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National Honor Society Induction
Gull Lake High School
President John M. Dunn
May 22, 2017

- Good evening, and thank you for inviting me to join you as you celebrate the academic and service accomplishments of students being inducted this evening into the National Honor Society. Congratulations to all of tonight's inductees.
- I was asked to speak about the value of service and the need for people to volunteer. That describes a core principle that drives the university I lead. It is sometimes summed up by the phrase, "to whom much is given, much will be required."
- Service is a topic of incredible meaning to me. I received a wonderful--and humbling--honor from the Kalamazoo community over the weekend and it gave me the opportunity to pause and reflect on just how lucky I have been. I credit much of the success I've experienced to having grown up at a time and in a place that was all about people supporting each other.
- I told those honoring me that the bottom line is this: I'm just a small town kid from southern Illinois and in many ways that has served me well through the years. When you're from a small town in southern Illinois you learn that it's about everybody, it's about other people, it's about trying any way you can to improve our society and make things better,
- When I speak to students who are graduating from WMU, I routinely remind them of the need to serve others. When our graduates are in their moment of triumph, celebrating their academic success and about to receive a diploma, I like to remind them of something just as important--the need to serve. When I do that,

I've found I can rely on the words of some of our great thought leaders--people like missionaries and Nobel Prize winners Albert Schweitzer and Mother Teresa or people who have found success in the technical world.

- Botanist and inventor George Washington Carver may have said it best, "How far you go in life depends on your being tender with the young, compassionate with the aged, sympathetic with the striving, and tolerant of the weak and the strong. Because, someday in your life, you will have been all of those."

- That's really the core concept. It's important to understand that we're all part of a community, and all of us are in need of assistance at some point in life. It's important as well to dispel the idea that service is something separate that we do--something we need to carve out special time to accomplish. Service can--and should--be integrated into every part of our lives. It can mean volunteering with an organization like the Red Cross or Habitat for Humanity to provide the simple people hours needed to accomplish a task. It can also mean using your professional expertise or even your personal standing in the community to help raise the profile of an agency or spread the word about a need.

- I would suggest that you view service to include seizing the opportunity to go above and beyond the expectations in *both* your personal and professional life. I hope your plans for the future put you on a path to a career--a vocation--that you love so much that you'll want to put your professional expertise to work not just to earn a living but to serve your community as well.

- At WMU, our students put in more than one million community-service hours every year, even as they focus on building their professional skills. Service-learning is woven into our academic programs. Our Greek system and student organizations routinely require members to take on service projects. And our

athletic teams have long since realized the value of sharing their success with some of our most vulnerable populations.

- Last fall, we had a spectacular football season and a team that was united and positive. They knew it was their time. Some of you probably followed the Broncos through their 13-0 season and their post-season Cotton Bowl appearance. What you might not be aware of is the fact that throughout that season, the team members were regular visitors to Bronson Children's Hospital and the Heritage Community Center that serves retirees.

I'm not talking about a one-time visit, but rather a commitment that began in the spring and summer and continued throughout the fall--and beyond. Team members did fundraising to buy toys, visited regularly and developed a few special relationships. As the Broncos' star rose higher with each new win on the football field, the spirits of the children and senior citizens they visited rose as well. There was a special energy that team had to share and they became stronger as a team when they shared that energy.

And when they were in Texas for the Cotton Bowl, they took that special energy and their "Row the Boat" mantra to the patients at Children's Medical Center of Dallas, spending an entire afternoon with some special kids. I suspect if you talk to any member of the team, they'll tell you that they got as much, if not more, from spending time with those children and from being inspired by their courage.

- That's the thing about service. When you are generous with your time, talents and resources, the rewards--extrinsically and intrinsically--will be plentiful. And giving can be done in many ways--by donating your time and talent, sharing wealth or just being there to support others in time of need.

- I mentioned Albert Schweitzer a few moments ago. He was a phenomenally successful physician, missionary, philosopher and humanitarian. He was convinced though that material success was not the path to happiness. He famously said: "The only ones among you who will be really happy are those who will have sought and found how to serve."

- My wish for you is that you find a cause or a profession you love enough to use your many talents to make you community a better place to live. I wish you every success as you complete your studies here at Gull Lake High School and as you move forward to accomplish your next goals in life.

Thank you.