

GUEST SPEAKER'S ADDRESS (Scholars Convocation, April 10, 2010)

**Kathleen J. Patenaude, MS, RN, CNE*
Instructor of Nursing, Rivier College, Rivier College**

I am truly honored to speak at this years scholars' convocation. You've worked hard to get to this time in your life. You have excelled in the pursuit of knowledge. Otherwise you wouldn't be here today receiving this prestigious recognition. I congratulate you.

I'm sure you've heard the phrase "Knowledge is Power". You may have heard these actual words or something similar in meaning from your parents, teachers, employers, or books. The phrase implies that with knowledge one's potential in life will increase. Now that you have the knowledge, what will you do with it? What are your plans? What are your goals? Start working? Continue on in school? Go on that vacation you've been longing for? Or are you just looking forward to a little down time...a break from the studying and the papers?

Now that you know things, is just "knowing" enough? Or is merely having the knowledge and the degree only part of it? I believe that knowing isn't only part of it: it's also the doing. It's what you do with your knowledge and your education that matters. Consider this: perhaps knowledge is not the greatest power. Perhaps "knowledge applied is power". This moment in time marks the point between learning and doing. It is where the world of education meets the real world outside.

Hopefully, if we have done our job properly, these two worlds have been entwined for some time now. You have accomplished so much. You can make such a difference in the world.

Every single one of you has something unique and precious to offer the world. It may be kindness or generosity. It could be genius or entrepreneurship. You may give others the gift of friendship. Or you could give life to another. Never underestimate what you can offer, but give of your talents generously.

Regardless of what you do, never stop learning. Because no matter how much you learn, you'll never know everything. There's always something new to learn. Whether formally or informally, you must advance your knowledge. Unfortunately for some, they stop learning at this stage. For them, they're finished with school and learning becomes a tedious task. The world is evolving very fast. If you stop learning, how are you going to compete in this world? To borrow a phrase from college who spoke at the Scholars Convocation several years ago and from one of my favorite television shows: "It's a jungle out there".

I don't know how many of you are football fans, but Ty Warren, the defensive lineman for the New England Patriots, announced just last month that he's forgoing a \$250,000 off-season workout bonus to go back to Texas A&M to finish his degree. His major: agriculture leadership and development. That just goes to show that you're never too old, too rich, or too famous. Just this morning while watching the news, I heard of a 102 year old woman who has made it into the record books as the world's oldest first year student. She never had the opportunity to attend school as a child. She started working in the cotton mill at the age of 13, and got married at 18. She had nine children, seven of whom went on to go to college. She once said: "I feel very happy that I can finally realize my dream of going to school". So no matter what you do, what path you choose to follow, you should never stop learning.

One resolution I would like you to make is to emulate someone who inspires you. Most of us have someone in our lives who has had a positive influence on us. Ty Warren is a role model for his three children, and so today I would like you to think of the person you admire the most and use them as a

yardstick for your futures. You are at a marvelous stage in your lives. You are here not just because you worked hard, but because you dared to dream. You manifested that dream by taking practical steps towards your goal. This is your amazing platform because now you have proof that you can do anything at all. Everything that you see around you was once someone's dream. It was once an idea that was attained by people who were determined, who had vision and who believed in themselves.

I say this because amidst your celebrating and rejoicing with families and friends, I want you to look to the future. I ask you to do this because the world needs people with courage and vision like you. Your success marks a very solid step that you have taken. It would be fair to say that you did not do this in isolation.

So today I would ask you to think about all the people who have influenced you and provided you with inspiration and direction. Acknowledge them, thank them. Whether it's your parents, spouses, children, friends, or mentors, know that they did not do it for themselves. Through their belief in you, through their encouragement, you moved forward. Now it is time for you to stand proud, as I know they are proud of you.

I would like to end with a quote from Tom Brokaw: "You are educated. Your certification is in your degree. You may think of it as the ticket to the good life. Let me ask you to think of an alternative. Think of it as your ticket to change the world."■

* **KATHLEEN PATENAUDE** is the president of the Rivier-St. Joseph Nursing Honor Society. She is an Instructor of Nursing at Rivier College with over thirty years of nursing experience. Kathleen has also served the public in various roles with a background in critical care. She holds licensure as a registered nurse in New Hampshire and Massachusetts. Kathleen earned a bachelor's degree in nursing and a master's degree in nursing education at Rivier. She has had the pleasure of contributing to the community's education of nursing program for the last ten years, six of which were spent at Rivier. Her devotion to Rivier College and the Sisters of the Presentation began in her high school years as a student at Presentation of Mary Academy in Hudson, New Hampshire. Most recently, Kathleen was appointed to be the certified nurse educator (CNE) for the National League of Nursing (NLN).