

RE/MAX INTERNATIONAL CONVENTION - 2001
ROBIN ROBERTS GENERAL SESSION KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Thank you... And thanks to RE/MAX , to Children's Miracle Network, and to all of you for inviting me here today to address the RE/MAX International Convention.

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.” One of the great champions of humanity said that -- Martin Luther King. He didn't say it just for the benefit of African Americans. He didn't say it just for the benefit of Americans. He said it for the benefit of individuals the world-over; striving to lift us all to a greater awareness of what it means to be *truly* human. “The broader concerns of all humanity...” Reverend King saw that to really be alive, we must get beyond our own worries – to zoom back, as we say in my business, and see that it's not really living if I just worry about feeding myself; I must also feed my neighbor. It's not enough that I have a roof over my head; I must help others find shelter from the storms of life. I'm not really living if I nurse my own wounds but do nothing to heal the sick and afflicted I see in the world around me.

As I'm certain you've read in the program, I've chosen to speak on “A Celebration of Champions.” What is a champion? At the outset, I want to assure you that I'm not going to waste our time with dictionary definitions. Neither am I going to use these precious minutes I have with you by going into the history of championship; though that in itself is a fascinating study, both for followers of championship sports and for those of you who are not so inclined. (I'd venture a guess that, among this group, those in the latter category are in the minority.) No, today I want to celebrate champions as we define them here and now; in this moment -- this time and space; in this new millennium.

Certainly, many of the champions I have seen in my life and career have been those associated with sport, in one form or another. Champions such as these are champions in part, because they remain champions off the court, as well as in the heat of contest. Champions such as these acknowledge and are grateful for the moments of extreme exertion and high drama; moments when they demonstrate their prowess before cheering crowds and adoring fans, who chant their names and wave banners urging them on; who dress in team colors and buy clothing that bears the same logo worn by their favorite player; but when the lights extinguish and the locker room is silent, true champions know the real work is just beginning.

True champions possess a personal integrity that not only guides them in their relentless pursuit of excellence, it serves as a beacon to others, inspiring them to extend their reach beyond that which they ever dreamed possible. This personal integrity is not like a uniform or a fancy suit, which they don and doff at will. It is something woven into every fibre of their being, to the point where it may seem that they were born with it. Personal integrity, however, is something that is cultivated – moment to moment, day by

day, year after year. Integrity implies being complete, undivided or unbroken; personal integrity is a deep and unadulterated sincerity. The champions I have known have a wholeness that comes deep from within; a wholeness that makes them rock-solid in their commitments and true to their values.

One of the strongest ingredients of integrity is courage. Robert Frost has said: "Courage is the human virtue that counts most." Courage is the shining attribute of a true champion, regardless of the challenges, fair or unfair, which she or he is forced to confront. Challenges can come in many forms: they can be personal or very public; physical or financial; tangible or intangible. Each challenge, however, in order to be transcended, requires sufficient courage to face the challenge and to stick with the process of overcoming it, regardless of the odds or the time it takes.

Let me tell you about a couple of true champions whom I've had the privilege of observing, both on and off the court.

(Personal Examples - 5 min.)

Now, while these people I've cited as examples compete in sports, champions are not limited to that arena alone. You'll find champions in every walk of life and the business arena is no exception.

We here today have many excellent examples of true champions in the business arena. Standing head and shoulders "Above the Crowd" are Dave and Gail Liniger, Co-Founders of RE/MAX. Dave and Gail are champions in the truest form and they manifest those values both in their personal lives and in the workplace environment. In fact, the Liniger's vision helped change the very nature of the real estate industry in a dramatic fashion. Their philosophy is embedded within the company name – RE/MAX – which, as I have learned, stands for Real Estate *Maximums*. In exchange for a management fee and a share of the monthly office overhead, RE/MAX Associates keep the *maximum* allowed amount of their commissions and receive all kinds of benefits through RE/MAX programs and services. Maximum – the largest, the greatest, the most. The Maximum – in both what is given and what is expected -- is what keeps RE/MAX true to its basic philosophy of "Outstanding Agents, Outstanding Results." Maximum effort, maximum reward – another mark of a true champion.

The RE/MAX commitment to its Associates has not gone unnoticed. Competitors and imitators have gone to great lengths to beat RE/MAX at its own game, yet it remains the number one real estate services franchise both in America and in Canada. Accolades from prestigious magazines such as *Entrepreneur* and *Worth* label RE/MAX *the best* real estate brokerage. Most gratifying, indeed, most amazing of all is the fact that in today's business environment, with its merge and acquire mentality, RE/MAX is still owned and directed by its founders. That type of committed ownership goes well beyond profit motive and speaks volumes about the character of the Linigers.

Let me ask you a question? What is the true measure of a person's character? Is it the number of business or humanitarian awards they receive? Is it how often we read their name in the newspaper or hear them deliver a sound bite on TV? Is it even strictly how much they give to worthy causes? Of course not. The true measure of a person's character – of the Linigers, or yours, or mine – is what we do when no one is watching. It's easy to walk the talk when we know we have an audience, but what about in those moments when our only judge lies within us; when the path of least resistance seems eminently more inviting, even justifiable, than the sacrifice we may be called-on to make in the name of personal integrity. You face it in your business, in your careers; I know you do. We all face those moments, and it is in those moments when, if we will harken to Dr. King's words, we will rise above the "narrow confines" of our own selfish reasoning and see that each of us is ultimately best served when we align ourselves with that which will serve the greatest good.

At RE/MAX, you focus on attaining something called Premier Market Presence through highlighting five primary qualities: Premier Quality Professionals, Premier Brand Name Awareness, Premier Customer Satisfaction, Premier Market Share and Premier Community Citizenship. In corporate jargon, Children's Miracle Network is the RE/MAX "footprint" for Premier Community Citizenship. Personally, I'd call it a "halo" rather than a "footprint."

You have in place the Miracle Home Program, which helps you stand-out in the community and helps differentiate you from the competition. The crown jewel of the Miracle Home Program is the Miracle Office Program, whose objective is to have 100 percent of the Associates in a Miracle Office participating in the Miracle Home Program. I submit that the good accomplished by each RE/MAX Miracle Office goes far beyond the millions of dollars it brings into Children's Miracle Network. The good it serves is much more personal than that, as I believe you Associates in a Miracle Office will attest: it lifts you, as participants, to a new awareness of your own humanity as you come to realize your contribution, your sacrifice – the decision for which you probably made alone, when no one else was watching – your gift will touch – even give life to -- another human.

We'll talk more about the Miracle Home Program and many other aspects of the RE/MAX commitment to Children's Miracle Network tomorrow in our workshops on "High-touch Balance in a High-tech World, so I hope to see many of you in one of the sessions, where we can get further into the specifics.

One perfect example of a life that was touched by your gifts, and those like yours, is a sweet young woman by the name of Daniella Fortuna. She's fifteen now, but when Dani was born, she had a disfiguring birth defect covering most of her face. You'll get to meet Dani in a short while and hear her story, but for now, let me just say that Dani, too, is a true champion. She endured her trials with courage and optimism. Moment to moment, day-by-day and year after year, Dani cultivated her personal integrity by giving her all to that which has meant the most to her. I know you'll understand what I mean, once

you've had the chance to hear her story. Once you do, take a silent moment and multiply that time the thousands of children helped each year because of you and your RE/MAX Associates. Know that you are a very real part of the Miracle.

What is a Champion? I'd say a champion is someone who's looked at life from both sides – and chooses, like Dani, and like so many others involved in this great effort, to rise... "Above the Crowd."

Thank you.

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