

A Word From the Executive Director



Dear Third Way Center's friends and family,

Happy June.

What a month it has been; Graduation, the end of a school year, Mother's Day, Mission Wolf, Hope on the Range, CrossFit at Lowry, volunteer days, and so much more that I am forgetting to mention. I'll remember later.

Graduation was special. It is always special; however, in all my years, I have not experienced a graduation that truly celebrated all 10 graduates. I mean, the entire audience seemed excited for every graduate, not just the ones they were associated with. The cheers seemed to surprise even them. Each time their name was mentioned, whether during the slideshow, when they were called to give their speech, or when they were called to receive their diploma, the room exploded with cheering, hooting, and yelling their names. It was truly a celebration of each and every one of them. The other noticeable thing was that they *all* gave a speech. That has never happened. It was evident that they encouraged and supported each other throughout the process. It is a tribute not only to them but also to the school, their house staff, their families, their peers, and their professionals. The graduates expressed thanks to those who helped and those who didn't give up on them. Many mentioned that they never thought they would graduate. It is not all there is, but it is a big one, and it opens doors. It means they learned to trust someone to help them. It's hard to learn without vulnerability. This, they can take with them.

Hildegard gave the keynote for graduation, and it was great. She talked about how there are many things that are out of our control. She compared life to the sea and the wind- how we often have to adjust the sails on our boat to accommodate and even survive, and we may end up going in a totally different direction. What we do have control over is our attitude; how we respond. This metaphor fits all of us. We can't control where we were born, who our parents are, the circumstances that surround us- especially as children. We can attempt to make sense of it: why we are who we are, what we protect ourselves from, and whom we choose to trust. Those early relationships influence how we have relationships now. Our ability to adjust our sails is dependent on truth and hope.

Happy Pride.

According to Youth.GOV, the Stonewall riots (1969) were said to be the beginning of a movement to outlaw discriminatory laws and practices against LGBTQ+ Americans. The month of June marks a time to celebrate the impact that LGBTQ+ individuals have had on history. Policies and practices are increasingly acknowledging LGBTQ+ youth and encouraging greater acceptance and support for all youth in order to make communities, schools, and other settings safer for everyone. Isn't that what we all need: a safe place to do the work? Statistics vary, but it is said that 1 in 5 kids in foster care identify with the LGBTQ+ community.

"It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences." — Audre Lorde

With gratitude and appreciation!

Renee