

Diet for a Small Planet - May 21, 2008

Ames High Baccalaureate Address

By Mary Jane Button-Harrison

In your lifetime, the world has become a much smaller place. Not literally, of course, but in perception and in the ways we relate. In 1990, the year many of you were born, including my daughter Hannah, our family had an MS-DOS computer with two 5 $\frac{1}{4}$ " floppy disk drives and no hard drive (ask your parents). It would be five years until we had internet or a windows based computer. Cell phones were not even in our thinking.

Of course, that's all changed. Now you can talk to someone via the internet or over the phone and have absolutely no idea where in the world they are located at the moment. Our concept of the world has changed.

Communication has become both instant and easy. We are connected to nearly every corner of the planet by web or satellite which means we have access to places and people and ideas way beyond what was imaginable even a short time ago.

The world into which you were born is changing at an ever increasing pace, in large part because of this new technology. But every new technology, every new tool we come up with can be used for good or bad, to help or hurt, to build up or tear down. And because of how our technology has produced the capacity for such instant and far-reaching effects, as you stand on the threshold ready to take the next steps on your journey, I want you to consider the importance to the world, the path you choose. Whether you are know it or not, what you choose can and will make a difference for good or for ill.

You may have heard the story of the Cherokee elder who was teaching his grandchildren about life. He said to them, "A fight is going on inside me... it is a terrible fight between two wolves. One wolf represents fear, anger, envy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, hatefulness, and lies. The other stands for joy, peace, love, hope, humbleness, kindness, friendship, generosity, faith, and truth. This same fight is going on inside of you, and inside every other person, too." The children thought about it for a minute. Then one child

asked his grandfather, "Which wolf will win?" The Cherokee elder replied...
"The one you feed."

This small planet on which we live really depends upon each one of you feeding the wolf that stands for joy, peace, love, hope and the rest. In what you say and what you do, in the direction you choose and how you move down that path, you can feed joy, peace, love and hope. And with our instant technology, what you put out there can spread to the far reaches of the planet and make this world a better place for everyone.

All the major religions of the world share in common a core belief that we are to love God and that which God loves, be it our neighbor or creation itself. If you live by and act on that belief, you will feed the good wolf in yourself and in the hearts and lives of others, and you will find meaning and purpose in life that reaches deep and wide, and which may even save the world. This is certainly not an easy path, but it is the only path in which we can find hope.

Do you know about the TV show called HEROES? The opening prologue to season 1 states: "In recent days, a seemingly random group of individuals has emerged with what can only be described as "special" abilities. Although unaware of it now, these individuals will not only save the world, but change it forever. This transformation from ordinary to extraordinary will not occur overnight. Every story has a beginning. Volume One of their epic tale begins here..."

And so your story begins, too, Ames High Class of 2008. May you feed the small planet on which we all live and depend with joy, peace, love and hope. And may your lives be transformed from ordinary to extraordinary that, together, we just might save the world. Amen.