**14407, Roberto Monteagudo**

Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen,

It’s great to be here today and speak to all of you for the 2015 Milwaukee Career College graduation. So welcome to our graduates, without whom we would have no reason to be here today and welcome to all of your friends and families. Last, but not lease, welcome to all our teachers, staff and school officials.

Today, I have a few pieces of advice to offer you, although I’m sure you’ve been hearing all different types of advice for several months now. Believe me, I know how you feel. I remember when I graduated from college so many years ago. I was excited, joyful and also uncertain. I also felt inundated with all the different kinds of advice, some of it conflicting, that I received. Sorting through it all to figure out which advice actually applied to me got kind of confusing sometimes. So, I’ll try to make my advice positive and encouraging, and hopefully somewhat unique.

­­I am a local dentist (some people say a very successful dentist). I am involved with a lot of community projects and I believe that even though most speeches are about individuality, no one has ever climbed a mountain by themselves. It always takes a team. You will hear a lot about graduation and how you got here and what to do from here. But, if you look back at your own lives, I think you’ll agree, it was a team effort just for you to grow up, let alone graduate from college.

From your first experiences in learning as a small child did you learn anything all on your own? No. It simply wasn’t possible. Your parents may have been your primary teachers but you also had other family members, teachers at church, if you attended, or pre-school or other community organizations you attended. Once you were in school full time you had home room teachers, art teachers, music teachers, gym teachers and a variety of other teachers, teacher assistants, and others. At home you still had your parents and other family members or even friends or possibly hired tutors who helped you to achieve your highest accomplishments in school. Because of this you know that as you move forward you know that you will most likely work as part of a team. Few people work independently on projects or businesses and learning to appreciate the value of teamwork is priceless.

As you graduate today I do want to remind you to have not only a sense of accomplishment for all you have done to arrive here today, but also a sense of your future obligation to serve. Even if you become an entrepreneur and own your own business, you are a part of the team that is your community. I am a dentist but I choose to serve in community projects. You can do the same through whatever things interest you. You have valuable skills and talents that your community needs.

While you are reminiscing about your past and planning your future I encourage you to realize that every day is a blessing. Don’t just go through your busy life, keeping up with everyone else until you’re so busy you don’t know which way is up. Don’t let the important things of life pass you by. As the old saying goes, once in a while you have to stop and smell the roses. Don’t take anything for granted. Just because you have the blessing of a loved one, a friend, a job or house today, doesn’t mean it will be here tomorrow. Look at everything in your life as if you only have it for today and truly enjoy it to the fullest. Then you will learn to truly appreciate everything in your life as it was meant to be appreciated.

Life is about choices. The circumstances of life and other people’s behavior are things you have little control over. The one thing you do have control over is how you experience life, how you approach life and how you react to the circumstances of life. If you look at every day as a challenge and go around with a negative attitude that is how your life will look to others and feel to you. On the other hand, if you go through life with a positive attitude and see life as a blessing then others will see the light in your eyes and hear the positive attitude spread out from your heart as you go through your regular activities. You won’t have to say anything; people will simply be able to tell from the way you behave.

Another thing I encourage each of you to do is to use your advantage of an education to help others. Not everyone has had your advantage of a higher education. So, you can be a source of knowledge as well as an inspiration to others. Your positive attitude and the value you place on learning can help lead others toward success. You can be an encourager to those who are struggling. You can help students who are struggling to keep pursuing their dream of a college education. You can spread your knowledge to help others to succeed in the area of their choice. Your mentoring of others, even casual mentoring, can help others to dare to dream and enlarge their lives as someone before enlarged your life as they encouraged you to dare to dream.

It’s important that you remember to always thank those who helped you to get to where you are today. Some of them may not even have realized the impact they had on your life, so thanking them will remind them that they made a difference in the life of someone else and give them an idea of their purpose in life. Your thanks could lift their spirits and encourage them. If they did help you on purpose, your thanks will lift them up and let them know that you really do appreciate them and that you don’t take them or their help for granted. It’s easy sometimes, when people offer themselves so freely, to take their help for granted. But, when we remember that they didn’t have to help us, we can see more clearly how much of themselves they truly gave and thank them for their generosity.

Lastly, I want to encourage you to always help others as you go along your way. Not just because others helped you, although that is a good reason by itself. But, also because it is the right thing to do. As I said, none of us got where we are today totally by our own effort. It was a team effort and it will help you to grow as an individual to learn how to be part of a team of individuals who reach out generously to help others whenever possible. It doesn’t have to be a planned, organized type of help. Maybe you just offer a small piece of advice, or maybe you see someone struggling and offer to help them find a solution. The opportunities are endless and you will see them as they present themselves if you are looking for them. Try to look for one such opportunity every day and before you know it you will find many such chances to help others. You will not regret it.

Good luck to each of you as you graduate today and move on to the next season in your lives.

Thank you