

Windy Hill School Dedication Ceremony

Remarks by President Tom Galligan

October 14, 2010

I'd like to welcome our trustees, emeriti trustees, faculty, staff, our students of all ages, the families and teachers of our Windy Hill "little learners," and the special friends and donors whose generosity has made this milestone day possible. I would also like to congratulate Janet Bliss, all her staff and colleagues. You all deserve this. Now, the building matches the program you have created and sustained. Thanks go to Doug Atkins, Dan Wolf and the planning committee, architect Ingrid Nichols, North Branch Construction and more.

Today we formally dedicate the new Windy Hill School. It took a lot of hard work from a lot of great people to bring us to this moment. However, we couldn't have even started that hard work without the help of our generous anonymous donors who have believed in the wonderful Windy Hill program and whose lives have benefited from Windy Hill. We could never have gotten here without their incredible vision, their faith in Colby-Sawyer, and their selfless generosity. So whoever you are, I say thank you so very much on behalf of all of us. We are also indebted to each and every one of the other donors who responded so warmly to our anonymous donor's challenge. They are recognized for their spirit of philanthropy on the plaque in the entryway. To all of them we offer our deepest gratitude.

Today the giving continues. We have just this week learned of a new gift; it is a family gift of \$15,000 in memory of an anonymous donor's father. This gift is intended to "inspire children to love farming" and will be used to design and construct a new outside playground with a farm theme. Thank you for your inspiration.

A well-run farm today can become a symbol of sustainable living, and one of our four strategic themes at Colby-Sawyer College is Living Sustainably. Consequently we are doubly proud today not only to be dedicating a brand new Windy Hill School but also proud because it is our very first green building on campus. The building's green construction was made possible by an additional challenge gift from the anonymous million dollar donors. Thank you again for showing us the way to a better, more sustainable, future.

When we began this project, we asked the question we always ask, which is: "How will this benefit our Colby-Sawyer students?" The answer was clear. As a laboratory school, the new Windy Hill will provide more and better opportunities for our students, especially those majoring in child development, to learn first-hand about young children, their families and the institutions that support them. It will provide a setting that exemplifies the best in early childhood education, and it will offer greater clarity to Colby-Sawyer students' understanding of the connections between theory and practice.

In her remarks, our Board Chair Anne Black mentioned that I've spoken of buildings as being the houses of our dreams. I also think of buildings as places of permanence. By permanence I don't mean that buildings physically last forever. What I mean is that buildings last forever in the memories of those who live, learn and play in them. They shape our memories and they shape our footprint on the future.

Stepping back, Plato would have loved the new Windy Hill School because this is a place where education and play have blended in perfect proportion. Of course, to many of us, play is a crucial and critical part of education. It is how many of us learn about sharing, compassion, counting, fairness, negotiation, multiple perspectives, dealing with frustration and just plain old joy.

Speaking of joy, you can see in this room, the windows are installed at a level that enables our Windy Hill Students to enjoy the breathtaking views. This is true throughout the building. You'll also see lofts and tunnels in the learning areas where the children climb and scurry around much as if they were playing in a tree house.

There's a block room—yes, a room dedicated just to building blocks—where the children can create the log cabins and skyscrapers of their dreams. There are portholes strategically located in many places, high and low, so our Windy Hill students can have optimal viewing of their surroundings. There are observation rooms where our college students can watch the children unnoticed, thereby benefitting from learning without intruding. There are water tables where the children study about aquatic life, and outside in the “back yard” there's a circular track where the kids can jump into their plastic vehicles and zoom around at speeds controlled only by their imaginations.

If you were here earlier today, you would see budding artists in the art room, where both the natural and electric light has been carefully planned to facilitate the young Picassos as they work on masterpieces for one another, their families, and who knows perhaps tomorrow for the art world. You could visit a classroom where three and four year olds are speaking or singing in French. Or you might see a group of students sitting in the library engrossed in their books or being read to by one of their teachers.

The college just celebrated its Alumni Fall Festival during the first weekend in October, and, after her tour here, one alumna said, “I might move back to this area just so my kids can go to this incredible school.” Perhaps it was said half in jest—perhaps not. But we are so lucky to have this new school and no doubt many prospective students will become actual Colby-Sawyer students, in part because of the very positive impression the new Windy Hill School will make.

Switching gears slightly, it's a rare day when one enters the “new” Windy Hill School and isn't greeted by the delicious smell of some baker's delight wafting through the building from one of the three kitchens, where, as you'll see, the fixtures come in adult and child-friendly sizes.

I'm sure that in some distant time more than a few of today's Windy Hill students, by then grown to adulthood, will see or hear something that reminds them of their favorite room here, or their Windy Hill friends, or a teacher from Windy Hill. Perhaps one day they'll catch the smell of something wonderful baking, and, like Marcel Proust and his madeleines (mad-a-lenz) in *Remembrance of Things Past*, they'll be transported back to this building and the happy times they experienced where they began their lifelong education. In that way the Windy Hill School will exist always in a special place in their memories as a place of permanence. Thanks once again to all those who made it possible.

And thank you for being here to celebrate this wonderful and proud occasion. Please join us for refreshments and enjoy your tours of the new Windy Hill School.