

Grand Opening Speech

Hello everyone, my name is Alfonso, and I'm here today to tell you all just how much this new school means to me and my growth along with the other youth here as well.

I came to this facility June of last year on my journey of serving a 5 year sentence, and when I first came here I did not have a care in the world towards my education. I figured that I have time and there is no need to worry about it right now so I was sleeping in classes and getting by with the bare minimum. Because school back then was just on the units so there was no noticeable transition between our environments. So a lot of the time kids had no motivation to learn, constantly taking personal time outs and acting out to leave class.

I don't speak for just myself when I say that once I walked up the steps to this new school my whole perspective changed. I felt like I was going to my first day of high school again and felt like I was stepping into a totally different world than the one we came from down there.

Seeing our new classrooms, outside field area, and my favorite place, the new barbershop, was something I never expected to see or even experience this kind of environment in a place like this. I actually look forward to coming up here when I wake up in the morning and enjoy the learning environment provided here. Since being up here I see youth actively engaged in learning, not trying to leave class every five minutes, and there has only been two fights since being up here which is an exponential decrease from when school was held down on the units. I have been given the opportunity to become a barber through this school even though I have not officially graduated high school, which has been an amazing experience so far and will give me a trade for the community after my release and motivation to continue to do well while here at Rogue Valley.

So I thank everyone here today that had a part in creating this place we are in today. It may just seem like just a school to others but to us it's an opportunity to prove to everyone the people we can really be and the opportunity to further our education and growth.

Since the opening of this new school we have more space to help us in places like our Vocational Education class which is a lot more state of the art and spacious than the space it was down in the facility. We are no longer crowded and clustered but have more space and mobility to learn in.

Our classrooms actually have windows in them where we can see the trees, the sky, and the mountains around us. It makes everything feel so normal, well as normal as a place like this can be, you know? I won't lie, though. I do tend to get distracted sometimes by the clouds and such that I took for granted all the years prior to my incarceration, but hey, I'm still human, right? Honestly I think I enjoy school here more than I did on the outs. I did attend a public high school and went through that experience and you can all see how that turned out. But this place right here is way more diverse than any school that I have attended, but yet we can all come together with one common goal, no matter who you are and what you're in for, and that one goal is to learn and grow in ways we never imagined. Thank you and have an amazing rest of your day.