

**Anne R. Pramaggiore Remarks**  
*Chicago Metro Achievement Luncheon*  
*Union League Club*  
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**Introduction**

Thank you, Carolina. Carolina is a stunning **success** and has a tremendous future ahead of her. She is a freshman in Engineering at the University of Illinois and the **first** in her family to attend college.

Carolina clearly has the organic horse power and talent to succeed. But there is a **wide berth** between potential and success. What sets Carolina apart is that her family was astute enough to get her to Metro Achievement and Metro Achievement has helped her work on what I call the “**Malcolm Gladwell**” factors.

In his book “**Outliers**”, Gladwell studies the roots of success and identifies two constants in every success story – **opportunity** and **10,000 hours of hard work**. The “**opportunity**” is the open door to try something, to work at something, to succeed at something. The **10,000 hours** is the minimum amount of time it takes to master a skill. In his early teens and in the early days of technology, Bill Gates had the opportunity attend a school that just purchased an early model computer. He used that opportunity – to get more and more time on increasingly sophisticated computers ---to start racking up his hours.

He had his 10,000 hours in long before he was out of high school. Metro Achievement offers the opportunity – it opens the doors – and – serves up the environment for putting in your 10,000 hours. Congratulations Carolina.

Today we celebrate 24 seniors who will be graduating high school and continuing their educational careers in college. The size of this graduation class is a **new MAC record!** While the **number** of young women is a record for MAC, success with helping develop young women is **not** new. This is the 15<sup>th</sup> consecutive Metro Senior Class to achieve 100% high school graduation and 100% college enrollment



and reflects nearly half a century of exceptional work (49<sup>th</sup> year). Congratulations Glen Wilke, Jody Madler, Erin Aldrich, the MAC staff and volunteers. Under your leadership, MAC has put in its 10,000 hours and opened its doors to 6,000 girls.

So, I am honored be here today, to celebrate these wonderful young ladies, to recognize MAC in its 49<sup>th</sup> year. Thank you all for being here. The contribution of your time and resources **means something**. You can look at these 24 young women and witness the impact you are having.



I am grateful for the gift of your time this afternoon and want to spend the few minutes we have together reflecting on the challenging but **quickly evolving world** these young women are entering and on the **dynamics of empowerment** that are most likely to generate success for them. We are not in Kansas anymore – that old world is fading fast. And that is a very good thing because the land of Oz – **the new and evolving world** -- is a much better place for Dorothy Gale and for all our young people – male and female alike.

My overall comments are not exclusive to girls and women, however, given our audience of young ladies and this being a graduation of sorts, there is a focus on women in some of the particulars of my talk. Let me start by taking stock of the world from the vantage point of women's influence. I would like to start with a few statistics.

- Women make up **50% of the population and 50% of the managerial workforce in the US.**
- Yet, women make up only **4% of the Fortune 500 CEOs;**
- About **14% of the executives in the Fortune 500;**
- And occupy about **16% of the board seats;**
- Women account for about **17% of the elected positions in US Congress.**

Kind of bleak. Kind of foreboding. ***Grey sky story.*** A little like Kansas, sorry Jody, as a storm rolls in. So here our story begins.

Enter Dorothy Gale, young woman, native Kansan – had very little control over her life, not much support from those around her, and almost no view to an empowering future.

She finds herself in trouble with her neighbor – the wicked Miss Gulch – who, after being bitten by Dorothy's dog, swoops in to take the dog away.

Dorothy's family - Auntie Em and Uncle Henry – seem not only powerless against this offense; they don't really seem to have much energy for helping Dorothy at all.



Dorothy runs away only to be **manipulated** into going back home by Professor Marvel – a roving Fortune teller she meets on the road.

Then, upon returning home, a Midwestern tornado materializes, Dorothy gets hit in the head by a window pane and **is knocked out**.

You all know the story. You know this story well and not because the Wizard of Oz is one of the most viewed films in history. **You know this story** because who in here has not had a day like this?

In Kansas, Dorothy is the portrait of the powerless at every turn. Mean spirited neighbors and conniving fortune tellers dominate the culture. No apparent support system and the **best** people in the mix are at **best** indifferent. Who wants to be in Kansas??

But luckily for Dorothy, getting hit on the head with a window pane turns out to be the **best thing that ever happened to her** – the game changer for her. And as she eventually wakes up and finds herself in a **very different place**.

This place is the land of **Oz**. A place where we see in technicolor. A place where Dorothy is immediately joined by the “good witch Glinda” and finds herself with a **mentor** for the first time in her life.

A place where Dorothy rises to the occasion and **finds**, after dragging down the yellow brick road with three apparently **lost souls** – the Cowardly Lion, the Heartless Tin man and the Brainless Scarecrow – that she actually has **leadership** skills – **in abundance**.

A place where she discovers she is **smarter** than the witch that tried to take her out and far **more capable** than a wizard whose complete lock on an Emerald city can’t beat a pair of ***ruby red shoes***.



This is a place where she hits her stride. This is the place of Dorothy's empowerment.

So what are the elements of Dorothy's journey that are so game-changing – so empowering? What is the difference between Dorothy of Kansas and Dorothy of Oz?

As Glinda said "It's always best to start at the beginning" the foundation – the support system.

In Kansas, Dorothy did not appear to have much of a support system. No apparent **guides** or **mentors** – those who were supposed to guide her were **indifferent or distracted**. The episode with the menacing Miss Gulch threatening to steal the family dog, revealed a complete abdication of family support by the adults around her.

**Oz** was a different story entirely. **Immediately** upon arrival, Glinda let Dorothy know she **had her back**. She gave her the roadmap for her quest, a big send-off with the munchkins, advice on defending against the bad witch – and Glinda the mentor gave Dorothy the **all-empowering red shoes**.

So, the first lesson of Oz is that success requires you to seek out environments and people that **can and will** support you throughout your journey. You may be in a position early in your career or vocation where you don't have the luxury of "shopping for a job." But as early as possible, you need to seek out the organizations that have support systems and supportive people. Systems in place for developing people.

You will know these organizations by reputation. You will know these organizations by evaluating how many of their top people came through the ranks. You will know these organizations because you will ask about their development programs.

They are the organizations that **value developing their people through training** and **value empowering their people through mentoring**. These organizations require their **leaders to excel at**



**developing others** and embed in their culture a drive to develop the best talent.

Look for the organizations that invest in their people. For you young ladies, look for organizations where women are in top positions and consistently moving through the ranks.

The second lesson of Oz relates to an appetite for risk. In Kansas, Dorothy ran for cover at every challenge – and quite literally ran for cover during her last moments in Kansas.

In Oz, in contrast, Dorothy willingly accepted the challenge of getting to the Emerald City, of making her way through forests full of lions and tigers and bears and – oh my – **flying monkeys**. She **never shirked**, she **never lost her nerve**, and when **she experienced self-doubt**, she **relied on her wits, the support of her** mentor, and **pressed on**.

According to a study by McKinsey, women tend to be evaluated on and promoted for performance. Men, on the other hand, are more often evaluated on and promoted for potential.

No one should fall into the trap of defining themselves so one-dimensionally – by only that which they have done and without regard future possibility. So, when opportunity presents itself, our first reaction should **not** be to dialogue with **ourselves** about **whether** we are ready – **whether** we have had adequate time in our current job – **whether** we have adequate skill – **whether** we are capable of the leap.

We should instead be empowered by the fact that **opportunity has made its way to our door** because someone saw something in us, someone – a more objective someone – thinks we can knock that **project, initiative, or job**, out of the park.

Dorothy was thrown into her journey – she had no time to talk herself out of the leap.



I attend many conferences and read avidly on the topic of performance and development – I am responsible **for both** for almost 6,000 people. One continuing thread in my constant studies is that successful people are willing to put themselves in a position where they are required to learn rapidly and stretch themselves. To take risk. To take the leap.

And the most important dynamic about risk-taking is that it **forces** you to develop a model for learning new things quickly, to **asses a situation for strength and weakness, to develop a vision and a plan, and to drive to success**. In this quickly evolving world – this world where Boomers average 11 jobs in a lifetime and millennial's will average 25 – this **learning model** may be one of the most valuable skill sets you can develop.

Several weeks ago I sat on a panel with two other women executives. We worked in completely different fields – for me, power, and the other two – aerospace and cosmetics. We all had different educational backgrounds – marketing, finance, for me theater and law. And yet we all had a common thread – we had all jumped at opportunity – even when we had little in a way of traditional backgrounds for the role – and all of us did that **over** and **over** again. We all had developed a learning model.

A related lesson – Lesson 3 from the land of Oz – is the importance of resilience. In Oz, Dorothy experienced failure. She was attacked by **flying monkeys**, captured by **a witch**, and sedated by **poppies**.

One of the strongest characteristics of successful people is resilience. Everyone faces challenges and everyone fails.

Thomas Edison invented the light bulb and changed our world, but he failed consistently. His perspective on this failure though is what set him apart, as he recognized these failures were the foundation for his ultimate discovery. As he said, “I have not failed 1,000 times, I have successfully discovered 1,000 ways to not make a light bulb.”



Michael Jordan, the Chicago icon and perhaps the most successful athlete of his generation, is quoted as saying “I’ve missed more than **9,000 shots** in my career. I’ve lost almost **300 games**. **26 times** I’ve been trusted to make the game winning shot and missed. I have failed over and over again in my life and that is why I succeed.”

Both failed, but neither shrank, and it should not be lost on us that they each knew their failure statistic thoroughly. Resiliency.

I think resilience is fundamentally about optimism. I have seen a lot of people with a lot of different strengths. One of the real distinguishers of successful people is optimism. Optimism counts for a lot. It will allow you to **bounce** back from trouble and it is a trait people gravitate toward.

I have a very successful friend – Melodie Hobson – president of Ariel Capitol, and chair of DreamWorks – who tells the story of meeting a very powerful and accomplished woman 20 years ago – one of the first women executives in a multi-national corporation at a time when such positions were far less accessible to women than they are today. Not a person to be trifled with. At a forum for career development, Melodie asked this woman what her single most important piece of career advice was. Her answer? “Smile” – “Smile a lot.” People like to work with optimistic people – with people they get along with.

The final lesson from Oz is that, in Oz, Dorothy – even in her **unlikely persona – young, female, more caring than commanding – Dorothy** was a leader. Dorothy **pulled the team together** and **called the plays** and achieved success. She was a success in part because she had some innate smarts, but the distinguishing factor in her success was her concern for people – well Lions, Tin men, Scarecrows and good witches anyway. To her success, Dorothy’s **concern was a stronger element than her smarts**.

We spend our lives in institutions – family, educational and work. These institutions are made up of people. Our core job is almost in any scenario to motivate, persuade, to influence, to move people.





As managers, we are responsible to getting our work done – through people. As leaders, our job is to challenge minds and generate a passion around shared goals – all about people.

People want to connect to people, not to metrics, plans or strategies.

Leadership is personal – everything you do is about people. Make sure the people you work with and for understand this is your priority. Dorothy knew it – for her it was organic.

So I began in Kansas with several bleak statistics. Let me close on a different note. While there is work to be done, there is also change about us:

- Women today are earning 60% of the undergraduate and master's degrees in the U.S;
- New Hampshire recently sent an all-female delegation to Congress;
- Christine LaGarde is the first female director of the international monetary fund;
- In 2012, for the first time, every country competing in the Olympics had a woman athlete on their team;
- And of course, Janet Yellen was just appointed the first women to head the Federal Reserve Board.

So change is upon us and that is good. Remember, while Glinda gave Dorothy the red shoes, she also reminded her “You have always had the power. You’ve had it all along.” But a good pair of red shoes never hurt a girl!

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