



Good morning (or afternoon),

It's so wonderful to be here with all of you on this very special and exciting day. Congratulations to all our 2024 graduates, their families, and our dedicated staff. Today marks an extraordinary milestone as our graduates embark on a new chapter in life—young adulthood.

Graduates, we are incredibly proud of each of you for all you have accomplished during your years in our pediatric program at The Center. The pediatric program has prepared you for the journey ahead—finding your place in the adult world beyond the supportive boundaries of The Center and its staff.

Take a moment to embrace and celebrate all that you have achieved. We have young farmers who have cultivated and harvested their first crops; actors and actresses who have performed in school plays and community theater activities, musicians who have learned to play instruments and performed at events; and, athletes who have competed in various sporting events. These are amazing accomplishments!

You actively engaged with your teachers and peers, and you learned what it takes to succeed. You learned not to give up, but to try again if you didn't succeed the first time - to get extra help when you needed it. You did not shy away from the challenges that came your way. Whether it was learning to communicate more effectively, mastering new social skills, learning a new job or skill, or participating actively in sports and drama activities, you thrived. You learned to trust those around you and learned to seek out help when needed. Most importantly, you thrived because you believed in yourselves and your abilities.

One of the most significant lessons you've learned here is the importance of building relationships. As you move forward, remember that the connections you make with others will be fundamental to your success and happiness. Relationships provide support, open doors to opportunities, and enrich your life in countless ways. Whether it's a friendship, a mentor-mentee relationship, or a work experience connection, the people you surround yourself with will help shape your journey.

Strong relationships are built on trust and effective communication. You've practiced these skills here at The Center, and now it's time to apply them in the wider world. Take the time to listen, to understand, and to be interested in those around you. Be open to new experiences and people, for every relationship has the potential to teach you something new and valuable.

Now, as you stand on the threshold of the future, it's time to again summon your courage and strength to build upon what you've learned and to discover your dreams of adulthood. Imagine the possibilities that lie ahead—the type of work opportunities, the kind of life you envision for yourself, and the skills you will need to be successful. The future is a canvas, and each of you holds the brush to create your own masterpiece.

This next transitional journey, these next three years, won't be easy. You will have to work hard to secure your future. There will be moments of doubt and uncertainty, but remember, every great achievement begins with the decision to try. Look around and you will see that you are not alone - you have friends who are also moving into young adulthood, and you have many people at The Center that will support and guide you as you transition to this new phase. Embrace the excitement, the challenges, and the opportunities with open hearts and minds.

Parents, this is always a bittersweet time - as you and your child prepare to leave the comfort of The Center and its staff and move on to adulthood. Take the time to reflect on the extraordinary accomplishments of your young adult child and embrace the future. These final years are an opportunity to shape the life your child needs to be successful. We are here to help during this exciting time.

Congratulations, graduates—you have each done so well, and we are so proud of you. A very special thank you to all the Center staff who make a difference every day in the lives of all our students. Thank you to our administrators, teachers, clinicians, psychologists, program educators, medical and nursing staff, teacher associates, residential associates, and support staff. A job well done by each and every one of you!

Congratulations, Class of 2024!