

Message to 1999 grads: Leave the world a legacy

BY TIM SMITH

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Graduates of Farmington's three high schools were urged Sunday to go out into the world and leave a legacy.

Cathy Webb, president of the Farmington Board of Education, gave speeches to the graduating classes of Farmington, Harrison and North high schools during three separate commencement

exercises at the Compuware Sports Arena in Plymouth Township.

She talked about how an author recently interviewed multitudes of people in the twilight of their lives and asked them if there was something they could change if given the opportunity to do so.

"Well," said Webb, "they wished they had taken more time to truly live their lives, to reflect on the big picture, the

spiritual aspect of their life. They wished they had been more courageous, to have taken more risks."

Webb said the author's interview subjects, "no matter how



Board president
Cathy Webb

successful or unsuccessful they thought they were, ... expressed a hunger to leave a legacy. They wished they could have made a difference. Each of you has at least the next 50 or 60 years to do what the people interviewed in the book wished they had done."

Graduates listened as Webb offered some tips toward leaving that legacy.

"As you set new goals, consider first setting your priorities

around fulfillment and value and success will surely follow."

Earlier in her speech, Webb asked the graduates to "reflect back" on their high school careers, about important teachers, administrators or events that helped them grow as people.

"Your memories of teachers and administrators you'll remember for the rest of your life," the board president continued. "Through their contribution to others, educators promote the

betterment of humankind by inspiring their students and helping them fulfill their own potential."

Webb also thanked parents of graduates "for their extraordinary love and support of their children."

To the grads, she noted how their parents "are and always will be your most important teacher."

Melissa

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and (the) rehab home I learned a little bit about it," Garr, 18, said Friday. "And I want to give back to society the help that I received."

Garr miraculously rebounded from the closed-head injury sustained July 23, 1997, at the Farmington Glen Aquatic Center in Farmington. That day, while Garr was baby-sitting children at poolside, a heavy tree branch inexplicably broke and struck her on the head.

Garr nearly died. But life-guards Laura Hryczyk and Melissa Kays stopped in with CPR until paramedics arrived.

Then, she spent several weeks in a coma before beginning her recovery at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital's Coma Rehabilitation Unit in Ann Arbor.

Melissa, the daughter of Susan Garr and Lt. Mike Garr of the Farmington Hills Fire Department, started improving around September 1997, not too long after 500 friends and community members attended a tribute concert at Heritage Park.

Those gains - fostered by the physical therapists' efforts - enabled her to leave the hospital and subsequently rejoin her classmates at Farmington High, in early 1998. In between was a short stint at the Rainbow Rehabilitation Center in Farmington.

Getting from that point to graduation day wasn't easy, either. Garr is grateful for the help of FHS administrators and faculty. "Without them, I wouldn't be doing this."

In order to catch up on courses missed during her prolonged absence, Garr did work last summer and after school during the year, not to mention a couple of correspondence classes.

About being able to graduate, the teen was ecstatic. "It's wonderful that this day actually came true."

Next up for Garr, who is promoting the importance of donating blood to the American Red Cross, is a blood drive in August and an appearance at the Farmington Founders Festival in July.

For the festival, she will turn pages at the piano for her mother during a performance of the Farmington Community Chorus.

This fall, Garr hopes to begin her career quest with classes at Oakland Community College-Oakland Ridge campus in Farmington Hills.

Grads from page A1

cation, whose president Cathy Webb later made remarks.

Vocal selections for the afternoon were offered by Lindsey Dyrkocz, Ashley Weber, Kim Yoder and the Madrigal Choir, directed by Evelyn Schuette.

Diplomas were presented by school board member Jack Inch and Frank Reid.

For a list of the graduates and more photographs of the graduation, please turn to page A10.

(Hurry in, while the deck is stacked in your favor!)



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