



**Closing Function Address – 27 September 2012 – Paul Cassar**

Mr Adam, honoured guests, ladies and gentlemen.

They say that principals at prizegiving are people who talk in other people's sleep. My daughter, who matriculated here used to say that the best thing about school was 'breaktime' and the worst was 'assembly'. So I'm determined to go the extra mile to hold your attention. And that – going the extra mile – is my theme this evening.

Mr Adam, thank you for your kind words and your willingness to take the lead. I would like to thank all our Governors especially, the chairmen of our Committees, Mr Dirk Klopper, Mr Kotie van Tonder, Mrs Eunice Strydom and Prof Gillian van der Merwe. I make special mention, too, of Mr Marius Whitehead and our PA.

I haven't had my office for the last month as we're going a few extra metres in that office block. So, having turned sixty in style earlier this year, I've been consigned to the museum. I'm not sure if they're trying to tell me something, but I feel better than Mr Uys. He's in the library – in the fiction section!

I sit at that beautiful boardroom table in the museum and I'm watched from the walls by some stern looking ladies and I often wonder to myself what they're thinking. I feel like



asking them: 'How do you feel, ladies?' And I know they'd answer just the way you do. Here's a snippet of useless information from that wall. Did you know that Eunice has had only three principals since 1942? It's crystal clear; it's a nice place to be. And it's our girls who make it nice. Sure, these young ladies can make me mad when they act without thinking, when they push the boundaries, when they follow the crowd and when they crank up the volume, but I love the sparkle of their sincere greeting, their natural enthusiasm for learning, for being on top of their work, for getting involved, for making the most of being together, for celebrating each others birthdays, for caring and sharing and reaching out and most of all for how they appreciate things, big and small.

It was Dr Paine's 67<sup>th</sup> birthday a week ago today and his matrics asked me to get him to Eunice House at twelve just as their Accounting exam ended, and there, waiting for him, like a little boy's dream come true, was a shining black Ferrari ready to take him for a mile with a smile. That's going the extra mile, ladies, probably at hundreds of miles an hour – an imaginative, thoughtful gesture which you and he will remember forever.

As a gentleman headmistress I go to girls' schools' conferences with those stern looking ladies where the focus is often on women's issues. At one there was an hour long demonstration on support for headmistresses of all ages and sizes. I thought it was about relieving stress, encouraging exercise and healthy living but it turned out to be more like AA and DDD. I ran more than a mile, but when I got back one old duck with a naughty smile took me aside and said: 'I kept you a brochure.' Not so stern, the old ladies.



Our 2011 Matric results were especially pleasing in four critical areas: only 3 of the 155 girls did not attain a bachelor or university matric; that's a statistic which puts our school in a class of its own in our province and which is a tribute to all our subject teachers; we earned R 100 000 as the Top Mathematics and Top Physical Science School; we came up trumps with the No 1 and No 2 performers in the Province; and, significantly, both of these, Deidre Basson and Corli Leonard were Eunice House girls. Perhaps this is the best place to pay tribute to Mrs Daisy Munro and her housemothers: Mrs Lanelle Kleinhans, Mrs Jacqui Truter and Mrs Rosanne Botha. Together with Mr Carl Pritchitt, Mr Louis Botha, Mrs Rosemary Jones and Mr Johannes Ntlokoa, they run a hostel which enjoys the total confidence of our community. That they go the extra mile is an absolute understatement.

As always I give only a brief summary of the year's successes as they will be reflected in our girls' achievements this evening.

There's no doubt that Niel van Niekerk's Beauty and the Beast demonstrated Eunice's extra mile approach in substance, in scale, in numbers on stage and in the audience, in value, in style and in total commitment. It was a bold, innovative and creative production with logistic challenges which required strong and significant institutional, parental, personal and community support. Thank you Niel and your team: Martinette, Stefan, Rienie, Mrs B, Fiona as well as Mag, Don, Pat and Leon for giving birth to a Beast of a production and thank you, Eunice girls, for providing the Beauty.



There were other highlights too, like winning the Provincial Science Debate and the Provincial Water Competition and the top school award at the Science Expo. The Cradle of Mankind Tour is another winning annual feature which goes back millions of extra miles. And the choir raked in the gold awards at the eisteddfod, the regional ATKV and the APPOUS finals in Stellenbosch. Our Leader Projects led by Mrs Mag Marais with the help of Mrs Mariana Spangenberg and Mr Paul Mahlokola focused this year very successfully on one institutional recipient, an appreciative Koot Niemann Primary School community. Our Christmas Market with a turnover approaching R 3 ,7 million is a unique strength totally reliant on Mrs Mag Marais and Mrs Trudie Pieterse.

Add in our 400 point victory over Oranje at Inter-High winning all three age groups, our trophy at the St Andrew's Senderwood 27 school netball tournament, the first hockey team's triumph at the 21 team National Girls' Schools' Festival in Potchefstroom, the first tennis teams' trophy in the Mareli Moolman Tournament in Cradock and you've got some major successes of which our two sports ladies Mrs Louise van der Merwe and Miss Maryka Holtshauzen and their helpers and all our swimmers and players can be proud. Sure, the year had its sporting disappointments, too. We will work hard to improve participation, readiness, performance and professionalism.

There's a French saying that goes: whatever a speaker's missing in depth, he'll make up for in length. I better get to the point.

In examining my theme this evening I share with you an idea from two of the books which I took to heart this year. The

first is Prof Tim Noakes' controversial Challenging Beliefs in which he shares one of the most famous examples of going the extra mile in self-belief – the story of how, in 1954, Sir Roger Bannister became the first human to run the mile in less than four minutes. It was 15 years later, when I was in matric, that the mile became the 1500m. Bannister used his brains as much as his legs. He understood the body's physiological limits, but he saw the four minute mile as a psychological barrier. He understood the power of inspiration. His genius was his ability to condition his mind so that it would release in four minutes the energy he usually spent in half an hour's training. Imagine conditioning your mind to improve your oral or your algebraic equations, or your goalshooting or your singing or your confidence in the company of boys! It's what our girls really need in this modern world, something we work hard to develop and that's confidence; that unshakable belief in themselves. When one examines the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills our girls need to make their mark in the fast and flat, and these days, increasingly fragile world, one realizes how important an asset that self-belief is. It's not arrogance or aggression; it's belief built on principle, it's firm foundations, it's discipline and consistency and it's the product of participating, practising, trying, volunteering, of going the extra mile.

Eunice girls understand the mile. Anyone can run a mile. I do every time a Eunice bride heads in my direction to ask me to dance. It happened last Saturday night in this very hall! But our girls commit themselves to a goal of swimming the mile under challenging conditions. There is so much to be gained in breaking personal barriers – achieving something you would not have considered personally possible.



Eunice girls understand what it means to go the extra mile on a Monday night or in taking a school production to a professional Sand du Plessis standard or to achieving the certificate or the colours or the medal you will receive this evening. It doesn't just happen.

Going the extra mile is never easy. Let's put high school hard work into perspective. Michelangelo, the painter, sculptor, architect and poet endured seven years lying on his back on a scaffold to paint the famous Sistine Chapel ceiling. That's two years more than high school. Dr Seuss', the famous children's book writer had his first book rejected by 23 publishers. How many of us would have kept on trying? The 24<sup>th</sup> publisher sold six million copies. In 1905 the University of Bern, in Switzerland, rejected a PhD dissertation saying it was irrelevant and fanciful. Albert Einstein was disappointed, but not defeated. We all often begin to feel defeated but that's when we need to dig deep – that extra mile!

Olympic triathlete Kate Roberts, on stage here, was lying 5<sup>th</sup> in the 40 km cycle having already swum 1 500m and - with her favourite part - the 10 km run still to come, when the girl ahead of her slipped and fell taking Kate to the ground with her and ruining her chance of a top place after four years of preparation. You gave it your best, Kate. You're SA's No 1, you came 22<sup>nd</sup> in 2:02:46:00, I'd still be swimming. You're 29. Now you can get on with the next phase in your life. 'No, Sir,' says Kate, there's UNFINISHED BUSINESS. And so we'll go the extra mile to the Commonwealth Games in Glasgow in 2014.



I love Jim Collins' new business book *Great By Choice*. He uses the image of a 20 mile a day three thousand mile walk across America. Not 80 miles today and none for three days and then 10 for two days. He uses the strict 20 miles a day walk as a performance mechanism, an unwavering commitment to having concrete, clear, intelligent and rigorously pursued challenges. It's about committing yourself to a set standard in approaching a school or a sporting or a personal challenge. Most of you are sitting here because you're 20milers who understand that discipline is rigour. Rigour means doing things thoroughly, accurately, precisely and with firm and demanding standards. I can't stress enough that consistency – maintaining these standards over a long time – is the basis for success at school, in business and in life. Without consistency you have mediocrity.

Before I continue I'd like to share with you just two final going the extra mile concepts. The first is passion. Not just personal dynamic drive or charisma, but rather the real or original meaning of the word "passion" which emphasizes rather how much we are prepared to sacrifice or suffer in persevering, in going that extra mile especially when others are out partying or just chilling in front of the TV. How much are you prepared to sacrifice to reach your goal, to help your team, to support your school? That's passion. And then there's resilience – the quality which sets people apart. It's that ability to bounce back in the face of fatigue or setbacks or disappointment or heartache; that capacity you have, that inner strength to cope with stress. Don't sulk for a week, don't be devastated by failure. If you read that thick Steve Jobs book, the most striking reality is how many times he failed before he succeeded. Winston Churchill failed Gr 9. Twice. Don't give up. Bounce back.



Professor Mary Metcalfe tells us that of all the African children who write Gr 12 in SA, only 1 % get a qualification that gives them access to maths and science degrees. 122 of our 179 matrics will write and pass Mathematics and 89 of them Physical Science. I don't mean to highlight this unacceptable inequality or the basic failure of the system; or to blow our own trumpet. Just to stress how very privileged we are to still retain a core of this province's very best teachers in a wide range of subjects and how critical it is that the undoubted commitment of our teachers and our teenagers is supported with appreciation, encouragement and cooperation.

It's my job to ensure that every girl in this school, irrespective of her background or her ability or subject package has the opportunity to realize her full potential, but there's a mile of a difference between opportunity and performance and pupil effort and parental encouragement are the key to that difference.

How do parents go the extra mile? How do they promote consistency and discipline and how do they help their children break their mental barriers and develop confidence and self-belief. They do so by practising discipline and consistency themselves and by practising that magic word of personal development: encouragement. As parents we encourage through our presence, our interest, our time, our small acts of kindness, our understanding, our praise. If you sit back and appreciate our girls' individual achievements this evening you will see that, as one Afrikaans Dad said to me last year: " Jou baie dogters is raakgegooi met die talent!" It's a wonderful image for those talents need to be grasped with both hands and they need to be nurtured in a stimulating and a caring high quality environment.

One place that really went the extra mile in 2012 was London. What an extremely supportive, gracious, enthusiastic and patriotic welcoming atmosphere. Well, I experience Eunice as an equally – go the extra mile – place and I need to highlight my management team who go the distance not every four years but four times each year, ten weeks each time, giving each term a vibrance, a ‘busyness’ and a sense of commitment one feels in this place.

I am just as appreciative and proud as the principal of this world class school. In my two deputies and my retired deputy I have experience, expertise, dedication and initiative in abundance. Leon van Rensburg would be my Sebastian Coe, organizer in chief, meticulous planner, consistent manager and quality assurer although his wheels qualify him more for the Paralympics. Mrs Mag Marais would be my Queen Elizabeth, parachute and all, imperial, elegant, regal, rich and dedicated; Dr Don Paine would be my Daniel Craig, my 007, rugged, skilled with gadgets, operations, fast cars and, dare I say it, women, pretty ones.

Mrs June Norval would take on the major functions – the opening and closing ceremonies, the major clean up and maybe even an Olympic Ball. She has a capacity for background work which is unparalleled. Mr Ferdi van Wijk is my strongman, weightlifter, bodyguard, fireworks button pusher, with just a little flair for beach volleyball. With a young daughter in Grade 4, Mrs Kleinhans is passionate about the future of this school. She’ll do the longjump, the highjump and even the triple jump if it takes Eunice ahead of the field. Mrs Karin Kok would be my medal lady; my valuable gold coin, my appreciating asset ensuring perfect fairness and accuracy, timing and administration. Mrs Lizette



Neethling's own 5 children achieved 39 distinctions in matric. She understands an Olympic standard and she'll make chess an Olympic sport. I'd like to make special mention of Mr Danie van der Merwe, Mr Tobie Wiese and their staff for always going the extra mile at the drop of a hat.

Allow me, as always, to share a few memorable moments of 2012 which make going the extra mile worthwhile.

I loved the tiny Grey boy who saw me coming off the Astro and whom I overheard saying: 'Hey, Mom, there's the actor from Beauty and the Beast!'

Niel's spectacle had so many special moments. I remember the rehearsal waiting room. Mrs Marais would insist on silence and the 250 girls would respond by taking out their homework and getting on with it. The boys just sat there. No books. They didn't bring a book. 'Sir, there're hundreds of girls here. What do I do with a book?'

But my favourite moment was just before my dramatic opening entrance. The Grade Ones waited with me as, in my tuxedo, which fits again after more than a decade, I rehearsed my lines. One Grade One, not short on confidence, looked up at me from her place on the floor. 'Hi handsome,' she said. 'Are you the boss of this place?' I remember my younger daughter, Kristina, at the same age, telling me: 'You may be the boss of that school; but you're not the boss of this house!'

Handsome I may be, but this year I had to share this stage with Mr SA! Not only share the stage, but my flabby abs, too. I don't like to share this space. I'm the boss of this place, but I loved the loyal tongue in cheek manner in which the

girls showed their approval. One Facebook photo showed Mr SA with a big X and Mr Eunice with a big TICK.

I remember Maki Makoe in Grade Twelve walking into Mrs Lombard's Physical Science class with her June exam paper and saying, 'Ma'm, the MEC is not happy with these marks.' The Education MEC in question is Maki's Dad. I'm glad to see the MEC, himself a chemical engineer by training, understands education well enough to choose Eunice as the best school for his daughter. She will do you proud, Sir.

The choir have been simply sensational this year. There's an angelic quality about the confidence and consistency of their sound, as you've just witnessed. But Mrs Visser has to dig deep to get them to smile even before they sing their first note. I love the way she does this. She bows to the audience and then turns to the choir and either flashes open her jacket to reveal a whole set of R 20 notes pinned into the lining or she flashes a smile with two of her front teeth painted black.

When our Matric Class looks back at 2012 it's two happenings that will stand out clearly. The first is hip and hype and a new word I learned in 2012 – swag. With just those skills they will need in a modern world – innovation, creativity, diversity, collaboration and the appropriate use of technology, they won 5 FM's Matric Dance SWAG competition to give the year an extra shot of confidence, some memorable camaraderie and an added dose of exuberance. I suppose that's what swag is, ladies.

The second happening was tragic, unnecessary and just so very, very sad. I'm not going to go into the 'what ifs' of Lona Nxesi's untimely passing. I would like to pay tribute to Lona's friends for the dignity, respect and style with which they



recorded their class and their school's response. At this time in a matric year, as parents, our thoughts are with Thulas and Sesi Nxesi. And also with Mrs Dasheka on the passing of Lesego Sebothelo in Grade 10 after a long, long illness.

I can't not comment on the fact that this matric class was born in 1994 in the year this hall was divided into two voting stations. Ferral Haffajee, editor of the City Press refers to you as children of the Nelson Mandela freedom era. But his heirs, the ruling party, the national leadership, those charged with the responsibility of serving our people are seriously squandering, are wasting one of the greatest opportunities in history. My comment, my point is that only if we as individuals, as schools, as civil society are prepared to go the extra mile, can that freedom era's promise be realized. As Haffajee's advises we need to become fundamentalist believers in SA's democracy and in the rights and freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution.

Having been one of Microsoft's now 200 pathfinder schools in 2009 and one of their 33 mentor schools in 2010 and 2011, they have now invited Eunice to be featured on the Microsoft Innovative Schools World Tour. We will be observed and validated on a global stage by multilateral, government and business leaders who will embark on a world tour which will showcase the most effective and innovative schools in the world in varied contexts. To join the other principals of the world tour schools to prepare for 2013 I will attend the Partners' in Learning Global Forum in Prague in the Czech Republic at the end of November with all travel expenses covered by Microsoft. That's a few extra miles for me, too.

The logo for Eunice, featuring the name in a stylized, cursive script with a decorative underline.

That's quite a feather in our cap. But I can share another more local highlight which gives us, as teachers, enormous pleasure. On 6 December I will be Professor Jansen's guest at the medical faculty's graduation where 11 Eunice girls will become medical doctors on the same day. Dr Millie Krause is one of the stern old ladies on that wall. She was SA's first woman doctor and on that day she'll be smiling broadly. Furthermore Eunice is placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the Allan Gray Orbis Foundation's 100 Circle of Excellence Schools which includes SA's top private schools and which is based on how our girls fare in the private sector's biggest bursary provider's selection process.

Mrs Emsie Bower will hand out the Gr 12 awards this evening. After 14 jam-packed highly successful years at the head of our celebrated Maths department, of our timetable and of Eunice Tennis and of four overseas sports tours, Mrs Bower is following her husband to Gauteng. Mrs Bower, you make the extra mile look absolutely normal. Your matrices understand what value you add to Eunice. They and we will miss you, to use a mathematical term, infinitely. Unfortunately, Mrs Lisa Deysel's husband is also moving to Gauteng. I'll bid her farewell on another occasion but we'll miss her uniquely personal approach, her critical thinking skills and her outstanding contribution as a debating coach.

Mrs Amal de Vries is retiring this year after 20 years in the Eunice tuckshop. It has been a labour of love fulfilling a deep desire to serve food for souls and support for those in need. She is retiring to devote time to hospital visiting. I can picture her with a bible in one hand and a box of icies in the other!

Next year will be Mr Pat Uys's last at Eunice. He has made an invaluable contribution to both our schools, their



governing body and to sport, in particular. No Eunice parent in history has influenced the progress of this school more significantly than Mr Pat Uys and everyday is a labour of love for him. In thanking you, Mr Uys, I thank your fellow librarians in the financial office who I hope are only collecting, depositing and processing not lending and borrowing. Elmarie Odendaal, Anele Mollentze, Adri Dreyer, Anita Smith, Pamela Mayiyane and Mrs Mary Paine who is so desperately kind to those who are sick or tired of school.

Mrs Myra Wienand, thank you for managing the school's busy front office and for taking on increased responsibility for school and departmental computer administration. I share my sparkling personal assistant, Mrs Liza-Anne Meyer, who was formerly the PRO at the Free State Rugby Union, with loyal supporters, adoring fans, hangers on and even a local shark. But I suppose most Sharks are local second-hand Cheetahs.

My favourite Eunice girls are my wife and my two daughters. Oops, I left out my Mother-in-Law! This school has dominated 26 of our 34 years of marriage and some close to me, including Mr Gordon, Mrs Dale, Mr Thomas and Mr Khoarai will understand the nature of that commitment. Mrs Dale, you may be younger, taller, prettier and smarter than this gentleman Eunice headmistress but I went one better than you in life – I married a Eunice girl and she makes me feel taller, younger, smarter.

I'm sorry I've taken so long. I end with this lovely story. A small boy is walking slowly to school. Hurry up, you'll be late shouts his mother. There's no rush he replies. They're open till three thirty.



