**14370, Manal Akiki**

Happy Mother’s Day everyone!

Welcome to all our mothers and grandmothers. Today we want to celebrate Mother’s Day. Our theme is “The Joy and Gift of Motherhood, in Style,” In a few minutes we will enjoy a fashion show. Please give a round of applause to all our ladies who participated in our cupcake competition, jewelry making and our models for the fashion show. We have a really talented group of ladies and a wonderful evening planned for everyone.

We have sayings about the power of motherhood: "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle Is the Hand That Rules the World” and “The mother is a school. If she is well reared you are sure to build a nation.” That is why we are here today to celebrate those fearless women in our life who made us feel that we are the center of the universe. Whether we have children or not, we know that the place where a child runs for comfort, wisdom, warmth, happiness, protection and security is in his/her mom’s arms and heart. When I was pregnant with my first child I was afraid to take maternity leave and go home. I didn’t know what to do with a newborn and I don’t have any family here in the US to support me or give me advice. So I stayed at work up to the last week until one of my colleagues noticed and gave me this wonderful advice. “Go home and enjoy your pregnancy and when your baby is here just ‘Love her’.” And I found this to be true. Today, with my second child I still have this fear but I am incredibly lucky that I am surrounded with wonderful, compassionate moms who embrace motherhood and always give me valuable advice.

When we were little children we always looked to our mothers to teach us, to guide us, to kiss our bruises and to cheer us on in all our endeavors. We knew that Mom loved us unconditionally and would celebrate us even if our attempt at something was poorly done. Mom would stand up for us any day, any time, no matter what. But, Mom also expected us to give our best at whatever we tried. She also expected us to follow the rules and if we broke them we learned to care more about Mom’s reaction than anyone else. We knew that Mom always had our best interest at heart even if we didn’t always like her rules.

As adults we now understand our mothers better than we ever did as children because now we see what she faced as we raise our own children. Some of us can still call our mom up and ask for advice. But, both those who can still call mom and those whose mothers are either too far away or who are no longer with us we are grateful for the older ladies in our midst. We gratefully acknowledge all those women who love us and mentor us, offering not only advice but encouragement. It’s just as important for us to know when we are doing well as moms as it is for us to get help when we are challenged as moms.

Tonight I want to say thank you to all the ladies who are here today to celebrate this day and made this day possible. Let’s give a hand to our gorgeous, fearless moms and all the children who are here today to shine and show the beauty of mom’s.

Happy Mother’s Day. I hope you will enjoy the show and the rest of your evening.

Thank you