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## Remarks to GVSU Alumni, delivered at San Chez Tapas Bistro on October 23, 2012

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Remarks to GVSU Alumni  
San Chez Tapas Bistro  
October 23, 2012  
Arend D. Lubbers

We have a cat named Raymond. He had that name when he discovered us at the cat orphanage. I say he discovered us because he followed me, occasionally rubbing against my leg, as we walked through the orphanage filled with hundreds of cats roaming around or in cages. At the end of our tour I said to Nancy, “Raymond has made a decision. He loves me and wants to live with us.”

Raymond has watched more football and baseball games on television than most cats. When I sit in my large leather chair to watch a game, he always jumps on my lap insisting on attention before settling in, sometimes for the duration of the game. Whenever Nancy and I are sitting in a chair Raymond is likely to be with one of us. He even leaps on our desks to offer help; wanting mostly our affectionate attention.

Recently we had house guests. My euphoria at being selected by Raymond is gone. It has been for a long time and his attention to our guests once again demonstrated to me that cats have their needs and it doesn't matter much who meets them. He was all over our guests and mostly neglected me. Raymond receives from us what he needs and in receiving it responds in ways that give us satisfaction. But, we have learned that we do not have special rights to his affection. He gets it where he can from whomever he can. Exclusive loyalty does not define Raymond.

Now I must explain why I tell you about a cat that I love. Tom has told you about the increasing number of well-educated graduates who are contributing to the communities and enterprises they serve. Like Raymond they all chose the place and people with whom they associated when they decided to attend Grand Valley. The college was their prime residence. They lived in close contact more or less with the same people during their college careers. Most of the 80,000 alumni like Grand Valley because of the education they received and the people they met. For most of them college friends continue to be important in their lives. The college life you who are here tonight experienced invoked in you a loyalty that leads to your

financial support. For too large a number of alumni, though well intentioned, do not have that spark of loyalty. They act like Raymond; friendly, but with limited loyalty. The difference between Raymond and them? They have the capacity for loyalty far beyond his. It is the job of all of us who have it to make it contagious.

Henry Knox, Washington's Artillery General and Secretary of War, in his first cabinet wrote to a friend, "It is part of my belief that we are responsible only for the light we possess." I have a light. Not surprising to you it has to do about the future success of universities. The state universities that will be most successful are the ones that build the largest private endowments. We are always interested in per capita funding from the state, but we will begin paying more attention to how many endowment dollars there are per student enrolled. My light is not exclusively mine, nor is it as light from a new star, but if it penetrates to real understanding Henry Knox bids me take responsibility for it.

Nancy and I give to several Grand Valley funds each year. Of course we must keep good programs supported and have the best facilities, but our bequest heeds Knox's insight and fulfills the responsibility our light requires of us; a scholarship endowment. Universities must do all they can to make sure the educable can afford to be educated. Alumni and friends play a major role in doing that. We here tonight must take personal responsibility in the crusade to enlist more alumni in the cause. Raymond pays no attention to the dollars that sustain him. He doesn't think about the future of other cats. We have the capacity to do what he cannot.

When we lift our voices to our alma mater we sing, "I hail thee Grand Valley – we're loyal, steadfast, true," and then we add, "We pledge our faith to you." Let's make it our goal to help the President, the Alumni staff, and the Development Office make that steadfast loyalty a little deeper and that faith a little more intense among our fellow alumni so more may feel and act as those of us here tonight feel and act.