GRADUATION SPEECH

FOR

KELLY TATUM

Hello everyone and good evening to all who are here to celebrate this milestone, the commencement celebration for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School Class of 2016! To family and friends, thank you for your love and support as we all worked to get to this special point in our education. To Principal \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, the administration and faculty of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, we **REALLY** would not be here without you!!! Your dedication to our education and your commitment to making sure each one of us achieved our goals is an inspiration. I want to express my gratitude for being given the honor of speaking to this senior class and to all of you. To all of my classmates, **we did it!!** It’s hard to believe we’ve spent almost one quarter of our lives in this school and as of today, it is time to celebrate and to move on to new and exciting adventures.

Four years ago we entered these strange walls with fear creeping through our veins. Who among us will ever forget that dreaded first day of school? (**If you want to make a joke you can say**)…and that was just the **teachers!**! (**And wait for the laugh**). In all seriousness though, that first day when everything was so strange and new seems like it was a lifetime ago. In the past four years we’ve learned and we’ve grown. Instead of being intimidated at the beginning of our senior year, the feeling was really different… More like the start of a celebration of all that we had accomplished while attending \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. The past year has been filled with landmark moments like (**Name 3 of the senior events that were special to you**) \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, and all of those events formed the countdown that led us to today.

Those four years have gone by quickly. It seems like just yesterday I was shopping for my first homecoming dress, playing my first volleyball game (**If you want to make a little joke you can add**)… **NOT** in my first homecoming dress!!! (**And wait for the laugh**), and eating Super Nachos for the first time… **ALSO** not in my first homecoming dress!! (**Wait for the laugh**). Oh, those were the days. Our high school careers built the foundations upon which we all stand as we prepare to go forward with our lives. I stand here tonight with my class as we celebrate together one last time and think of what we will do with the rest of our lives.

Each one of us has our dreams and goals, some of them big, others bigger, but each thought and image of the future we hold presents us with unique paths… and whether it’s as a Marine Biologist, Pediatric Nurse, Chef, Pharmacist, Graphic Designer, Welder or Psychologist, we will reach for the goals and careers that will build upon the future well being of our communities and families. Whether we choose to go for those intentions in baby steps or by leaps and bounds, we must always consider our faith as we remember to include our conversations with God as we reflect if what we are doing is truly His plan for our lives.

We do not know what the future will bring. All we can do is keep our hearts and minds open to new adventures and new lessons. And as we navigate our paths, always remember Proverbs 3:5-6- “Trust in the Lord with thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all they ways acknowledge him, and He shall direct they paths.”

No matter how much zeal we have as we charge forth into the future, we will still fall on our faces. And then we will pick ourselves up, gather ourselves together, ask why, cry a little and laugh a lot. Someone once said, “Success is getting up one more time than we fall.” We learned that when we were children- we just didn’t know how to express it, we learned it again when we were kids, and now as we enter adulthood, it’s the most valuable lesson we can learn…. that and one more thing… we will never stop learning. Our lives will be our lessons in faith, ambition, compassion, respect, and resilience. No matter how many times we may fall, no matter how many times we will have to pick ourselves up, remember that through all of life’s trials we always have our trust in the Lord. Please remember that everything has its season and with true faith and appreciation, we will know when our time arrives.

As we prepare to set off on our own unique journeys, please keep in mind the words of Audrey Hepburn, the actress and humanitarian, who said, “Remember, if you ever need a helping hand, it’s at the end of your arm and as you get older remember you have another hand: The first is to help yourself, the second is to help others.”

To all of my classmates, we have had an amazing time together and I know we will all hold a special place in each other’s lives. As you and I go forth remember to put God first and continue your prayers for a fulfilling, happy, and healthy life… one that serves you and gives you strength to be there for others. Congratulations! Thank you all!