

Remarks of Cleveland Foundation President and CEO Ronn Richard

Closing Ceremonies of Gay Games 9

Mall C, Lakeside Avenue

Saturday, Aug. 16, 2014

Good evening. What a wonderful conclusion to a week we will never forget!

During my 11-year tenure as president of the Cleveland Foundation, I have had countless opportunities to publicly represent this august institution. But I have never been prouder to assume that role than I am right now.

We have seen these Games bring our entire community together in support of our region's, our state's and our world's LGBT population. These Games represent much more than a pleasant interlude or an enjoyable experience in our shared history.

Seeing the larger picture, the Cleveland Foundation board and staff committed to making the foundation the first presenting sponsor in Gay Games history, thus building on a heritage of social justice. And now, we take great pride in joining with the Gay Games 9 team to ensure that the legacy and impact of this singular global event extend well beyond the moment the torch is extinguished.

The Gay Games LGBT Legacy Fund of the Cleveland Foundation will perpetuate the environment of inclusion and diversity created these past five years as so many worked so hard to build a welcoming community for thousands of LGBT athletes, allies and supporters.

Gay Games 9 established this fund at the Cleveland Foundation with initial seed money. We are so pleased to be the team's philanthropic partner in this endeavor.

The fund will support the local LGBT population through regular grantmaking to organizations, programs and services that have a positive relationship with this highly valued segment of our community. In addition, the fund will help us promote intentional inclusion among our corporate and nonprofit partners.

For 100 years, we at the Cleveland Foundation have partnered with our donors to turn their passion for our community into purposeful, sustainable giving. We invite all of you – athletes and supporters alike – to join us in the years ahead, contributing generously to the fund to affirm your experience here in the Cleveland-Akron region.

In donating, you will keep alive the memory of this past week and the vision of a just, inclusive society that honors and respects everyone's equality. We are deeply grateful for the Gay Games 9 team's thoughtfulness in establishing this fund to sustain the good work and good will generated by this event.

Another way to continue the momentum is to support the Akron Community Foundation's Gay Community Endowment Fund, which invests in causes that advance the interests of LGBT citizens in Greater Akron, our sister city in hosting these Games.

Now, the time has come to say a reluctant farewell. To our visitors, I say: Come back! Our region would be honored to host you again. Even better, we'd love to see you relocate to Northeast Ohio and lend your talents to our regional renaissance.

I leave you with the eloquence of the late Dr. Tom Waddell, beloved founder of these Games:

"The Gay Games are not separatist, they are not exclusive, they are not oriented to victory, and they are not for commercial gain. They are, however, intended to bring a global community together in friendship, to experience participation, to elevate consciousness and self-esteem, and to achieve a form of cultural and intellectual synergy.

"We are involved in the process of altering opinions whose foundations lie in ignorance. We have the opportunity to take the initiative on critical issues that affect the quality of life, and we can serve in a way that makes all people the beneficiary."

Let us continue to live up to those stirring words.

It has been so lovely to have you here with us. Thank you, and safe travels home.