

Office of the Governor

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NEWS RELEASE

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Governor to Highlight Perseverance, Personal Best, and Personal Time During Raritan Valley Community College Commencement Address

Gov. Christie Whitman will address the graduates of Raritan Valley Community College this evening with a message that focuses on perseverance, personal best, and personal time.

The Governor will commend the school on its excellent record of serving New Jersey by linking the classroom to the community. She will also encourage the graduates to carry their knowledge into their professional lives with her message to "persevere in all you do, strive for your personal best, and make room for personal time".

A copy of the Governor's remarks is attached.

REMARKS OF GOVERNOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN RARITAN VALLEY COMMUNITY COLLEGE COMMENCEMENT ADDRESS MAY 20, 1998

President Israel, Reverend Soaries, members of the Board of Trustees, faculty, administration and staff, graduates, families, and friends.

Let me begin with a special thanks to the families and friends of the graduates. Through your support and sacrifice, you've contributed much to this special day. I ask the graduates to join with me in applauding your role in helping them achieve this moment.

And to the graduates of the Raritan Valley Community College Class of 1998 - well done! You've made it!

You, the graduating class of 1998, more than 200 strong, are ready, willing, and able to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

Moreover, you may also be prepared for what they say is the greatest achievement of graduation - sitting through the commencement exercises.

Winston Churchill had three pieces of advice that public speakers should keep in mind. One - never walk up a wall that is leaning against you. Two - never kiss a person who is leaning away from you. Three - never speak to a group that knows more about a subject than you do.

I'm about to break rule number three.

Looking at the diversity of this class and knowing how many of you have juggled getting an education with working or raising a family - or both - I won't pretend that I can offer you the standard fare of commencement ceremonies.

I'm not about to give you a "Top Ten" list of things you should do with the rest of your life. You're already living life and doing a great job.

Having been a Raritan Valley Community College trustee, I know that many of the students here already have the kind of real life experiences that most college students won't get for years to come.

Of course, I promise not to mention the three "r's" of reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic. Coming off final exams I'm sure you had enough of the three "r's" to last you the whole summer.

Rather, I want to talk about the three "p's." I call those perseverance, personal best, and personal time.

They say that perseverance is how the snail reached the Ark. How the tortoise beat the hare. And how I got to be Governor.

I call it "stick-to-it-ive-ness." And we have a lot of real life examples of "stick-to-it-ive-ness" in this graduating class.

Take Darlene Ross. She's the mother of two children, ages 6 and 12. As Darlene will tell you, she's struggled with family illness and with raising her children without child support. Yet she honed in on the idea of getting an education and she has stuck to it.

Darlene will be attending the College of New Jersey to continue her studies in

advocacy for women and children.

Diane Corado is another great example of perseverance. She returned to school in her mid-forties, a time when many would have given up the hope of getting a college education. Today, Darlene is listed in "Who's Who Among Junior Colleges" and she's pursuing a career in nursing.

And I could go on and on with examples from this graduating class. With an average age of 29 for a freshman, there are a lot of students here who have persevered. Students who needed, for whatever reason, to take time off from pursuing their education. Students who put education back into their plans and stuck to it.

My message is this: as you go forward from this college, continue to persevere in all you do. New Jersey, your communities, and your families will be the better for it.

Which brings me to the second of the three "p's" - Personal Best.

Runners know that a personal best is your best time, whether you're sprinting in a 10K or just pounding the pavement on the weekends. But you don't have to be a runner to have a personal best.

In fact, 61 years ago on this very date, this country had perhaps its greatest example of a personal best - not on the ground but in the air.

That day, Charles A. Lindbergh took off from Roosevelt Field in New York in a single-engine plane. He flew solo for 33 hours before he touched down in Paris.

In a world of personal bests, the Lindbergh flight ranks near the top for confidence and courage.

And while none of us may ever match the magnitude of Lindbergh's transatlantic voyage, our personal bests are no less important. Let me give you a few examples.

One is your valedictorian, Dawson Joseph White. Dawson has been on the President's List for 4 semesters. He also made the National Dean's List and is a Phi Theta Kappa honor society member.

This year Dawson received the Business Administration Department's 1998 award for academic excellence and, next year, he'll pursue a degree in International Business.

Another example is Nicole Giacche. Nicole is a Business Administration and Accounting major from Flemington. She's made her mark with the Service Learning network here at Raritan Valley Community College.

Nicole Giacche has had not one but four Service Learning placements. She's worked with the Easter Seal Society in Somerville, with the Somerset County Department of Consumer Affairs, with this college's Office of Research, Planning and Development, and with the Hunterdon County Economic Partnership.

Nicole has packed a lot of service into her years of learning at this college.

So have 827 other students in the Service Learning network. Working with 200 community organizations, these students have volunteered more than 17,000 hours. And two out of three continue to volunteer after they complete their coursework. Seeing the spirit of Service Learning, I have great hope for New Jersey's future.

Hope for a New Jersey in which each of you in the Class of 1998 strives to the utmost for yourselves, for your families, and for your communities.

And in that striving I ask that you also create some space for the third of those three "p's" I mentioned - personal time.

Ours is an age of rapid technological change, one that promises a fuller life and a better future. In fact, New Jersey ranks right at the top in developing new technologies in communications, pharmaceuticals, and finance.

But in our rush-rush society, we can sometimes lose our bearings. We can experience a disharmony between what's important and what's not so important.

We all know what disharmony is. It's when you're on your car phone leaving a voice mail message and you get a fax on the laptop on the seat next to you while your Palm Pilot beeps a reminder to stop at the local ATM.

Our high speed, high-tech society creates the kind of stress that results in shortcut solutions, short attention spans, and short tempers.

Graduates, take time for yourselves and your families. Relieve the stress. Strive to reach what one writer called the "moonlight of the spirit."

For example, you could take time to enjoy the 850,000 acres of open space New Jersey already has to offer. You could stroll our beaches or explore our Pine Barrens.

You could visit a state museum, go fishing, or ski in the Skylands.

You could picnic at the Princeton Battlefield, or watch whales off Cape May.

Or you could simply go shopping.

Whatever you choose, work hard at opening up some space in your life for yourself and those you love.

And leave the laptop home for your little one.

Graduates, that's my message for you. Persevere in all you do. Strive for your personal best. Make room for personal time.

And continue to make us proud of you - for all you've accomplished here at Raritan Valley Community College and for what we're sure you will achieve in the years ahead.

After all, you and New Jersey are perfect together.

Thank you.