HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

KELLY FALLON

Hello everyone and welcome to the 2012 commencement exercises for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School. To all of our graduates, congratulations.... and there will be more thoughts for you in just a little while. To family and friends, I am sure the graduates would like to acknowledge each one of you for your encouragement and support, to the students here today who are not yet seniors, you have some accomplished shoes to fill, and to the teachers and administration of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, another year draws to its completion, another class has graduated, and the challenges, inspiration and guidance you have provided to our students will have positive ramifications on our community for years to come. Each one of you makes an invaluable contribution to the success and viability for our future leaders and citizens and we thank you.

Okay graduates, now it’s **YOUR** turn!! I mean that in many ways. It’s your turn to listen to what I have to say, and to receive some more acknowledgement before your high school careers are considered complete and you move on to the next phase of your lives, so while I have you all in one place, there are a few things I’d like to say. It is also **your** turn, to enter the world as adults, and to begin to inherit the awareness and responsibilities that come along with finding your way in the “real” world.

High school is a wonderful metaphor for life, and it prepares you to deal with professional and personal responsibilities that comprise how you choose to live. Although it seems that going to school is about acquiring “book knowledge,” its purpose is so much more than that. School teaches you to so many lessons; it trains you to prepare for life’s tests, and gives you the opportunity to learn how to function in social and academic environments. In school, you learn how to acquire knowledge, and if you were paying attention, it also taught you how to expand your horizons, learn about new concepts and how to give back to the “community.”

You’ve completed your required tests, you’ve had your prom and other social events designed to acknowledge the “end of an era,” and you’ve cleaned out your lockers. Today you graduate, but guess what? This is just the beginning! Now it’s time to take the tools you’ve acquired and use them as adults, to continue the learning and growing. Now is the time to find the motivation within you and continue to explore. Now is the time to take those dreams you’ve had about what life might be like in the future, and to work to make them reality. Henry David Thoreau said, “Do not worry if you’ve built castles in the air. They are where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.” In other words, it’s one thing to dream. It’s another to be **willing** to work to see those dreams become real.

Some of you will be going off to college; some will be entering the work force. It doesn’t matter which path you’ve chosen. **WE** all have one very important thing in common, and that is, the learning **NEVER** ends. Every day presents each one of us with new challenges, trials and temptations. As adults, it is up to each one of us to know how to read the signs and clues placed before us so that we can make **educated and informed** choices to build on for the rest of our lives. Now that you’ve graduated, you may be planning to take one last, long breath as this summer approaches, but on the horizon is truly the beginning of the rest of your lives. We all have dreams. It’s time to really build the foundations to support them.

Each one of you graduates is so fortunate to have grown up in an era inundated with new technology. I am sure each one of you knows the tips and tricks required to get the most out of the latest iphone or android, the apps that make an ipad sing, and the widgets and what-nots that make our increasingly complicated lives more manageable, but guess what? New technology is being created every single day. It is up to you to stay current with technology to enhance the learning needed to sustain life in the future. The skills you have acquired need to be maintained and “upgraded,” just like you have to stay on top of upgrading all of the apps you use every day. Today you’re “Jane Doe or John Smith 1.0,” but you know as well as I do that the equipment doesn’t function optimally unless you keep up with those downloads!! By the time you get to college or your first job, you’ll be ready for Jane Doe 1.2, and so forth. Always remember to stay current with the information and insights that will insure your personal knowledge base is updated.

While you’re out finding your way in this new, uncertain and adult world, you will try to do things and you may fail. Failure is part of producing a result and it is also an essential part of the process of becoming an adult. Failure teaches responsibility and accountability. The only way to make sure you don’t fail is to do nothing, and that is not an option. Go out into the world, give it your best shot, and if you miss the mark, take a deep breath, acknowledge that your performance did not achieve the intended result, make the correction and move on. Once again-take **responsibility**, **acknowledge** the mistake, **make the correction** and move on. That is what an adult does. Benjamin Franklin said, “I didn’t fail the test. I just found 100 ways to do it wrong.” There’s also a Chinese proverb that teaches us, “Failure is not falling down but refusing to get up.” If you know you’ve done something wrong, Own it, acknowledge it. **Fix it** and **learn** from your mistakes. Be an optimist; keep trying. And if you’ve done something wrong and you know it, then you know inherently how to do it right-it’s the opposite of doing it wrong. There’s an old expression that teaches us that success is getting up one more time than you fall. We all do it, and we all make the necessary corrections. The most important thing is to keep trying.

As a high school student, you were part of a group. Whether it was a class or a team, a study group or extracurricular group activity, you found your way as part of an entity made up of other people. It is really important to be able to know how to operate effectively as a part of collaboration. No one makes his or her way in the world alone. We are interdependent on each other and each one of us has an essential function within a collaborative effort. Collaboration teaches us to relate to traits and interests we may have in common and it teaches us to acknowledge, learn from, and celebrate diversity. In order to have a meaningful life, having an open mind and a thorough appreciation of all cultures and differences is required. Someday **YOU** may be the person in the minority and you will want the respect of your peers. In order to get it, you need to be prepared to give respect.

So now we send you on your way to the next chapters in your lives. You have a good high school education to use as a foundation, but it is up to you to build on that foundation. Take your high school experiences and use that drive and enthusiasm to succeed in new arenas of life. Remember how essential education is in every phase of life and always remain hungry for knowledge. Remember to maintain your skill set and do that “periodic maintenance” as needed in order to insure that your “equipment”- that is your heart and mind and knowledge base, is updated regularly-you’ll need it to sustain yourselves in the world “out there.” Remember-do not fear failure. It is your best teacher. No one likes to fail, and I can say that the feeling is awful. But as we adults have **learned** from failure, so will you, and you will be all the more valuable to your family, friends and colleagues for having learned life’s less pleasant lessons.

I wish all of you the very best and I look forward to **learning from you**, and hearing of your successes and challenges as you make your way through life beyond \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School. Congratulations!