**Larkin Speech [EZ Speech No. 16238]**

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Valedictory address by Ms. Biara Larkin to the 2017 graduating class of Riverview East Academy.

ladies and gentlemen . . . faculty and staff . . . distin­guished guests . . . fellow graduates and parents . . .

i am both honored and humbled to have been invited to give the valedictorian’s address at this year’s graduation ceremonies.

when i was thinking about what i’d say here this [morning/ afternoon/evening], it occurred to me that the first thing i should say is, “thank you.” For if there’s one thing I’ve learned in my [no.] years at riverview east it is that one of the most important aspects of living a good life is to foster and nurture and manifest in all things an *attitude of gratitude.*

my experience here has taught me that none of us gets through this life on our own. throughout our days, we’re helped along the way by our parents, our teachers, our church, our friends, and by the many mentors who’ve given us guidance and counsel through the years. we can achieve little on our own. we’re always going to need the help and support of others to achieve our goals in life. and for this, we’re going to “owe” them.

and how do we repay this debt? it’s simple. just say “thank you” — or better yet, “thank you; I’m very grateful.” but, it’s not good enough simply to *feel* grateful. no. you’ve got to *express* that gratitude straight out loud, and most importantly, you’ve got to *mean* it. you’ve got to make sure that anyone who helps you in any way, large or small, knows that you sincerely appreciate their effort or their help. from the cashier at mcdonald’s to the math teacher who took the extra time to explain quadratic equations when you just couldn’t wrap your head around the subject, you need to say “thank you” from the heart. you will find that an attitude of gratitude is one of the most attractive and endearing traits you can manifest.

now, i’m pretty sure that, for most of us, our parents are the people to whom we owe the greatest debt of gratitude. that’s certainly true for me. just think of all the things our parents have done for us. think of the sacrifices they might have had to make to send us to such a wonderful center of learning as riverview east academy. think of all the love and care they’ve lavished upon us from the moment of our birth to the present moment. so on behalf of all us graduating seniors to all you wonderful, supportive parents out there: thank you, *thank you*, ***thank you!***

an other important life lesson i’ll take away from my time here at reverview is that I was put on this earth for two purposes and two purposes only: the first is to take care of myselve, and the second is to help others.

the most important and noble purpose we have on this earth, i believe, is to relieve the suffering of others, to help others realize their full potential, to give care and warmth to those who are in pain, to raise others out of despair and into joy. *this* is the secret of living a meaningful life. and certainly, all of you who plan on going on to jobs in the healthcare sector already feel this way.

so I believe that the secret to living a good and successful life is to — first — develop a genuine attitude of gratitude within yourself, then show that gratitude openly and freely; and — second — to live a life of service and helpfullness to others. nothing could be simpler, right? with faith in ourselves, gratitude in our hearts, and a commitment to serve the community, let’s go out and change the world!

thank you very much.

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