**Central Middle School**

 **May 21, 2019**

 **Dream-Aim-Achieve**

 **Dr. Terrence Ferguson: DVM**

**Terrance,..This will be a happy day with lots of excitement, (and middle schoolers!). Once you stand before the audience, give them a moment to see you up there, so they can settle in and focus on you. Speak slowly and if possible allow your eyes to make as much contact with folks in the audience as possible.**

Good Morning/Afternoon/Evening **EVERYONE**,..and welcome, welcome to this very special day and event. I see so many faces that I know from the community as well as the school, and I am very glad to see everyone who has come to share this celebration. For those whom I have not had the pleasure of meeting, my name is Terrance Ferguson, and I am a graduate of Central Middle School. I am here to speak to everyone today, but most importantly to the students, and other youngsters, about their *dreams, their aims, and their achievement.*

These types of speeches and talks can sometimes go on way too long, so I plan to keep my message short, yet to the point. I mentioned that a few years back, (well, maybe more than a few years), **(laughter),** I attended Central. This school, this place, was a significant piece of the puzzle that kept me moving to the next step in my education, then the next after that, allowing me to achieve goals that I never thought imaginable. And let me tell you what I never could have imagined back then, when I was a youngster*?* I could have never imagined that **I** would be **here** today as a member of the greater community, as a proud husband and father, and that I would be here **here today,…..** as a **Doctor of Veterinary Medicine.** I am one example, one result, that WE, **YOU**, can *‘dream-aim-and achieve.*

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Raise your hand if you have a dog. OK, now raise your hand if you have a cat. Now, raise your hand if you have a cow. OK, I can see we have/don’t have farmers in here. **(lite laughter).** Think about how you feel about your animals. Think how you want to protect them, care for them, and keep them safe. That was the *dream* I had over thirty years ago. A *dream* I kept having, until I *aimed* for that dream,and then worked veryhard in school and out of school, to *achieve* my dream.

As you sit here today with your parents, grandparents, aunts-uncles, and friends think for just a moment: Think now*: “Hey, in fifteen years I could be* *up there just like this guy is, talking to kids just like me”. “I could be up* *there as a pilot, a police officer, a dentist, a TEACHER, a carpenter, an army* *officer, book author”.* Most importantly, I want you to think: *“In ten or* *fifteen years, I could be up there as anything that I set out to accomplish”.* So as you sit here, right now, hearing my voice, you too can **dream**,…then **aim-for**, then work to **achieve**. And please believe me, I can attest from my story, this **is** possible for **any one of you**.

This is a world, a country, of opportunity, and that means opportunity for all of us. I realize that your next step is high-school. And oh my!,…that is one of the most important experiences you’ll ever have in life. Middle school is like farmland being prepared for the crops to be planted. Middle school is like the cement foundation for a home or building. Then the next part of your puzzle, high school, will be the crops growing on the farm, or the wood or steel frame of the house on top of the foundation. So, you’re going from one very important piece of the puzzle to the next, even bigger piece. There is so much to do and learn in your high school years. But the one idea that you should always keep right in front of you, right on the list of what is important, is too never doubt, never think, that you can’t do something,….**because you can**.

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**Little dreams become bigger *dreams:***

 When you were a few years younger, as well as now, many of you had ideas of things you wanted, places you wanted to go, or perhaps a job you thought was cool. At any age, and more so at yours, it is hard to structure how to put that all together. Some of you might have the exact answer now as to how to reach those goals, but **I** sure **didn’t**. I loved animals, especially marine and aquatic species, and I liked the veterinarians that I knew or read about. But the thought of how to get there was just beginning to become clear. So, my point is that dreams are sometimes clear at a younger age, but for most of us they aren’t quite yet connected to our goals. When specific images and mental pictures in your mind continue and continue, we need to pay attention to them, we need to listen to them, because they are telling us something. And don’t push aside the thought that one day you could be a geologist, a jet mechanic, a train conductor, or an eye doctor, because this is the exact time for you to realize, it is possible. No matter how complicated, difficult, or expensive it might seem right now, with perseverance and support, dreams can become reality, for anyone here today, **anyone**.

**Take *‘aim’.***

There is so much going on in your lives now, and even more will happen next fall as some of you begin high school. But, there is plenty of room in your brain for those dreams to be started now. It’s done by asking questions such as where can I research this idea? Where can I go watch someone who is already doing this? Is it possible for me to try this with a person who already does this job? For example: If you want to be a pilot, you can read aviation magazines online. You can buy an inexpensive special aviation band radio at Radio Shack that allows you to listen to the pilots talking to the control tower. If you want to be a translator, you can start to learn a language online, right now, this summer, tomorrow. If you want to be a Forrest Service or Fish & Game Officer, you can contact their local stations for material on a career in forestry or fish & game. And some of the local Forestry and Fish & Game offices allow interns and students to ride along with regular officers or help in the office.

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 So, as you get busier and busier with everyday life and with school, do not push those really, really, good dreams aside. Keep them front and center, then find a way to get involved and learn, first-hand.

 Now, let’s take a breath here, because that is a lot for you to think about, and we do not mean to make it too complicated right now. (**Pause**). What I am suggesting is for you to read, watch, study, anything that you are enthusiastic about. And don’t think it necessarily has to be just one subject, it could be five different things. It might be martial arts, pencil drawing, equipment repair, soccer, dance, mathematics, camp-counselor, story-writing, or any of the hundreds of jobs and careers throughout the world.

Then, through high school ask: How can I accomplish this? Is it through college, trade schools, the armed services, an apprenticeship. How can **I** make **this dream** come true? This is how you aim, this is how you bring your goal into focus, into view, into **reach**. That includes getting your parents, your family, your teachers, involved, so they know this is something you really want to learn. That is the beginning of assembling the pieces of the puzzle, your puzzle, your future.

 Now let me put the brakes on here for just a second. Please do not think of this is not a homework assignment due in September. This is a suggestion to stay alert and listen to your dreams, then try the dreams, and then take **direct aim** at the ones that interest you the most.

***Achieve*, (get it done!)**

 Then the next step, is to get there, **get it done, to ACHIEVE.** Achievement won’t come to you, you must go and get it. Achievement won’t be dropped on your doorstep, or magically appear in your computer’s inbox. To achieve you must get your family involved, get your guidance counselors involved, and most importantly become dedicated yourself to making it happen. But, you’re thinking now: *“Hey, I’m just a kid, with a fun summer* *right ahead of me.”* And you’re right, you are still youngsters. We want you to have fun, kids are supposed to enjoy this time in their lives. What I am suggesting is that to achieve, it will take effort, and that effort must increase a little more each and every year.

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And as you complete even the first small steps, those beginning experiences will give you more confidence to go to the next. And after a few years from now, that tall mountain will not look as giant as it does today. Ask your parents what options there are for applying and paying for the education or the training, for what you want to do. And you too be part of that. Research yourself where you can go to learn something specific. And start saving your money from both jobs you might have and allowance you might receive.

 And keep in mind that no matter how different you might think what you like is, there is always a place for training or education in that field of work. If you think what you like is strange or obscure, then just listen to these examples: There is a university in Montana **\*** where you can get a four-year degree in horsemanship, including becoming a certified *horse shoe maker*, and that is called a Ferrier. There is a two-year college in Pennsylvania **\*\*** where you can get an associate degree in masonry, (that is building things with stone and rock). And there are many four-year universities where you can go and get a degree in aviation **\*\*\*** to become a pilot. If you have a dream, then with thorough research, you can find **where to go**, and **how to pay for it**. With a plan as well as with persistence, you will find and complete your educational goals, you will be **successful,** and youwill **achieve.**

*If you would like to know the names of the colleges and universities that offer the course of studies I just mentioned, come up when I am done, and we can write them down for you. Don’t be shy, I am glad to help you start.*

I’ve talked to you today about dreams, aims, and achievement. None of that can be done without one more element. That is what type of kid you are now, and what type of a person you’ll be as an adult. All the education, all the training, all the things you can buy, are secondary to how you act as a person and a human being. You must be honest, you must be kind, you must learn to treat everyone just like you want them to treat you. You should keep promises, do what you say you’re going to do, and do it when you say it will be done. You must treat people fairly, with respect, and with

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dignity. You must act the same way towards a homeless person as you would act towards a sports hero, or a grandparent. I am not telling you not to win. Of course, you should try to win, but win fairly, and win with respect to the loser. Be a good child, be a good brother or sister. Be kind to animals. Be a respectful grandson or granddaughter. Be a polite student. Don’t take advantage of people, and never be a bully.

I want to close with one more item, one more suggestion, one more request. We all know what compasses are. Well, there is another type of compass besides the one that you buy at the camping store and hook onto your belt. This is not a compass you can touch, this is a compass from inside of you. It is called your **Moral Compass**. It **points** you to the **right** road, not the **wrong** one. It gives you direction to what **you should** do and what you **should** **not** do. It can be a guiding light to avoid trouble, and to arrive safely at your destination. This is the compass **of life**, always keep it with you, it will not allow you to get lost.

 But,..right now it is time to enjoy the rest of this celebration, the rest of this day.

 Have **fun** everyone,

 **be careful** out there,

 and **Thank You.**

**\*** University of Montana, Western.

**\*\*** Williamson College

**\*\*\*** Embry Riddle, Purdue University, University of North Dakota, and others.