

## **A Life Well Lived**

### *Dr. Carin Guarasci's Commencement 2019 address*

Thank you Dr. Warren Procci, Wagner College trustees, faculty, staff, students, family and friends. I am so honored to receive this degree from Wagner College and join the ranks of its esteemed alumni.

I count myself lucky to have spent 22 years of my life with Richard at Wagner. I love so many people connected to this wonderful school. I'm impressed with the many people who created a school culture where courage is more prized than comfort.

I am inspired by the potential of the young adults I mentored as director of New Educators at Wagner College. Wagner College graduates are smart and caring. They possess the courage to lead a meaningful life. Visiting the Hawk's Nest, talking with students at our home, applauding you on the stage, joining you at your athletic events and participating in your academic celebrations gave me the opportunity to know you a little better. My travels locally, nationally and internationally allowed me to build stronger relationships with many alumni. These experiences reveal what a wonderful world Wagner graduates have the spirit to create.

At Wagner, students receive a solid educational foundation. You grow in your emotional intelligence, your resilience, your grit. You learn about yourselves and your feelings. You learn the importance of personal happiness, of creating dreams and never settling for anything less than fulfilling those dreams.

Graduating today is Eman Metwally. Eman was the undergraduate speaker at last year's commencement ceremony. Eman is reaching her academic goals and overcoming challenges by writing her master's thesis on the role of mentoring for first-year teachers. Eman came to me for assistance in conducting her research and writing her master's thesis. She was smart enough to first read the doctoral dissertation I wrote at Columbia University on this very topic. Doing this enabled Eman and I to engage in a substantive, enjoyable conversation where I witnessed Eman's determination to excel as an early childhood teacher. I was grateful for this experience.

In the time I have spent here with you, I have noticed how Wagner students become more sensitive to the feelings of others. You learn to bring out the best in your friends and classmates. These gifts will serve you well in your lives and your careers.

Wagner College students are pro-active. You have faced many challenges during your studies. With mentoring and coaching from your professors, friends and others who helped you, you have overcome these stumbling blocks, arriving at effective solutions.

The story of two Wagner graduates and current New Educators at Wagner participants stand out. Ashley Sinodinos and Alessandra DeMeo teach children with mental health histories. Both invite children's parents into their classrooms during the day and after school so that they can learn what their children are learning. Research indicates that parental involvement is often the missing ingredient in children's success. Allie and Ashley's efforts value their students' parents as their crucial first teachers.

Wagner students have grit, staying focused on accomplishing their goals, as evidenced by your presence here today. One example is Natalie Kayton, an outstanding water polo

player, who lost her home in the California fires last November but returned to complete her studies in English literature. We happily celebrate Natalie's graduation today along with all of yours.

After Richard and I leave Wagner, I know that we will continue to be touched by the memories of the wonderful experiences we have had here, and of the wonderful people with whom we have spent time — and in the future, when we serendipitously encounter Wagner graduates working in hospitals, schools, businesses and other professions, we will treasure those experiences, too.

Not so long ago, my son Patrick asked me, "How do we know we have lived a meaningful life?" I replied, "You won't know until you are much older and look back on your life — but you must set out to try." I am old enough now to reflect on my life at Wagner and can, without any doubt, say that my life here has been a *life well lived* — and I hope that, many years from now, you, too, will feel that you have achieved a *life well lived*, and that your path toward that life began with the steps you took here at Wagner College.

For these reasons, and many more, I know that whenever I hear our alma mater from now on, I will smile appreciatively — especially at the last two lines: "For Wagner will forever be deep in our memory."