HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

THAD HILL

Hello everyone and welcome to this year’s graduation ceremony for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School’s Class of 2013!!! I am thrilled to see so many of you here tin attendance. Of course, you, our graduates are our very special participants today, and I want to extend a special acknowledgement to all of the school faculty and staff for supporting all of these students to achieve this milestone. To all of the parents, friends and family of our graduates, I want to recognize each one of you for being as nurturing and encouraging to our students as you have been throughout their high school careers. For those of us that know what life is like “in the real world” after we graduate, we also know how important it is to have the love, respect and motivation from those who are closest to us. I am sure our students realize how blessed they are to have such great cheering sections-after all, look at this turnout!! … And if they haven’t said it to you, I will. **THANK YOU**.

Graduates, Congratulations!! You made it!! You’ve crossed the finish line and you’ve graduated from high school. That’s the good news!! The other news is that now you have to show the world what you’ve learned and how you’re going to make your mark in this world. Senator Orrin Hatch said, “There’s a reason why we call these ceremonies ‘commencement exercises.’ Graduation is not the end, it’s the beginning.” Of course today you’ll celebrate with friends and family, but tomorrow the real work begins. I have given a great deal of thought to what I wanted to say to all of you. I’ve been thinking, “What can I possibly say that they don’t already know?” Because let’s face it, I got the memo…. all of you students, now that you’ve graduated, are probably fairly sure that you know **EVERYTHING**!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Guess what? I know something that **YOU** don’t know!!! I have a friend who’s motto is, ‘I don’t know what I don’t know!” It takes a degree of maturity and life experience to realize that. The other really important point to remember is that we are put on this earth to learn-through every single phase of our lives. Knowledge is what enriches us, guides us, and supports us to be independent, functioning and viable adults. You are about to inherit the future. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School has given you an excellent foundation, but that’s what it is-a FOUNDATION. It is up to YOU to build your future based on what you’ve learned here. Some of you are off to college in a few months; while others will join the work force, but ALL OF YOU share a common bond-soon it will be YOUR turn to care for the world. It will be your turn to be the leaders in some way, somehow-whether for your family, friends, co-workers or community, someone will look to you for guidance. Whether you have plans in place for your next steps in life, or whether you’re still “reviewing options,” I urge you to keep this thought in your minds at all times. **Wake up and Show up**!! It’s a great way to join the world, after all, where would YOU be if all of those people in YOUR lives took a pass and decided not to encourage YOU??? Think about all of the people you’ve met along your journey through high school and even before. Of course there are those who have had a profound effect on your lives, but actually, if you really took a look, you would find so many people that encouraged and guided you along the way. It is YOUR turn to make a difference in others’ lives now.

You can make a difference no matter where you choose to go in life. Remember that showing up is only the beginning. British Prime Minister Winston Churchill said, “Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to **continue** that counts.” If I may add to this, it is also the courage to **BEGIN** that counts. Begin to look around you. Begin to see what is needed and wanted in this world, in your family, in your community, and go and DO IT. It is YOUR turn. I cannot emphasize that enough.

As you look back on this day and your high school experience, remember what I said a few minutes ago. No one got here alone. There are teams of people who have encouraged and supported each one of you. Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote a poem called “Ulysses,” and I will not go into much detail-but there is one line that I want to share with you, and I want you to remember it and consider it as you consider all of the people who are in your life. The line is, “I am part of all that I have met…” That’s a really powerful thought. Imagine, all of those who have befriended you, influenced you, mentored you. They have all made a difference in YOU. From family to friends, from teachers to coaches to the members of your community, you really would not be who you are today without having known them. And, as I said, now it is YOUR turn to make a difference in the lives of those you will meet, and work with and mentor.

As you go onto those new phases in your lives, remember that the only disability in life is a “bad attitude.” Life goes by really quickly; I encourage you to make the most of it. As you are faced with newer and greater challenges throughout life, remember to keep some essential tools by your side, and you will naturally inspire those who become part of your lives. Those tools are Service, Principles, Character, Knowledge, Responsibility, Accountability, Faith and Commitment. It may sound like a lot to you now, but remember again-you didn’t get here without people sharing those tools with you.

Once again, I want to congratulate all of the graduates and I look forward to hearing wonderful things about how each of you has inherited the future!! Thank you all!!