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CHS GRADUATION – June 17, 2009 **Kenneth R. Di Pietro, Superintendent**

Good Evening and Welcome, Parents, Families, Friends, Faculty, Attending Dignitaries
And most importantly – The Coventry High School Graduating Seniors of 2009

Congratulations!!!

Raise your hand for the following...

How many of you have younger brothers or sisters attending today?

How many of you have parents or guardians attending today?

For this one don't just raise your hands...

Stand up if you have Grandparents and Great Grandparents attending today.

I would like to speak briefly today about - **GENERATIONS**.

Every generation likes to leave its own mark – make its own contribution.

Let's consider your grandparents and great grandparents – They may be in their 80's.

The year 1929 and beyond were the years following the great depression.

Your great grandparents helped America to recover not only financially but also to become a world leader supporting freedom through World War II. They returned from that war – so proud to be an American - that America experienced the largest baby boom in its history. Your grandparents and great grandparents wanted to raise a family in the world's most prestigious country and to give to them all that this country and the world have to offer. They witnessed the origin of television (color), the princess phones, airline travel, TV dinners and Coca Cola, but also atomic & nuclear power. The future was being invented – right here in America!

There is an honor, a pride and a respect among our elders for America that comes from helping America to become all it has become.

Your grandparents and great grandparents left you a legacy of not only freedom but also of world leadership. You have a duty to preserve that legacy.

Now your parents are a different generation. For older parents and younger grandparents they emerged through the times of the sixties and seventies. I am part of the baby boom generation. Our generation challenged authority. If they wore suits, we wore blue jeans. If they liked classical music, we invented ROCK & ROLL. If their hair was short, ours was long. If they were clean-shaven, we grew beards. If they drove Cadillac's, we drove sports cars and mini-vans. Some tried drugs or lived in communes and chanted PEACE NOT WAR.

“Working Together To Improve Our Schools”

This was a time of unrest and a time of questioning. And let me tell you how much this hurt the older generation who would ask, “What would become of America if the present generation turned its back on American ideals?”

But think of the last fifty years. The same baby boom generation – of hippies and freaks – also invented the newest technologies of microwaves and cellular phones, rockets and space stations. This generation explored the cosmos and exposed the genetic code, discovered cures, created artificial limbs and eliminated diseases. This generation was building a new culture and new expectations for the quality of life for its children.

And you, the next generation, have a duty to build upon the best of these developments.

But our generation, as with all generations, also left its challenges. Glass bottles became plastic and landfills threaten the environment; the world’s rainforests and fossil fuels are being depleted by an insatiable demand for ease and comfort and excess. Our environment and the air we breathe are compromised. Our financial institutions and our economy are in jeopardy and world peace still escapes the largest armies and most knowledgeable leaders.

So, what do we see, a new generation wearing baggy pants too low below their waist, with tattoos and piercings - a generation calling for peace and the greening of America. We see America at a financial crossroad once again. And some of us will say “What will become of America if the present generation turns its back on American ideals?”

So I am here today to answer that question based on the graduates I see in front of me!

By the very fact that you could meet the newest challenges of high school reform;

By the very fact that you are present and prepared to graduate from Coventry High School;

By the very fact that you as individuals and as a class have distinguished yourselves in academics, athletics, the arts, and community service;

By the very presence of your families and friends supporting and believing in you;

And by your very manner of dress, your individuality and your questioning of America, I know that America is in good hands!

You will bring America to a new era.

You will regain America’s financial leadership.

You will be part of a new world perspective on peace and cooperation.

You can be, and will be, the generation that moves America to a new level of prosperity and leadership in the world.

I hope that some day, you will be in the audience for your children and grandchildren when another superintendent speaks of all that your generation did to make America so great.

Congratulations and God bless.