

Volunteer Appreciation Day Remarks

by Ms. Jannes, Principal

Good morning. I am honored to welcome you to our Volunteer Appreciation Breakfast and grateful to see so many of you here with us today.

As most of you know, my name is Eli Jannes, and I am the principal of Sigsbee Charter School. What many of you may not know, is that having that title makes me one of the luckiest individuals on this island. Now that may seem odd to some of you, but it's true. I am lucky, in fact blessed, by this role because it means that I can wake up every day and feel a sense of pride and accomplishment, that many people don't get to feel in months or even years, perhaps even in a lifetime. Every day, I marvel at the wonders that happen at this school. I've seen it grow from a far-fetched idea, to a solid plan, to an actual living and breathing community of engaged learners.

In my role, I get to connect the vision that developed for over three years with the reality that affirms all of the hard work that went into the preparation of this school. I get to meet various individuals who come here with interesting ideas and talents. I get to support motivated and compassionate teachers in their persistent attempts to make learning meaningful. I even get to park in the Queen Bee spot and wear really cool looking t-shirts. But most importantly, I get to marvel at the 317 children of Sigsbee School, who are really the heart of all of this effort.

As you can see, there are many wonderful components to my job. And one of them has been getting to know each of you, valued members of our Sigsbee family.

A wise man named John Ruskin once said, "The highest reward for a man's toil is not what he gets for it but what he becomes by it. "

When you become invested in a project like Sigsbee Charter School, it becomes greater than the job, the task, or the person. It actually becomes a part of who you are. Through this school, we have become something greater than our individual selves or our independent organizations. We have found an important common purpose that has driven us all to be our best and through this, we've become one family. In the same way that Key West's *One Human Family* promotes unity among people, our school has attracted a diverse group of citizens who united around a common cause and worked side by side for the betterment of children. There is no greater act of kindness than supporting the children of a community. Throughout this effort, you have shown me, this staff, this community and these children the incredible power that the people of this small island can have and the tremendous things we are capable of when we work together. I thank you for giving us that lesson.

There were many moments this summer when I worried that we would not be ready for our doors to open, but I always felt supported. Sometimes, when I needed a little boost, I would look down at the message on the bracelet that our Board President, Leslie Crabbs, gave me. It read: *Expect Miracles*. Other times, I made Sandy Higgs tell me once again that you eat an elephant one bite at a time. We took many bites this summer and I soon realized that no matter what the circumstances, people like Leslie and Sandy were going to push on and push harder.

Just before we opened our doors, I read a quote from another wise guy, Albert Einstein. He said: "There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is though everything is a miracle". That says it all doesn't it? This school **is** a miracle and miracles happen here every day. In fact, we expect them and we work hard to support our students so that miracles can happen. That work would not be possible without the contributions that each and every one of you have made.

The effort is certainly not over. In many ways, it is just beginning BUT we've been so busy in our forward momentum, we haven't taken a second to reflect on whether we've been successful or not. For this I turn to my third wise man, Ralph Waldo Emerson . Mr. Emerson once said:

To laugh often and much; to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children; to earn the appreciation of honest critics and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to know that even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.

I hope that today and for many days in the future, you will feel proud to be a part of our family. I hope that you feel rewarded for what you have done here and for what we have become AND I hope that you celebrate this success. There are truly no words to express our gratitude. On behalf of the students, families and staff of Sigsbee Charter School, I thank you, I salute you and I honor you.