



Address at the Debi Gallay Celebration of Life Reception

**Given by Mark B. Rosenberg
on August 28, 2015**



This speech was presented to the attendees of the Celebration of Life reception for FIU's former Associate Vice President for Governmental Relations, Debi Gallay, on August 28, 2015.

"It is not death that a man should fear; but he should fear never beginning to live"
- Marcus Aurelius

So here we are – united in grief at the passing of our Debi Gallay. What is it about death that clears the mind; reminds us of all that is important? I have been searching for the answer to this question day in and day out since Debi passed. Like most others here, I just assumed that she would make it past this point, as she had so many other times in her nine year dance with cancer.

David Brooks has given me comfort, and some guidance. Here is why we are grieving hard about Debi: she radiated inner light, she was deeply good, she listened well, and she made me/us feel funny and valued. She was not thinking about the wonderful work she was doing – although she believed deeply in the work itself.

Debi had a character about her – an unfakable inner virtue that many of us would like to emulate. She was profoundly honest about what she thought were her own weaknesses – chocolate and, according to Debi, her hips. She used humor to build bridges and to make sure that her zest for life and her zeal for her work were not misinterpreted as conceit, arrogance, or smugness. My friend and adviser, Nance Guilmartin, has said that when she first met Debi her passion was an effervescence that washed over anyone near her and one felt an unparalleled belief in what matters.

John O'Donohue answers my search for the answer to the opening question – in an unsatisfactory way – but nonetheless it is an answer: "No one knows what has been taken from you when the silence of absence deepens" ... when the silence of absence deepens.

My wife Rosalie – who was adopted by Debi, in Tallahassee, and here at Reagan House – and our entire family, want to thank David and Debi for their love and support. Debi set a standard in selflessness that was so high that it forces us all to re-think what is important in our lives. But why does it take the passing of a friend, a loved one, to move us to this moment? Because none of us really want to come to grips with the deepening absence of our Debi Gallay.