**AWARDS SPEECH**

**FOR**

**LISA MANKINS**

Hello everyone!! I want to thank all of you for being here and celebrating, of course, with me, the conclusion of the current season for the Greensville Salem Girls Basketball program. I am sure everyone here has so many other things “on their plates.” There are so many commitments we each have, but to take the time to join us, to share this moment, to get a peek into what it’s like to be on this team and to offer your support and encouragement is so greatly appreciated. Whether you’re a parent, friend, new member, or a prospective “power forward,” it means the world to us that you’re here. **(If there is anyone in particular you want to thank… like assistants, school staff, etc, do that here)**. I would like to acknowledge some very special people that support this group and allow these young women to learn, grow, and realize their potential in sports…. and that’s no small feat!!! Thank you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

Of course, while every year is special in its own way, this closing moment marks a big turning point in the life of the team, the program, the players, and those that aspire to make their own contribution in the future, and while it’s no secret that I’ve been here for a while…. Well, maybe a **littttttttle** longer (**wait for the laugh**), my tenure here allows me to witness the development, progress, and growth of so many of you. That’s probably the most rewarding part of my job here at Greensville… if you can even call it a job…the rewards I get just from knowing that girls blossom into accomplished young women… vital young people who have genuine appreciation of the importance of athletics within the context of growing and learning… please know that my gratitude lives within everyone on this team…. I take all of you with me and use that strength and appreciation to continue. This past year was absolutely no exception. I’m so proud of this crew and in particular, the people up here with me. You see, standing here before you, four wonderful young athletes. They’ve performed exceptionally well this past season, but that’s not the only thing that makes them so special. I have had the privilege of working with, encouraging, coaching, and observing these girls since they began in this program in the 4th grade. I almost cannot remember or imagine a time when they were not here, with us, on our team, practicing, scoring, and running faster and further than anyone might have imagined.

Yes. Up here, you see four young women… Kaitlyn, Ashlan, Mackenzie, and Gia. Each one is outstanding and a real winner in her own way. Each one has excelled, for years, both on the court…. and off. Excellent students…. Wonderful basketball players…. Fine young women…. And tonight, we congratulate them, thank them for their inspired dedication to Greensville, and honor them with a resounding send-off as they find their way to the next steps of their lives.

Each of these young women are holding a candle…. Throughout history and culture, the candle… the light… has been a symbol of so much… A wise man once said, “At times, our own light goes out and is rekindled by a spark from another person. Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude of those who have lighted the flame within us.” Kaitlyn, Ashlan, Mackenzie, and Gia, in a few moments, I am going to ask you to blow out the flames on your candles. This will symbolize the completion of your time in the Greensville Salem Girls Basketball Program, but please be very clear….the light you’ve each shared with all of us will continue to glow. It will provide a beacon for those that follow you into this program. You’ve been wonderful examples of athleticism and teamwork and I know your flames will work to light and inspire those that follow in your footsteps, both on and off the court, and while, for you, this particular flame is about to be extinguished as it burns down to its finality, the good news is that there will be new flames to ignite, new candles to measure your time and progress, and new lights to guide you and inspire you on your paths… in college and in the future.

I may have said this before, but, for me, it holds true. “I am part of all that I have met.” Each one of you have taught me as I’ve coached you. This job is so rewarding because of enthusiastic young people like you. Clearly, I always look forward to new seasons and new teams, but be very aware that you will be missed. Your flames… your spirits… your accomplishments will light the way as new underclassmen begin the process that you have mastered. While the flames of these candles flicker and go out, be proud and full of intention as you go on to reignite your spirits in your next chapters.

Congratulations to **ALL** of you, and **THANK YOU!!**