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Today's grads give reason for optimism

By Richard Eckstrom

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For millions of young adults here in South Carolina and across the country, it's an exciting – and uncertain – time: graduation time.

Many S.C. colleges have recently held May commencement exercises, and most high schools hold graduation ceremonies in late May or early June. For high school and college graduates alike, the beginning a new chapter in life can be both exciting and scary.

Graduation season is often a time of mixed feelings. It's a time for celebrating accomplishments and preparing for life's challenges... a time of soaring expectations and anxiety about the future.

Many high school grads will soon head off to college, which often means living away from their parents for the first time.

Others will head straight into the work force, which means entering the "real world." And of course, some will choose to enter military service, a noble calling which requires courage and tremendous sacrifice.

Today's college grads are walking into a job market that remains extremely competitive, and job-seekers need courage, patience and resourcefulness to stand out.

But for today's college grads there's much for which to be hopeful, including a gradually improving economy.

And while the world is changing, some things will always remain the same, such as the value of hard work. For those willing to put forth the effort, opportunities will present themselves.

One source of anxiety, for many, is the national state of affairs. We're currently a nation with a few big problems, not the least of which is the eye-popping debt we're leaving for our kids and grandkids. And during our most serious challenges, when we most need our leaders to work together to solve problems, the President and Congress hunker down in gridlock.

This brings me to the point of this column.

I frequently have the opportunity to speak with new college graduates, and I never cease to be impressed.

Because they begin their careers in a shaky economy, they don't take for granted the blessings often taken for granted by their elders – such as ready employment and job security.

They're thankful for what they have. They want to be self-reliant. They believe in doing their part to improve their community, their state and their nation.

They seem to be noticing the over-spending by today's politicians, whose spendthrift approach to government is leaving a mess they'll have to clean up. To that end, they understand the importance of setting priorities and living within their means.

Today's grads are tomorrow's public servants, the men and women who will guide our country. As I speak with these young people, I'm more optimistic than ever about America's future. They'll be the ones to chart a new course, right this ship and lead us in a new direction of prosperity and freedom.

Our most fundamental problem is the "government culture," and fixing it will be a tall order. I believe they're up to the challenge. I'm confident we'll be in good hands.

Comments