

Salem High School Alumni Association

Honored Alumnus Award 2018

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I am so proud to be the recipient of the Salem High School Alumni Association's Honored Alumnus Award this year. Sitting in this very cafeteria some 35 years ago, I never would have imagined that I would be receiving this honor today.

Graduates, you may be unaware that gatherings of alumni, teachers, and graduating students began more than 100 years ago in Salem in 1882. Past alumni had the foresight to create an alumni association and raise funds to assist students with higher education. Over the past century, the Salem High School Alumni Association has awarded nearly \$7M to hundreds of deserving graduates like yourselves. I am grateful to having been awarded a generous scholarship at my high school graduation from the Salem High School Alumni Association, and I am excited to speak to you and help present your scholarships this evening.

My message to you is to try to make a difference in all that you do. There are many ways to accomplish this.

You graduates may recognize me as the host of your career day last year. That is an annual event that I started 17 years ago, working with the Salem Rotary Club, to make a difference for the youth in our community. Inspired by hosting many students interested in medical careers at the hospital, I created this event which utilizes more than 50 professionals from our community to speak about their careers to the benefit of hundreds of Salem High School students.

Do you remember what I said to you that day? I told you that when I have students spend time with me, I like them to consider the difference between a job and a career. I asked if you had ever thought about that distinction. What makes a job? What makes a career? Typically, a job is something you are trained for, you go to work, perhaps 8-5, are paid a salary, come home and go to work the next day. That day, I invited you to think about a career - a calling - a vocation. Something you really might enjoy doing for the next forty years. I told you to put yourselves in the shoes of the professionals speaking with you and see if they might fit.

I hope that the Rotary Career Day made a difference in your life by providing insights into your options for the future and by encouraging you to find your calling. Steve Jobs, the founder of Apple, once said, "Your work is going to fill a large part of your life, and the only way to be truly satisfied is to do what you believe is great work. And the only way to do great work is to love what you do." He said, "If you haven't found it yet, keep looking. Don't settle." I invite you to do the same.

I have been very fortunate in my career choice as a physician, but my journey began as a computer geek in 7th grade by building an early computer and learning computer programming on my own. This was the same time Steven Jobs was working in his garage on the Apple computer. Through chance and guidance by my father, a physician, I recognized that a career that combined computers and medicine would be perfect for me. Following these passions in college and medical school led me to a career in radiology. I am now Chief of Medical Imaging at Salem Regional Medical Center. Every day I use

advanced medical imaging technology and computers to care for patients, and I have been able to make a difference in this community by diagnosing early cancers and helping prevent strokes and heart attacks. I have seen my patients, their families, and friends benefit from these efforts. When you recognize your passion, follow it where it leads, and you too can find success. Try to use that success to make a difference.

As an example, thanks to my guidance over the past 25 years and with the strong support of our community, I am proud to say that Salem Regional Medical Center has the most advanced imaging technology available. We have the newest and most sensitive computerized breast cancer screening tool which uses 3D mammography and artificial intelligence to identify small cancers at their earliest stage. A few months ago, a woman, similar in age to your mothers', came for her annual mammogram. The traditional portion of the mammogram that she could have anywhere in the area showed a mass, but was it cancer? The 3D images told me the real story - the mass on the mammogram was not cancer, but there was an unsuspected cancer smaller than a size of a pea nearby. I biopsied the area and made the diagnosis of early breast cancer. Salem Regional Medical Center is the only hospital in the area to offer 3-tesla (3T) MRI, the most advanced MRI available, to all our breast cancer patients. In the other breast, I identified an even smaller cancer. How devastating for the patient to be diagnosed with bilateral breast cancers, but after consultation with our surgeons, cancer specialists, and our new University Hospital affiliation right here in Salem, her care plan was set - one surgery, prompt treatment, and genetic testing to be sure her kids were not at future risk. Had she not had her 3D mammogram in Salem, her main cancer would have grown for at least another year or two before being diagnosed. Had she not had 3T MRI in Salem, the opposite breast cancer would have presented in 3-5 years. Imagine being a breast cancer survivor after all the challenges of treatment only to find out a few years later that you now have another breast cancer. It is so rewarding to know that through my career choice, I made a difference in this person's life and so many others in our community. With dedication and passion, you too can change people's lives.

Aside from your career, you can also make a difference by simply volunteering in your community. Every organization needs help, and one of the first organizations to approach me was the Salem Community Center during its design phase. This was in the early days of the internet, and I recognized that my computer skills could assist the organization. I taught myself web design and created their website. I have since created and maintain several local not-for-profit's websites including the Alumni Association where we have a century of data online including yearbooks, scholarship winners, military and alumni remembrance sections, and even Salem High School band music from the 50-60's. Over the next week, your scholarship information including pictures will be highlighted, so please visit the website. Volunteering is a fantastic way to make a difference.

I invite you to make a difference throughout your life. Many of you have already started to do so through your accomplishments in high school. Some of you can start tomorrow as the newest high school graduate in your family. If you attend college or take another educational path, make a difference there. Help fellow students; volunteer at the school and in the community. Steve Jobs also said, "The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do." You can change the world.

When you start that career, remember your family, friends, and community. Join a local organization like Rotary, Kiwanis, or other not-for-profits, volunteer at your church, help family, friends and

strangers. Consider coming back to Salem. We would welcome you with open arms. Work hard in every aspect of your life, and you will be rewarded every day as I am.

Finally, I remember back to the days that I spent in this high school having been known for my computer skills, solving the Rubik's cube and publishing a book, a true nerd. I invite you to contemplate a quote from Bill Gates, Microsoft founder, "Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one."

Thank you.