**GRADUATION SPEECH**

**FOR**

**KAYDEE CLARK**

Hello everyone!!! No matter how you’ve chosen to join us... whether by Zoom or YouTube or social media platforms, or however we find the best way to share this wonderful event, one thing is for sure.... it’s **GREAT** to hopefully see and be seen by all of you... Today we celebrate the 2020 graduating class of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ High School, and in particular, the wonderful students of our Medical Assisting and Phlebotomy class... forty bright, intelligent, eager young people, ready to make their mark in the world... Talk about **TIMING**!!! (**Wait for the laugh**) ... Who among us **EVER** expected, four years ago, when you began your high school careers, that circumstances would lead us here...to this day, to these conditions, and most of all, to this incredible opportunity for all of you graduates to make a positive, valuable mark in this world???

Throughout life and history, there have been landmark events that have affected the way we live, think, and act....we’ve all experienced them... Graduates, I keep thinking about what life was like for me at your age... believe it or not... I’m not **THAT** old...(**Wait for the laugh**). I think of what was going on just around the time all of you were being born. You entered into a world of enormous tragedy during 9-11 and the aftermath, and you’re graduating into a world during an unprecedented pandemic. When you were born, the SARS Pandemic spread throughout the world and now we have this one. You walked the halls of school, trying to function in uncertain and dangerous times, through the “epidemic” of school shootings and violence. I remember that I was in high school when the very first shooting happened in 1999. You came into this world almost at the same time as the virtual world... you “grew up” together. Back at the “turn of the century,” the virtual world probably had about 600,000 users... You’ve matured together... you’re graduating at a time when that virtual world is just about at 100%. And just as the capacity and capabilities of technology and connectivity have grown, so have all of you... I can recall so many incidents from the past four years... they seem far away now but they’ve influenced each one of us as we “grew up together.” I remember lots of work, days in lab learning new skills, days when even I messed up and no one told me until the next class period – HA!  I remember connecting with all of you, feeling nervous and excited at the start of a lesson, you rolling your eyes at me when I tried to be funny... and let me tell you.... you’ll see... as you look back on these times, that **I AM FUNNY**!!! It’s all relative!!! (**Wait for the laugh**). I can still hear nervous shaking voices during speeches and when I close my eyes, I still see messages left on my whiteboard. I will always treasure those “light bulb moments” when you learned something new... and it **SANK IN**!! I will treasure the happiness projects and even me... trying to dance ... with no skills. Remember that I, too, once sat in your seat, not that long ago... and I’ve learned and taught the same lessons as you’ve learned.... Some things, thankfully, don’t change, and the thought of the foundations we share, builds and strengthens our own personal, academic, and professional histories.

Each one of you are about to confirm what I already know. You are strong, resilient, and have learned to adapt. You’ve learned to ask questions, search for real, authentic answers, and find the wisdom and lessons the world around us teaches every single day. Although it might not seem so right now, each era has its own silver linings, positive points, and opportunities to learn and grow and discover your integral part in both a local and global community. These past several weeks have shown us something very clearly and equally as awesome... we are all **connected**... the decisions we make affect everyone around us and vice versa. While I feel your frustration, confusion, possible impatience, and probable anxiety, please know this... life tests us all the time. The degree with which we manage in life is based on integrity, open-mindedness, optimism, and a willingness to get through whatever tests and trials are thrown our way. A wise man once said, “If we could unfold the future, the present would be our greatest care.” I think were seeing that now, and we all can begin to prepare for whatever lies ahead.

While during this pandemic, you are facing challenges and changes, and of course, the unknown, know this without a doubt... I will always be by your side spiritually and as you take this giant, unknown leap forward... I may even sometimes be that “**little voice in your head”....** scary**... HUH??? (Wait for the laugh)**.... guiding you... allowing you to question... reminding you how to find your own best responses to the situations you will face in life. Also know this without any doubt... this class will always be special to me... we’ve faced so much together. This very strange moment in history is defining our path as we travel towards the future... So far, we are prevailing and as long as we are able to place one foot in front of the other, assess what’s going on, and act accordingly with awareness and common sense, we will be okay. Congratulations and thank you!!