

RETIREMENT DINNER TALK
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DELIVERED MAY 30, 2008

Good evening and welcome.

I wish to dedicate my remarks tonight to our dear colleagues and friends, Mrs. Anne Rosenthal, Mr. James Bennett, and Mrs. Linda Wagner. These three individuals died this past year. They exemplified all of the best features of our district. Dedicated, caring, knowledgeable, and encouraging to their students and fellow teachers, they drew out the best in everyone with whom they came in contact. We will continue to miss them very much.

I ask that we remember Anne, Jim, and Linda with a moment of silence.

Some of you may have heard about Randy Pausch. He is a Professor at Carnegie Mellon University who was asked to deliver a talk titled "The Last Lecture". That lecture has now been widely televised and a book has been written entitled The Last Lecture, by Randy Pausch and Jeffrey Zaslow. I recommend the book to you. Professors are often asked by a national undergraduate honor society to consider their retirement and think about what they would want to say in a last lecture to their class. They struggle to answer the questions: "What wisdom would we impart to the world if we knew it was our last chance? If we had to vanish tomorrow, what would we want as our legacy? In Pausch's case, when he was asked to give such a lecture, he did not have to imagine it as his last since he had recently been diagnosed with terminal cancer. The lecture he gave, "Really Achieving Your Childhood Dreams", was not about dying, rather it was about living, and it summarized all that he had come to believe.

I mention this to highlight for you one of the things that Pausch learned; it comes under the heading of "Loyalty is a Two Way Street". He describes a student who he had had when he was a young, untenured professor. This very strong student had gotten F's in Calculus III, and the Dean was going to expel him. The Dean believed that the F's were due to the student simply not trying. Pausch went to bat for his student and, in the process, incurred the wrath of the Dean. The student ultimately passed Calculus III and, after graduating, he went on to become an award-winning star in Pausch's own field of computer science. Now, as Pausch's own career has been cut short, this student will carry on Pausch's work into the future. He is going to bat for Pausch.

I use this story to illustrate the importance of us going the distance for our students. This is, indeed, how you have lived your professional lives in North Colonie, and I believe it is in strong measure why approximately fifty-five teachers currently in our district were graduates of the North Colonie School District. They sought careers in education and employment here largely because of you.

You went the extra mile for them, and now they are taking over your work here for you. What a wonderful tribute! You can leave North Colonie knowing that this new generation of staff members carry with them the culture and values you imbued in them as students. For those who did not go through our school system, you have fostered in them so much of yourselves as you have welcomed them into your grade levels or departments, as you have mentored them or, in the case of our retiring administrators, as you have observed, coached, supervised, and evaluated them. You have left indelible marks on the fabric of our district.

I hope that our retirees have all really achieved their dreams by spending their professional lives in education and by working for all or most of their careers in North Colonie. I urge you to take time and celebrate the fact that you have touched countless lives in powerful and meaningful ways.

Each of our honorees has made a great commitment here and, through teaching, a great commitment to the future. Audience members, I ask you to please join me now by rising to give our retirees a standing ovation.