



# COTTING SCHOOL

*Serving Children with Physical, Communication, and Other Challenges to Learning*

January 14, 2021

Dear Cotting School Community:

Nearly 17 years ago I was honored and humbled when Cotting School's Board of Trustees named me their 6th President since 1893. Given that I am the child of a parent with a disability, Cotting married my personal and professional values. Although my mom, Elaine Manzo, died 30 years ago, our students at Cotting School remind me daily of the lessons she taught me: never underestimate a person with a disability, look for the strength in people and not their weakness, treat everyone with respect and dignity, always increase opportunities for independence, and create a warm and welcoming environment. In my tenure at Cotting School, I hope that I have succeeded in meeting her goals.



Recently I shared with our Trustees that 2021 will be my last year as President of Cotting School. I look forward to working with our Board, our staff, our students, and their families toward a successful transition. Later this week, Michael Durkin, our Board Chair, will communicate with you. I am confident our Board will name a successor who will both build upon and improve our school.

Cotting School's successes come from listening, learning, experimenting, and reassessing our efforts. Improvements in curriculum, technology, and therapeutic and educational services are the work of our entire team: the kitchen and maintenance department, our program assistants and support staff, our teachers, therapists, nurses, and administrators. When I arrived at Cotting, I created a parking space with the initials "C.D.S.G." I picked the first winner. Two weeks later the first winner picked the second winner and so on. For seventeen years there has been a steady stream of staff who were "Caught Doing Something Good." That is our spirit at Cotting, always encouraging and recognizing the excellence in each other.

When I walk visitors through our building, I often talk about our students as "tough and tender" – that is, tenacious in their abilities to overcome seemingly insurmountable obstacles while treating each other with exquisite kindness. I will fondly remember both the hard work I saw daily in each classroom and the joy of a cheer or a last-second shot at a Friday night basketball game. I'm thrilled that this summer we will complete a 25,000 square foot addition to our facility that will serve students for generations!

*A Tradition of Innovation and Excellence Since 1893*

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On my desk, I keep a copy of Ken Untener's poem titled, *A Future Not Our Own*. I've taken the liberty to adapt it to our work at Cotting School.

*It helps, now and then, to step back and take a long view.*

*Our work at Cotting School is not only beyond our efforts, it is even beyond our vision.*

*We accomplish each day only a tiny fraction of the magnificent enterprise that is happening in the lives of our students.*

*No one moment in the classroom says all.*

*No one therapeutic session makes our students whole.*

*No one visit to medical fully heals.*

*No one program accomplishes Cotting's mission.*

*No set of goals and objectives includes everything.*

*We are builders of a better future for our students.*

*We may never see the end results of our work.*

*This is what we are about.*

*We plant the seeds that one day will grow.*

*We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise.*

*We lay foundations that will need further development.*

*We provide yeast that produces far beyond our capabilities.*

*We cannot do everything, and there is a sense of liberation in realizing that.*

*This enables us to do something, and to do it very well.*

I am grateful for the wisdom, support and generosity of our Board of Trustees and deeply appreciative of the three extraordinary Board Chairs under whom I served: Anne Ogilby, David Cushing, and Michael Durkin. I was blessed to work with a talented and passionate senior administrative team. I am especially thankful for the insights, commitment to excellence, and the friendships of Bridget Irish, Vice-President and Chief Operating Officer, and Krista Macari, former Chief Academic Officer. It has been my privilege to lead Cotting School. I've cherished this opportunity, and I am enriched by each person I have met in the past seventeen years.

Mary Oliver closes her poem, *The Summer Day*, with the following:

*Tell me, what is it you plan to do  
with your one wild and precious life?*

With a big smile on my face and a heart full of love, I can say, "I spent a precious time of my life at Cotting School!"

With my deepest appreciation,



David W. Manzo

President of Cotting School (Once A Falcon, Always A Falcon)

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