OPENING CELEBRATION SPEECH

FOR

DOUGLAS KENDRICK

Hello everyone!!! It’s so good to be here at the Mama Kevina Comprehensive Secondary School. We’ve flown many thousands of miles and worked very hard to get to this day, but seeing all of your happy, smiling faces tells me all of the hard work is very, very worthwhile. I see there have been many changes made around here and I cannot wait to be able to take the full tour with all of you. There’s an old saying that goes, “Rome wasn’t built in a day.” What that means is that it takes time to see results from all of your hard work and efforts. It takes time for a seedling or a young plant to bear fruit to feed us. It takes time to teach young people lessons and skills. It takes time to build dormitories and science labs and playing fields and classrooms, but your smiles and energy reassure all of us that as we all work together as a very special team, the work will get done, each of us will learn from the other and from the experiences in which we participate, and as we learn our lessons, we will also learn to be proud of our hard work and the skills we can now share in order to make us stronger and healthier. As we learn and grow, we will all become more successful at what we do and therefore more able to offer our hand to help others to grow and be healthy. Probably the most important part of the improvements we see that have been made are through the selfless efforts, dedication, and caring of Sister Clare (**Is she still the person running the school? If not, please use the name of the person currently in charge**). To Sister Clare, someone once said, “Every child should have a caring adult in their lives. And that’s not always a biological parent or family member. It may be a friend or a neighbor. Often times it is a teacher.” Truer words have never been spoken. To think of how this school and its students have met and dealt with unimaginable challenges is awe-inspiring. To see the improvements made and enthusiasm on the faces of these students is heart warming. We now know what a miracle looks like.

There are so many people to thank for their unique and generous efforts in helping to support this school (**Name 3 or 4 local people or distinguished visitors that have contributed to the progress of the school).** The progress and improvements we see and celebrate today were not possible without the resourcefulness and generosity of people like \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They gave of their selves and their talents to see to it that goals were met, lessons were learned, and confidence and a sense of security have become the rule and not the exception for our students and residents. And of course the administrators and staff of RMF have also demonstrated their commitment to the well being of our students and for that we are beyond grateful.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb that teaches us, “The gem cannot be polished without friction, nor man perfected without trials.” We know that many of you have had more trials and challenges in your young lives than most people face in ten lifetimes, but look at you!!! Every one of you is your own magnificent proof of what survival looks like and means. You can see how much we believe in you and how sure we are that pride and dignity come with hard work, lessons learned and mutual respect. We know that as we support you in making your goals, you will teach others what it means to do one’s best. We want you to know that you’re not alone. You inspire us to find the ways to offer our hand of friendship and guidance more and more each day.

The late Nelson Mandela said, “Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.” I suppose you can say that in a way, our mission at the World Children’s Fund might be considered a little selfish, because (**President?**) Mandela’s words express exactly how we feel. Ignorance is not bliss. Education arms you with the weapons that are most important in life. Here at Mama Kevina Secondary School, your weapons are computer skills. You get sharper and more able to seize the world with baking skills and farming skills and grammar and history lessons. You get stronger as you learn to appreciate those around you-your teachers, your friends, your classmates, and as you get stronger you’ll realize that you’re part of a team. You are not alone. You’ll learn that being rich doesn’t have anything to do with having money. You’re already rich-you’re here and you’re learning how to take care of yourselves, how to tend to the crops that will feed you, how to sew the garments that will clothe you, how to use the computers that will take you to places and experiences you’ve hardly even imagined.

Life is full of challenges. Someone once described success as “getting up one more time than you fall down.” Mama Kevina Secondary School has seen its fair share of challenges too, and although we never know what tomorrow might bring, we know that every effort is being made by Sister Clare and the people that really believe in the work that is being done here…. and that would include me and all of the people involved with our organization, The World Children’s Fund. You can see by all of the life and building and excitement around the campus that a new day has dawned here. Every day, improvements are made so that each one of our students has a chance to learn in a supportive, encouraging, healthy environment. The faculty and staff are devoted to stopping the vicious cycles that keep people from being magnificent. Every day miracles are happening and even if it seems like just a floor has been swept and mattresses arrived for some of the beds, every thing that happens serves our goals. And we can see it’s working!! We can see that the communities around us are becoming more and more impressed with the work we’re doing here!! Pretty soon we’re going to be the most popular place in town!! And YOU were here first!!! (**Say that with enthusiasm and wait for the laugh**)

Who would have dreamed a few years ago that we would be celebrating the completion and opening of some wonderful new buildings like our dining hall and our new dormitories? Well here we are and those buildings are ready to house our students like never before!! Our new dining hall will make it feel like every meal is a party!! Every step and every improvement really is cause for celebration!!! And every improvement provides the chance for us to find new ways to support and inspire you and as we improve the school more and more, that all means…. More lessons!! More classes!!! More Challenges!! YAY!! (**Wait for the laugh)**

Our school is growing by leaps and bounds and it’s a challenge to support that growth, but it’s a good problem to have. We are building momentum and interest and you, our students, continue to provide the fuel that inspires us to keep going. Our goals are to support the school and its staff and students to the point of self –sufficiency-probably one of the hardest lessons in life to learn and one of the most challenging goals to achieve, but we know you, and we know Sister Clare and we know her goodness, determination, sincerity and faith will work to motivate and inspire all of us. I am thrilled for the recent accomplishments made here at Mama Kevina and I know those steps and achievements will lead to even more recognition. It is a very exciting time for our school and I encourage all of you to work like you’ve never worked before. As I said earlier, your strength of will and determination has gotten you so far in your young lives. With care and education and the support of your friends and fellow students, I can’t wait to see the mountains you move in the future. Enjoy your new buildings. Use them well and make us proud. The future has no limits as long as you’re willing to learn and work and show each other respect. Thank you all!