

A Tribute to Seeds of Greatness

Growing up I knew that my father was an intelligent, well respected leader in the State of Alaska, but I don't think I fully realized the impact he had on others until later in life. As the head of an organization that helps individuals who experience life altering disabilities he was an advocate for many who could not advocate for themselves. He believed that every life must be valued, has purpose, and should be lived to the fullest. At public events he would tell advocacy groups and legislators that every person has dreams and the seeds of greatness within them. It is our responsibility as citizens of humanity to recognize that greatness and help others achieve or approximate their dreams and share them with our community and the world. He worked so hard and did so much for individuals who experience disabilities that the Governor of Alaska dedicated a day in his honor after he passed away last year.



Sometimes we forget that we can and do make a difference. We may not always notice how our words and actions impact others, but a simple smile to a stranger, a kind word to the cashier, or taking the time to give a compliment can be a lifeline to someone who is having a tough day. I recently experienced a time when I was struggling to see the glass as half full. I was feeling down and went to church early by myself. During the sign of peace a kind older man took my hand with both of his, looked me in the eyes as he smiled and wished me well. That small simple act, the compassion of a comforting word, from someone who may not have known I really needed the comfort made me feel so much better. Kindness is a gift and is one of the seeds of greatness we all have within us.

Sometimes it can be difficult to believe in our own value and trust the greatness within us. The Native Alaskans believe that everyone has gifts and talents inside them. They consider these talents like a life giving fire that will consume you unless it is shared with others. However in order to share our gifts we need to be willing to reach out and risk that we might fail. Even failure can be the next step we need to take on a road to success. We get stronger and better after every mistake and every challenge. I love sharing with my children some of my biggest mistakes and they love hearing about them and what I learned from these experiences. It is my hope that they will think of these stories when they go through a difficult situation and will know that they have the power to keep moving forward. Overcoming hard times is an amazing feeling and being able to see them in hindsight can be so powerful. As we look back and we can see the greatness in the moment, the lesson learned, and the greater journey that our failure was part of.

You make a difference. You are important. The world is better because you are in it. My wish for you is to reflect on yourself as your best friend would. Embrace yourself with all your weaknesses, vulnerabilities, and strengths. True self-acceptance has an amazing ability to fill us with the power to take the risks that are required whenever we seek to make a difference. To encourage you on your journey, I leave you with a quote from my Dad's last speech before the Alaska State Congress...



"There is greatness in you, hold onto it and don't forget you have it. Don't forget that when you use the greatness you possess, we grow as a people, we grow as humans. So look for the greatness, and find it in you." Stephen P. Lesko

Peace and Love,
Stephanie Simmons

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