WELCOME ADDRESS

FOR

HELEN McINTOSH

Hello everyone and thank you so much for giving me the honor of welcoming all of you to tonight’s very special festivities. I would like to thank \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ for your thoughtfulness and consideration in thinking of me and sharing this wonderful opportunity. Being a debutante is a real privilege in so many ways, and being able to connect with all of you and have the chance to reminisce about what my season was like is truly a gift. My participation in this community has informed and inspired everything I do and I am thrilled to share some thoughts with all of you. To all of our debutantes, congratulations on your achievements so far!! The good news is, this is just the beginning!! There’s a magnificent and complex world just waiting for each one of you to make your mark and as your accomplishments and challenges continue to mold you into the poised, compassionate, responsible and aware women you will become, you will see how your connections to each other will be some of the most valuable assets in your lives. To the parents, families, and friends of this year’s debutantes, welcome to you too!!! Rest assured that each one of you plays a unique and essential roll to our young ladies. As you do your part as top drawer cheering sections, mentors, sounding boards and confidantes, you are all doing amazing jobs in helping to fine-tune our leaders and philanthropists of the future!!

I have to admit that this event inspires me to be a little misty as I think of what my tenure as a debutante was like. (**State the year you attended your coming out ball**) Believe it or not, my season was in \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and I have to say, everything I have done-every project, job and responsibility has taught me something about myself, life, and what is needed in this world. As you may already know, after high school, I realized the importance of a quality education and had the good fortune to study in places like the University of Salamanca in Spain as well as James Madison and Northwestern Universities here in the US. Being exposed to and influenced by other cultures really supported my abilitiy to identify and empathize with diverse groups of people. I’ve worked for most of my career in human resources and have also dedicated my life to philanthropic causes with an emphasis on education, equality and empowerment. And I learn from **every single thing** I do. There’s an old Chinese proverb that teaches us, “Women hold up half the sky.” Sometimes it can feel like we’re doing more than our fair share, but I will tell you that the true gift is in the challenge. For every mistake I may have made in my early career, I’ve learned a lesson to teach my children. For every rejection I’ve faced in philanthropy, I’ve learned to be more resilient. For every time a pessimist attempted to discourage me, I’ve learned to believe in myself that much more. At an early age, I knew that soon it would be my turn to feed and nurture this world and those who need support in our communities. Every incident along the way built my courage, strength and positivity, **NO MATTER WHAT**.

As society and our culture evolve, every generation of young women that are presented have new sets of mandates to face and conquer, and as a debutante, each one of you will have a network of support and feedback as you tackle the issues contemporary to your times. Now it’s **YOUR** turn to leave this world in better condition than it had been. Participation in life is really a full contact sport and it’s time for you to jump in!

You all look absolutely radiant tonight, and your finery is a symbol of how you will transform this world with intelligence, grace, light and determination. Someone once said, “You’re more powerful than you know and beautiful just as you are.” Use the tools and blessings you’ve been given to support and strengthen others. Use your standing in the community to ease unspeakable burdens, and most of all find your way in this world with purpose, integrity, intelligence and partnership. We are all so proud of you and we eagerly anticipate your ascent into the arena of movers and shakers well into the next generation!! I’ll be watching and cheering you on!! Thank you all!!