

**2012 Bridges to Circles Graduation  
Historic Holy Family Senior Citizen Center - December 18, 2012  
Mayor Van Johnson Remarks**

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I bring you greetings from the esteemed Apalachicola Board of City Commissioners and its dedicated staff.

It is so good to have the families and friends of our honored graduates join with us this evening to share in this momentous occasion.

I like to start by sharing with you some background information regarding the Bridges to Circles Program. The program is a regional initiative of Catholic Charities of Northwest Florida, which have partnered with Franklin's Promise Coalition to introduce this vital program to the communities of Franklin County.

Its primary purpose is to stamp out poverty by addressing the root causes of poverty. The program pairs individuals and families that are in poverty situations with allies who in turn support them in their efforts to develop the emotional, intellectual, financial, and spiritual resources necessary for self-sufficiency and stability.

The program has also proven to be extremely successful in building relationships that cross the lines of race, religion, gender, and socio-economics.

So I like to acknowledge and thank both Catholic Charities and Franklin's Promise, including all those affiliated with the two groups for seeing the need and for bringing this anti-poverty program to Franklin County.

Thus far, thirty residents from the communities of Apalachicola, Eastpoint, and Carrabelle have participated in and have completed the initial phase of Bridges to Circles.

Because of this, we gathered this evening as one community to support, recognize, and honor those who decided to take a different direction and to help them celebrate their choice, their hope, aspirations, and their dreams for the future.

To our honored graduates, you have earned our profound admiration by indulging in the bounty of endless possibilities that are so ripe and ready for the taking.

We are extremely excited to help you celebrate the course that you have set upon and determined by the choices that you have made that led to tonight.

Eleanor Roosevelt, our longest serving First Lady once said, "The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams." I like to add to her statement, "that there's no such thing as an impossible dream."

Impossible, means beyond man's comprehension, which mean things can happen that man's brain has not got the capacity to understand, but with God, all things are possible, because God understands all things.

So as you step out to meet the world with your newfound success and your dreams of a brighter future, I urge you to set your directions with a positive attitude and strong spirit, believing, that with God all things are indeed possible.

Celebrate the days of your success and always prepare for the challenges each of you will meet as you venture through life.

Although you may consciously make the most positive of decisions from day-to-day, you and I both know that from time-to-time there will be days filled with hardship.

It is during the good days and the good times that people will know you by your name, but it is through the hardships and troubling times where they will come to know you by your character.

And yes, character does matter! The following quote by Frank Outlaw says it best. "Watch your thoughts; they become words. Watch your words; they become actions. Watch your actions; they become habits. Watch your habits; they become character. Watch your character; it becomes your destiny."

With your completion of the Bridges to Circles Program, you are now empowered to choose your own destiny. You have been provided a strong foundation upon which you must now independently design and build a brighter future for yourselves, your families, and your communities.

In fact, your communities are greatly dependent upon your continued success in order to enrich the quality of life for all. Studies have indicated that quality of life issues play an important role in improving the economic conditions of a community. Outside businesses that pay decent wages are more apt to locate into communities that address quality of life concerns.

So you see, your success is inescapable linked to the success of others, as others successes are likewise linked to yours and it gives us all a renewed sense of hope at what you have accomplished.

Because of this, as mayor I am indeed encouraged that you have completed the Bridges to Circles Program and I urge you to continue on the path that each of you has embarked upon. And as you reach your destiny, please remember to reach out and help someone as you yourself have been helped.

Congratulations on a job well done and may God bless you and keep you and may God bless the City of Apalachicola.