**BANQUET SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LISA MANKINS**

Hello everyone and welcome to this year's end of season banquet for the Greensburg Salem \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s. Tonight we'll celebrate our accomplishments, look back on our shared “adventure,” acknowledge the people who supported us, the lessons we learned and then we’ll take a look forward to the future. I want to thank each one of you for the part you played in our success this year-and by the way, it’s **ALL** a win for all of us! We started off as a group of individual students that play basketball and had a new coach... and somewhere in the middle we became a **team**. I know there were probably some collective "eye rolls" at certain parts of the season, but here we are \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ months later and I think we can safely say that we've all had a great time. We learned about each other, and ourselves, we learned about what it takes to win, what’s missing when we lose, and most importantly, we learned what it means to work hard as we all chip in to build something **together**.

Some people consider Phil Jackson one of the greatest basketball coaches that there ever was in the NBA. He had an incredible career as a player and as a coach and his track record with teams like the Chicago Bulls and the LA Lakers show us that the man knows how to coach. He knows how to produce winners. Hey!! We have something in common!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Just kidding, but if someone knows how to do something really, really well, it’s always a good idea to try and absorb as much information as possible from him or her. Mr. Jackson had this to say about teamwork. “The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team.” There’s something that’s very special about being a part of a group that works together for each other’s success. The seasons change, the configuration of players changes. People leave and move on, but if you’re smart and willing to work hard, there’s one thing that stays with each one of us and that’s the feeling of being a part of something and knowing that hard work really pays off in ways we can’t even imagine.

We’ve all heard the expression, “It’s not if you win or lose but how you play the game.” Part of being successful at playing the game is developing a strong work ethic, and believe me, once you know just how important it is to work hard and do your best, you’re on your way to success in life. As I look around and recall how you as a team and as individuals performed, the main point that really inspires me is your work ethic and how much you invested in this group to do more than you would have dreamt of. Don’t think for one minute that your devotion to the team and to “giving it all you’ve got” stops when you leave the court. If you’re smart and you’re paying attention-and I **KNOW** you are, the skills you learned playing basketball will guide you in every aspect of your lives. Playing sports is really like a laboratory for life. It’s a place where you can learn valuable tips and information that come in handy, as you get older. As you learn to pay attention, practice, concentrate, strategize, and support your teammates, you’ll also realize that those same valuable lessons are what you’ll need to know as you grow up and live your adult lives. Think of it - everything we do involves teamwork-your family is a team and so are your friends, your classmates and your coworkers… once you get out into the professional world. Learning to get along and make a contribution to a group effort is what life is all about!

A really important part of developing a strong work ethic is to recognize that in order to learn something, you have to learn it from the **bottom up**. And speaking of that, sometimes we can compare climbing a mountain to putting in the effort to do the hard work in order to achieve our goals goals. At the start of anything-whether it’s a project for school, a strange, new adventure, a year on a new basketball team, or climbing a mountain, it’s natural to start with excitement and a bright, optimistic outlook. The climb seams like fun at the beginning…. and as we trudge up that mountain, we notice our legs get a little heavy, we breathe a little harder, there seem to be more obstacles, we get distracted… we want pizza… or really ANYTHING that might take us away from (ugh) practice (**wait for the laugh**) and the little voices inside of our heads start to ask, louder and louder….
“**WHAT THE HECK DO YOU THINK YOU’RE DOING?**”. Sooner than you realize it, that good idea appears to be turning into an impossible obstacle. It feels like everything is getting harder to do and somewhere in the middle of the climb, the trip just doesn’t seem like the best idea…. in fact if you could, you’d probably want to turn back…. and go for that pizza!! (**Wait for the laugh**) But you didn’t do that this season!!! You kept your word and stuck with the plan no matter how uncomfortable it might have gotten. I want to acknowledge the seniors on our team for persevering… for pushing through your limitations and considerations, and for pushing past those little voices in your head reminding you how really comfy your bed is, to keep your word and stick with your commitments. It was because of people like you (**name** **some of the seniors**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that the team did as well as it did! I want to acknowledge all of you for the time you put in, for the leadership skills you demonstrated, for your willingness to work harder than you ever imagined you could, for your demonstration of faith in my leadership even though I was new to this team. You’ve set the bar really high and those who follow in your footsteps have some great roll models to emulate.

And speaking of… next semester we’ll start with some familiar faces and some new talent just waiting to be nurtured, or at the very least discovered! I don’t want to get all “Lion King” on you, but there is a circle of life and it also applies to middle school basketball! To all of you juniors out there… next year is **YOUR** turn! The younger students and team members look up to you. Remember how you felt when you first saw the senior teammates and thought they were “so cool?” We’ll guess what? In a few short months, that will be you!! And those in the lower grades are going to want to be just like you… whether they admit it or not… Trust me… they ‘re watching!!!

Think of that special talent you have that you bring to this team. Think of your spirit, your energy, your willingness to help others to be their best… Think about how much you love to picture yourself winning… well… picture yourself **PRACTICING**…. **A LOT** first!! **THEN** you can win… after!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Think about the younger kids who look to you for your skills and inspiration.

I talked about the comparison of experiencing challenges, especially this basketball team, to climbing a mountain. For this season you’ve reached the top. You can take a breath and congratulate yourselves,,, for a little bit. Take what you’ve learned and keep your minds open to new possibilities. There will always be more mountains to climb. Make sure you are prepared or at least willing to face them and to use your skills to understand the situation. Seniors, as you move on to new aspects of your education keep the spirit of being part of a team with you.

I want to thank all of the parents, friends, family, neighbors, and staff who have done so much to make sure this year’s basketball team had fun both playing and learning. Your encouragement of these athletes will go a long way to inspiring future classes to want to do their best as well. I thank all of you for doing your best work and I can’t wait to see what next year brings!!! Congratulations and thanks to all of you for a great experience!