

SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION ANDREW H. CARD, JR.
U.S. OLYMPIC COMMITTEE DINNER
WASHINGTON, D.C.
SEPTEMBER 30, 1992

Event: Short Dinner speech. 5 minutes.

Thank you Bill Hybl (President, Olympic Committee) for the kind introduction and let me also acknowledge our other speakers for the evening, Senator George Mitchell and Olympic Gold Medalist, Janet Evans.

We have gathered this evening not only to celebrate sport and the international brotherhood of the olympics, but also to celebrate the values and characteristics that make a winning athlete -- of discipline, dedication and fair-play. As the President said when he recently met with many of you in the East Room of the White House, "Competition lifts the human spirit and now that spirit lifts the American character."

I couldn't think of any other group of people who best represent the spirit of achievement. Through your accomplishments, you have within you the extraordinary gift of teaching others how to succeed.

When you talk to America's school children, I would like to suggest that you teach them the importance of enthusiasm and perseverance. And that you inspire them and offer them a vision of what they can accomplished if they apply themselves.

In fact, I would ask each of you to become an advocate -- a spokesperson -- for the national education goals as contained in our America 2000 program: as they prove a solid non-partisan foundation for educational reform throughout the country.

You have before you an important task. We need you to bring victory to those often on the losing side: those children who don't have hope or vision. By going into schools as many of you did this morning to inspire our young people to strive for excellence -- you are making a difference. You are lifting their spirits. And you are showing that you have the courage to care.

When down in Florida helping in the recovery efforts, I saw first hand how sports can motivate children to look beyond their personal and family tragedies. How a local high school football team -- even without its uniforms or playing field -- practiced

together in a leaky gym full of discarded and broken equipment. They pulled together and remained a team -- even though several students had moved away, they remained to play. This is commitment, discipline and dedication at its very best: and I'm sure all of those young people in that South Florida, Dade County team will go far. As one of the line backers might have said to his team mate when the storm winds started to blow the ball of the tee -- "I'll hold the ball, you hold the kicker!

All of you past and present olympians know -- and there is no such thing as a former champion -- that to succeed you must have a goal or a vision. Goals serve as a stimulus to life. They tend to tap the deeper resources of the human soul and draw out of life its best achievements. Where there are no goals neither will there be any accomplishments -- it's that simple. And what we ask you to do in your visits to the classroom, is to help these kids dream of goals to reach: whether its graduating high school, staying off drugs or becoming an Olympic star.

Children need to be challenged to think beyond just the next day or week. As Helen Keller once said, "the most sorry person in the world is someone who

has sight but has no vision." What you must do then, is to help these children see the possibilities -- the wonderful and exciting possibilities -- that exist for those who work hard, never give up, and remain true to their passion.

You can make a difference in these children's lives because you know only so well of what it takes to overcome adversity.

The Olympic games have demonstrated time and time again, that the most notable winners often encountered heart-breaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.

There are plenty of examples right here this evening of how one individual broke through the barriers of despair to bring victory: to yourselves ... your communities ... your country.

I think, for example, of Kristen Babb-Sprague, who overcame a career threatening back injury in 1989 that kept her out of the pool for nine months to return and win the gold medal in synchronized swimming. Or Chris Campbell, who made a comeback to win the

bronze medal in free style wrestling after retiring in 1984 when he was injured prior to the Olympic trials. Or Pablo Moreles, who after the tragic loss of his mother to cancer, returned to swimming and became the oldest swimmer in history to win an Olympic gold medal.

And these are only several of the dozens of other inspiring and uplifting stories one could tell. You olympians, better than anyone else can say to these kids, "yes, there are problems and obstacles out there, but you can make it, truly make it, if you try."

Besides providing vision and inspiration, you can also create enthusiasm in the classroom. You can do anything if you have enthusiasm. As Henry Ford once said: "it's the yeast that makes your hopes rise to the stars." Like the common cold, enthusiasm is contagious, and that's what we want you to do -- infect every child with it! You all know the symptoms of this bug -- you can see it in the sparkle of the eye, the tight grip of the hand, the irresistible urge to go after something that looks like it can't be done. A person can succeed at anything -- can overcome any apathy -- if there is enthusiasm. It's the kind of faith that has set the world afire with positive effect.

So let's join together this evening and be olympic winners in bringing dreams and inspiration ... perseverance and enthusiasm ... to our nation's needy kids. By working together, we can truly make a difference in the life of a child.

After all, there is no happiness in having or getting -- but only in giving.

Thank you and good evening.

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