

Speaker emphasizes school, family

Friday, Nov. 18, 2005

By Jonathan J. Hukill
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Exhorting students to never forget where they came from and to always serve their community and country, retired U.S. Army Lt. Col. Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch lit up Thomas Building last night with brilliant wisdom from her "life of adventure."

"Anything you want in life, you've got to be willing to go the extra mile," she said. "I ask of you that you carry the honor of our past."

The speech, attended by about 35 people, was sponsored by the Puerto Rican Student Association (PRSA) and funded by the University Park Allocations Committee. It was part of PRSA's annual Culture Night.

Kickbusch told students the importance of their education and asked them not to be discouraged by difficulties.

"You are on a journey, and you must finish it because you are our greatest hope," she said. "Do not let your dreams slip away because of a bad grade or a tough course."

One of the greatest problems the United States faces today is dropping high school graduation rates, she said.

"We are at an epidemic, we have a serious crisis," she told the audience. "Our children are dying because they don't have enough role models, so we need you; you must stay and finish the race."

Kickbusch asked students to follow what she called the "Kennedy vision."

"Ask not what your county can do for you, but what you can do for your country," she said. "I thank America for giving me that chance."

She also expressed her desire that students would be able to end conflict in the world.

"I have my greatest hope that your generation will accomplish that in the 21st century -- true peace," she said.

Kickbusch said students must never forget their families and their communities.

"I ask you tonight to think closely about what you think your duty is here," Kickbusch said. "How hard are you working toward honoring your ancestors, your parents?"

PRSA President Cassandra Matos said she first heard Kickbusch speak while in high school.

"She really inspired me to the point of tears," Matos said. "She really had an impact on my life."

Matos said students who could not attend the event could still learn from Kickbusch's message.

"They should believe in themselves and believe they can do it," she said. "They should look for and embrace their purpose, and not forget where they came from."

Sean Noisette (senior-accounting) said he was inspired by Kickbusch's optimistic ideas.

"Don't let your goals get out of sight," Noisette said. "Strive for what's really in your heart."

Michael Rodrigues (senior-economics) said Kickbusch's message hit home because of his similar family situation.

"My father's an immigrant from Mexico," Rodrigues said. "It's a reality check; wherever I end up, I plan to invest in my community."

Kickbusch received her Bachelor of Science in law enforcement from Hardin-Simmons University in Abilene, Texas.

She retired from the U.S. Army after a distinguished career and founded Educational Achievement Services Inc., teaching leadership to students, corporations and government officials.



PHOTO: Nikki Sanner

Consuelo Castillo Kickbusch speaks at Culture Night sponsored by the Puerto Rican Student Association in the Thomas Building.