

WORDS OF WISDOM

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Danielle Tilders, Class of 2007, encourages her fellow graduates to live like champions



Rivier's 72nd Commencement ceremony was unique in many ways. The event was celebrated under the largest tent ever erected in the state of New Hampshire, the College honored its oldest graduate ever to receive a bachelor's degree, and for the first time in its nearly 75 year history, Rivier awarded nursing degrees to a father and son nursing team (*see article in this issue*). It was also undoubtedly the first time a student speaker ever quoted celebrity Vince Vaughn in an inspirational address to fellow graduates.

Quoting a line from the popular 2005 movie *Wedding Crashers*, Class of 2007 graduate **Danielle Tilders** boldly stated, "No excuses. Play like a champion." She urged fellow graduates to make the same declaration for their personal and professional lives, always holding themselves to the highest standard. "Let us think like champions. Speak like champions. Behave like champions," she said.

Tilders shared a fond memory from her childhood in which her mother told her to "always remember who you are." She remembers showing up to her first day of kindergarten reciting "My name is Danielle Lyn Tilders. My name is Danielle Lyn Tilders" over and over again in her head so she wouldn't forget exactly who she was. On a more serious note, Tilders related how that one piece of advice from her mother stayed with her as she grew up and always helped her remember where she came from, where she was going, and how she was going to get there.

Tilders, an elementary education graduate from Nashua, was one of three student speakers to address the 550 graduates and close to 3,000 guests. **Mary Wood-Gauthier** received her bachelor's degree in nursing and addressed the crowd as the undergraduate evening student speaker. She recalled the last graduation ceremony she attended when she earned her high school diploma in 1970, and considers herself "among a daring group of individuals with the proud distinction of returning to school as an adult."



PHOTO BY KATHY MACKAY

She expressed her deep appreciation for a college that helped her balance the demands of her personal and professional life by offering face-to-face, online, and hybrid courses. When she needed to put off her education to meet her own personal obligations, it was Assistant Professor of Nursing Sandy Harrington who took the time to call and remind her that Rivier was still here for her. She thanked the countless other nursing faculty members who assisted her along the way including Denise Baxter, Mary Ann Breen, Kathleen Patenaude, Karen Frenn, and offered a special thanks to Pat Hagan who "took the terror out of my first online class and helped me navigate through cyberspace."

Brian Lopez earned his master's in computer science with the distinction of a perfect 4.0 G.P.A. Addressing the audience as the graduate student speaker, Lopez compared life to a highway, where drivers must constantly adjust to changing road conditions. "Life isn't just a highway...it's a whole lot more," said Lopez. "It is more apt to say...life is a blender and Rivier gives access to all the ingredients one needs to be successful." An employee of M&R Consulting Corporation in Burlington, Massachusetts, Lopez proudly stated that Rivier's infrastructure for computer science programs rivals that of commercial businesses. ■

* **KAREN COOPER** is the Executive Director of Development and Marketing in Rivier College. As a Senior Staff member, she directs the Office of Development & Alumni Relations and the Office of Marketing & Communications. Karen has been with the College for seven years. Cooper is a graduate of Merrimack College in North Andover, Massachusetts, with a degree in English and Psychology. She earned her M.B.A. with a marketing concentration from Rivier in 2003. In addition to her responsibilities at Rivier, she serves on the steering committee for IUGO, an organization for young professionals in the Greater Nashua area, and was recently appointed to the Board of Trustees for the Academy of Notre Dame in Tyngsboro, Massachusetts.