



Dear Fellow Alaskans,

Many of the traits I've learned as an Alaskan have helped me as an athlete. I know to plan ahead to make time in my day for training. I know to work with others, to share what I know and to learn with gratitude what others can teach. I know the importance of taking care of myself, physically, emotionally and mentally. In caring for myself, I'm encouraging others to care for themselves and that is the most important role I have as a Professional Fitness Competitor.

By participating in a sport that rewards healthy, fit, athletic physiques, I hope to challenge the perception of beauty. I hope that people will broaden their views of attractive female physiques and that all women will be accepted as is. I want young women today to know that how we look is not important. It's making the most of what we have that counts.

Making the transition from child to adult isn't an easy process. As you grow, it becomes your job to take care of yourself, and how you feel at any given time is directly related to how you've treated yourself. If you eat healthy food and build yourself up, you will feel good about yourself. Conversely, if you eat poorly and don't develop decent muscle tone, you will likely feel tired and irritable. If you treat yourself in the way you know to benefit you most, you will have more energy to be the best sibling, friend, student or co-worker you can be! Before you prepare your next meal, ask yourself what will be the healthiest choices for you. In your spare time when you have the choice of TV or a workout, make the decision that will benefit you the most.

Another important part of growing up is learning how to forgive. Expect to make mistakes, and expect others to make mistakes, but learn from those mistakes. Whatever your goal is, don't give up! It's normal and expected to feel disappointment when you don't see the results you want. This is a chance to learn and grow. There are many ways to reach any one destination. It's like traveling. Some roads are longer and take unexpected turns, and each of us is sure to travel a different route, but there's exciting things to see and do around each and every bend. As long as you keep moving, you'll get there eventually!

When I was growing up in Alaska, I saw the best of people. I saw neighbors helping neighbors, strangers working together to push a car out of a ditch, campers sharing marshmallows, a fire and a brief part of their lives. I continue to look for these things today, and you, my fellow Alaskans, never disappoint me.

I encourage Alaska's youth to work hard towards a kind, gentle society, wherein each of us is accepted and applauded for our individual strengths. I hope that everyone will

find beauty in everyone we meet – whether short or tall, fat or thin, weak or strong. I encourage Alaska youths, as they become adults, to support one another and work together to bring about a brighter future for everyone.

Karen Patten

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