

**NORTHVILLE HIGH SCHOOL**  
**Northville HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION SPEECH**  
**June 8, 2002 – 3:00 p.m.**  
**Compuware Arena**

To the 2002 Graduating Class of Northville High School:

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, members of the Class of 2002; I am honored to be part of this afternoon's significant occasion and to share with you in this celebration of your graduation. To the Class of 2002, we are all very proud of you. I have participated in a number of graduations over the past three and one-half decades, but each time the excitement of where you can go, what you will see, and what you will learn makes each of us on the podium excited as well.

I've watched many of you from Benjamin Thomas Abbott to Adam John Zobl over the past four years perform in plays, band/choir concerts, athletic contests, making Board of Education presentations, attending Board meetings, participating in high school committee meetings, being involved with "Make a Difference" projects, Rotary Interact Projects, and other general efforts to help your fellow man. Through all of these activities, you have helped set new standards of achievement for other classes to emulate. You have added to the excellence that is the Northville Public Schools.

You are the 133<sup>rd</sup> graduating class of Northville Public Schools. The first class graduated in 1869 and consisted of one class member, Ms. Alice Beal, who was a pioneer and leader. When I thought all of the good advice to give you, I was struck by a couple of recent documents. The Investors' Business Daily Newspaper has analyzed leaders, successful men and women in all walks of life. They report that most have 10 traits that when combined can turn dreams into reality. Briefly, here are the traits:

- 1) How you think is everything. Always be positive. Think success not failure. Be aware of negative environments.
- 2) Decide upon your dreams and goals. Write down your specific goals and develop a plan to reach them. Make sure the goals are inspiring. In the 1960's, President Kennedy could have asked NASA to "beef up the space program." Instead he challenged them to "send a man to the moon and bring him safely back to Earth before the end of the decade."
- 3) Take action. Goals are nothing without action. Don't be afraid to get started—just do it!
- 4) Never stop learning. Read books, get training, be curious and take classes. To stop learning is to stop growing.
- 5) Be persistent and work hard. Success is a marathon—not a sprint. Never give up!
- 6) Learn to analyze details. Get all the facts and input. Use it to make decisions. Learn from your mistakes.
- 7) Focus your time and money. Don't let other people or things distract you. Work from your own agenda.
- 8) Don't be afraid to innovate. Be different. Following the herd is a sure way to mediocrity.
- 9) Deal and communicate with people effectively. No person is an island. Learn to understand and motivate others.
- 10) Be honest and dependable; take responsibility. Maintain your character and trustworthiness. Otherwise, numbers 1-9 won't matter.

To give a different perspective to this leadership advice, I was struck by re-reading the writings of Robert Fulghum in his book entitled, All I Really Need to Know, I Learned in Kindergarten that attempts to put our collective futures in a proper perspective and I am quoting:

These are things I learned: "Share everything, Play fair. Don't hit people. Put things back where you found them. Clean up your messes. Don't take

things that aren't yours. Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody. Wash your hands before you eat. Warm cookies and cold milk are good for you. Live a balanced life. Learn some and think some, and draw, paint, sing, dance and play and work everyday some! Take a nap every afternoon. And when you go out into the world, watch for traffic, hold hands, and stick together."

So when you get out in the world and see the expectations, problems, challenges and temptations, discouragement and opportunities, and you forget your teachers' and/or administrators' lectures, just try to remember Kindergarten. The rest will take care of itself.

This afternoon, we continue a tradition in selecting one student to receive the Superintendent's Award. This recognition goes to a graduating senior who has accomplished much through some very difficult, life-impacting events. The individual to whom I am pleased to present this award exemplifies and embodies the spirit of this award. This 2002 graduating senior has met some rough go's in life. He, unfortunately, began to use drugs at the beginning of his high school career, which then caused him to have a .8 GPA in the first two years at the high school. Compounding that, unfortunately, his father was very ill for four years and passed away in his junior year. He, himself, was a tremendous support to his family through this difficult, sad time. You see, he had realized, and came to believe, that he was responsible for his own behavior. He had, in fact, changed his school goals and his relationships to other people. He quit using drugs and started to believe in himself. His GPA in the second semester of his junior year was 3.5. His GPA in his first half of his senior year was 3.75 and I don't doubt that it will be all of that in the second half of his senior year. He has made career-path decisions that are becoming a reality. He will be attending Schoolcraft Community College and then transfer to Western Michigan University. He started off at the high school speaking in a few words, to now make effective morning announcements at the high school. More than one person shared with me how he gives back, how he has realized what he has

gained from those situations that were tragic and things he lost. Nobody gave up on this senior—neither his Mom nor his Dad, nor the school staff. He, in fact, is proving to be an outstanding human being. The strength of his will and his spirit has been magnified this past year and he is worthy of this special honor. Graduating Class of 2002, ladies and gentlemen, please help me in honoring **Seth Corbin** as the 2002 Superintendent Award recipient. Seth, please join me here to receive your award.

To the Class of 2002, as you leave this ceremony this afternoon, on the path to your personal future, you have become a part of a great tradition, which is Northville High School. Buildings and people change—but that tradition of excellence will remain our goal for as long as the Northville High School is the center of pride for this community. Remember all that have played a part in your achievement—parents, grandparents, teachers, administrators and this entire community. Remember that you have the power to do great and different things. You have the power to change the course of history through goodness, kindness, and intelligent decision making. In a global sense—hold hands and stick together! HAVE OPTIMISM!

We are proud of each and every one of you, and we share your happiness this afternoon. Good luck and may God bless you in all that you do!

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