

Karissa Andro

Salutatorian Speech Final

Good evening honored guests and graduates. It is my privilege to welcome you here today as we celebrate this special moment, the graduation ceremony of the Class of 2019.

I can stand up here and talk about the amazing, dedicated teachers, the life-changing friendships, and the unforgettable memories that have comprised our high school experience. I can discuss the numerous academic, athletic, and artistic accomplishments we have all achieved. But today, I will not be cliché and ask us to reflect on our past, nor imagine our future. Instead, I ask to see beyond ourselves to the generation following in our footsteps.

As we look out into the bleachers I'm sure many of us see our younger siblings, cousins, and even nieces or nephews.

Just as we see them, they are looking back at **us**. We are their role models. They look to us to see how they should behave. Whenever we speak they are listening intently and are likely to mimic our voice. Our positive behavior and kind words can last far beyond just the moment they're spoken.

Our positive behavior and kind words can stretch out into eternity as they are echoed in the speech of the little ones who look up to us.

What story will your voice tell? One of courage and perseverance? Of tolerance and kindness?

We are the leaders for the next generation so we must be conscious of where our actions will lead them. The goal is not to simply have them follow in our footsteps but to take the path next to us and go farther than we can ever imagine.

If we are courageous, we will inspire courage in the next generation. If we teach integrity, they will have integrity. Our optimism will create optimism in them. **If we are leaders we will create leaders.**

There's a poem by an unknown author that I would like to share,

"take my hand... imagine

What it will someday be.

A hand that's strong. A hand that's kind.

Is that what you foresee?

A hand that's skilled, a hand that's sure

A hand that someday may

Take another little hand

And guide it on it's way"

At the end of high school and college, after our retirement and beyond, our legacy will not be the physical works we have created, but rather what we have inspired in the people around us.

So, when it is hard... when you want to quit. Just remember who is watching. Thank you.