**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**BRIDGET TILLEY**

Hello everyone... to family and friends, fellow graduates, distinguished guests, faculty, administrators, and of course, Mr. and Mrs. Kerns, it is an honor to be here today, to graduate from Child’s Way Charter School, and naturally, to be here with all of you. This commencement ceremony is special for many reasons. For one, it is **OUR** graduation, something we’ve worked hard for throughout the past several years. We also must remember that although my sister and fellow graduate, Sierra and I live in Arizona and are home schooled, it’s great to be back here in Oregon to celebrate with all of you in person. Another, possibly less obvious but more meaningful reason this is such a special day is because we are unique... and by “we,” I mean all of us, the graduating class of 2019, and we **finally** get to celebrate **together**. We may not **THINK** we are **that** special, but I promise you, each one of us **IS** **THAT** special and different in our own way.

Thanks to the way this school has been set up, we can either attend classes in person or we can be home schooled. Having been able to continue our studies as we moved has been a great experience and adventure for my sister and me... we have learned so much about different parts of life... we’ve been able to focus on our interests... we’ve had the chance to learn, not only through attending school, but through traveling...

seeing what life is like in other communities... by reading and exercising our imaginations.... finding and focusing on activities and areas of interest that we find really interesting... we truly are blessed.... and while some kids in other schools might find themselves **kicking** and **screaming** as they are forced to go to school.... we’ve learned to take our doubts and hesitations and use them for good... and turn them into black belts in Tae Kwan Do!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). That’s just one example of the ways we have been inspired to really get the most from the gifts we’ve been given.

While my sister and I are both younger than the average graduate, we know the encouragement and support we’ve been given by our father, friends, family and community has been really amazing. I think the most important lesson I’ve learned throughout my time as a student in Child’s Way is to believe in yourself. I know there are times when I wonder if I can do something.... kind of like now... speaking here... in front of all of you... but I also know, thanks to the encouragement I’ve received, that if I give my all... if I do my best... if I am willing to get up when and if I may slip and fall, as long as I have learned.... as long as I have realized that I am responsible for my actions.... I will continue to grow. We all think of Thomas Alva Edison as a genius inventor. Not a lot of people know that he had learning disabilities and that he was kicked out of school at a young age. When someone asked him why it took so many tries to reach a successful invention, he said, “I have not failed. I have just found **ONE** **THOUSAND** ways that won’t work.”

Each one of us has the ability within us to make a positive mark on this world. It may take **ONE THOUSAND** tries, but we can do it. It may not be the biggest, flashiest accomplishment... that’s okay... a complete journey is made up of small steps. We just have to remember to keep moving. As long as we keep our determination, as long as we find one more kick within us, as long as we don’t allow negative thoughts and lack of encouragement to take us off course, we’re going to be great...and don’t let anyone tell you different!!! ... and if you don’t believe it, or if you find yourself in a “situation,” call me!!

Anyone who knows me knows how much I love to read....in fact, it was a little hard for me to put down my book, even for a few hours to be with you today!!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). But in the pages of books, I discover new worlds to teach me... to open my eyes.... to allow me to dream and wonder and plan. ... and anyone who knows me and my love of books knows I love Tom Kirkbride... His imagination takes me to some pretty great places... and his wisdom... especially the Gamadin Code of Honor, serves as a guide for me in my life...”Honor, Truth, Courage, and Humility above all else.” It’s time for us to find our places in the world and it’s important for us to be guided by the strength of those words.

I want to thank all of you.... you’re all my teachers... and I pledge that I will continue to learn as I find my own path to the future... Thank you all!!