

June 3, 2017
Salutatorian Remarks
Stephanie Lechki

Mr. Karsten, Mr. Penikas, members of the Administration, Faculty, Parents and fellow classmates.

Good morning!

We gather today as a group of unique individuals whose personal experiences define who we are and who we will become. Whether as a small ripple or a large wave, I believe that every single person here has impacted the lives of others. It may have been unintentional, and we may never know the change we initiated.

I also believe every single person has had her or his life changed over the last four years. Maybe you "found" yourself in a character from a novel you could not bear to put down. Maybe in mourning the loss of a loved one, you discovered another facet of your personality. Or, maybe the selfless acts of a teacher, a peer, even a stranger, spoke to your heart.

"Oh the places you'll go," wrote Dr. Seuss.

But let me rephrase that:

"Oh the places we've been."

We have had the privilege of bearing witness to an abundant outpouring of kindness and generosity for people all around our planet through the Saint Marcellin Champagnat society's service trips.

We have had the privilege of seeing the world through a different lens by discovering the cultural beauty of Italy, England, Greece

and Germany, places that seem so far from home yet have become part of the map of our hearts.

We have had the privilege of preserving our world for generations to come through our service at Briarwood Shelter and Harlem Tutoring. We have shown children the power of patience and perseverance as a way to grow in knowledge.

And we have had the privilege to accept and understand lessons that are vital to our success in life:
that we should have confidence in ourselves, but not be too easily convinced;
that there are situations for which it is impossible to prepare, but which we will spend a lifetime looking back at, trying to accept, interpret, and comprehend;
that listening and reserving judgment is a matter of infinite hope, but action creates change and defines leaders.

Our collective actions have had far reaching effects, but we are nowhere near done, in fact we are just beginning our journey. And along the way we must be aware that the only certainty we will encounter is change.

Each and every one of us has the ability to adapt and reshape ourselves when presented with trials and tribulations.

Each and every one of us has the ability to rebound after being pushed and tested to our limits.

Most importantly, each and every one of us has the ability to forgive when we have been wronged and to admit and ask for forgiveness when we have done wrong.

As Stanners, as human beings, we must take the lessons we have learned, the memories we cherish - even the moments we yearn to forget, and use them to make the world a better place.

Our world is in desperate need of specialized surgeons, world class detectives, and heroic servicemen and women who give their last breath to defend us. And, it is also in constant need of chefs who push the boundaries on culinary art; painters who touch hearts through their expert hues and brush strokes; scientists who see an inch of soil on the ground as a treasure trove of endless possibilities.

Our world needs people like you and me!

Whether or not we want it, the future is in our hands. It is our duty to accept this responsibility with open arms and open minds. What we do now will have an impact for generations to come: our spark of curiosity can become a cure for cancer, our questions can challenge the most deeply rooted beliefs, and our one ripple can amount to a giant wave of change.

To quote Elle Woods from the movie Legally Blonde:

"Congratulations class of 2017 - we did it!"
Now, let's go and do more

Thank you.