

Quick 'n Easy Ceremony

KOPS Graduation Address

Submitted by George Rosenthal, TOPS#IL 2115, Wheeling
2007 Illinois State King and 2007 International King Runner-Up



TAKE OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY

The following is the commencement address I had the honor of presenting to the new KOPS graduates at our Northern Illinois ARD in April of 2009. Feel free to read it at a chapter meeting to help inspire and motivate members to achieve and maintain the ultimate goal of KOPS.

First and foremost, my heartfelt congratulations and the congratulations of everyone here in attendance – as well as all of your friends and families and your TOPS chapter members – to each and every one of you! This is a major accomplishment in your lives as members of this wonderful organization we know as TOPS – Take Off Pounds Sensibly.

Now that you've achieved your weight loss goal and become KOPS, I wish I could tell you that that the journey is over – and that you can just sit back, relax and enjoy the ride! There will be no shortage of people telling you just that. "You don't need to follow that diet stuff anymore. You're skinny now! You deserve some treats." **But you know better!**

Losing weight and becoming a KOPS is like climbing a hill. Some hills are larger than others, and we **all** had to struggle to make our way to the top of our hill.

- As TOPS, we were largely responsible for ourselves. We were primarily focused on attaining our weight loss goal. We were busy trying to make our way up our hill.
- As KOPS, we take on added responsibility. As we continue up past the crest of that hill and transition to KOPS, we become guide posts for others following behind us who are still struggling to make their way up their hill.

One of the first changes you noticed is that now you recite the pledge twice – once as TOPS, and again as KOPS. As KOPS, you say, "...I am to be an **example of what TOPS can do** as I **KEEP OFF POUNDS SENSIBLY.**" You realize that you are now becoming an example for others to follow and to look up to and to emulate. Every time you say that pledge, it should stick in your mind what an accomplishment you have achieved and how much added responsibility you now carry.

But we're not done. We can't stop. Because if we just sit back and relax, we will eventually fall back into our old habits and slide back down that hill – all the way to the bottom – and end up maybe even farther back than where we started from. Remember the KOPS pledge – "I **have** controlled my emotions and **not let** my emotions control me." This is not a sprint to the finish line; it's a marathon – a lifestyle. It has to become our lifestyle. My wife calls it my obsession. Perhaps it needs to be an obsession! It has to be an important focus in our lives. It's all about making choices – good choices. But most important, it's about **never giving up – never quitting!**

I have been honored to have received a number of prestigious state and national recognition awards in TOPS. All of that pales in comparison to having reached my goal weight and graduating as a KOPS. I'm both honored and humbled by the experience.

Whenever I'm speaking publicly at TOPS I always like to point out that if I could only have one award, the one I would choose is my tiny KOPS pin. It's the one I cherish above all the rest. It means I have succeeded, I have accomplished what I set out to do – I am healthy and thin.

I've learned that winning awards really depends on circumstances beyond our control, and a certain amount of luck and timing. But while only a few may be lucky enough to win awards, **EACH and EVERY ONE OF US can reach our weight loss goal** and become a **KOPS**. And to me, **that** is the most important award of all.

My best wishes to all the new KOPS graduates. Here's wishing you – and everyone assembled here – success, health, happiness and Godspeed as we continue on our lifelong journey with TOPS!

