

Graduation: Where to from here?

Written by By Bernie Dotson
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Signs that the school year is coming to end have been arriving in mailboxes throughout greater McKinley County the past few weeks, courtesy of the U.S. Postal Service.

Usually stiff and hand-addressed, the missives come in those smallish colored envelopes that scream “invitation.” Graduations are wonderful moments.

And that’s what graduation invitations are, no matter if they’re from Gallup High or Miyamura High or Tohatchi, Rehoboth or Monument Valley high schools. “Your presence is requested at my high school or college commencement,” a typical invitation reads, followed by the place, date and time.

Be there, is the message.

Each of us has been to our share of graduation ceremonies. And we all have undoubtedly heard the various speeches, some motivating, others just plain boring. Most commencement speeches are short and add up to something akin to verbal window dressing.

The various speeches that get told to graduates are often heard, but unfortunately ignored. And that’s too bad. But there are some instances whereby the hooting and hollering that takes place at graduations outshines the actual text of a given speech.

“Let me congratulate you. This is an exciting time. You have worked hard over the past four years and are ready and anxious to go out into the world,” most graduation speeches begin. “Go for it. Take chances. Experience new things and keep your hearts and minds open,” the speeches continue.

But what should the real advice be for high school and college graduates? Don’t limit yourself. And for those born with the dream-chasing gene? It won’t be a commencement speech that persuades them to go after something positive, worthwhile and productive.

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It's important to remember that education doesn't stop after graduation, it's actually the beginning. Simply put, graduation is a time of celebrating a new beginning of another chapter in life. It's not about receiving a piece of paper, it's a recognition of moving from one step in life to another, taking lessons learned and applying them toward a new opportunity.

"Where to from here" is a question common to people about to graduate from high school or college. The answer to that question is as diverse as the students who make up the 2016 graduating classes.

One last thing for the Class of '16: Most of the people on your graduation invitation list are family members, your parents included. Thank them, for it is family support that allowed you to make it this far.

By Bernie Dotson