step may be fruitful. Yet there will stretch out before you an ever-lengthening, ever-ascending, ever-improving path. You know you will never get to the end of the journey. But this, so far from discouraging, only adds to the joy and glory of the climb."***

With apologies to Churchill, I would also say that sometimes you may get to the end of the climb - and that end is also rewarding. Maybe that climb has led you to mastery - of a skill, of a subject, of a profession - of something that interests you, or something you like doing. Today that climb has led you to this high school graduation, and the beginning of another climb. Hopefully, you will find rewards on your journeys, and at those journeys' ends.

In life after high school, count on the simple rewards - the feeling of accomplishment, the feeling of mastery, the feeling of helping others. In the future, the simple rewards - not awards - will be the secret of your happiness and success. Take joy and find success in what is rewarding. Use your ingenuity and creativity, and commit yourself to what you do. This will provide a lifetime of rewards.

Congratulations on your graduation today, and best wishes and lots of rewards in the future.