

NEWS RELEASE



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Townsend urges Central College grads to 'lead the birth of a new American idealism'

Des Moines businessman's commencement address envisions Iowa as a global leader in 'ecological literacy'

Pella, Iowa – Sunday, May 13, 2007 – Des Moines businessman and philanthropist Ted Townsend today challenged 2007 Central College graduates to “lead the birth of a new American idealism” and confront alarming national and world problems “from right here in Iowa.”

“You must resolve several fundamental issues, chief among them: environmental degradation, Islamist extremism and America’s rapidly deteriorating image around the world,” said Townsend, who delivered the keynote address at Central College’s commencement at H.S. Kuyper Fieldhouse and also received an honorary degree from the college. “Those are the challenges of the day and you’d better meet them, because you cannot afford the luxury of living irresponsibly.”

Townsend is president and founder of Townsend Vision Inc., a company he formed in 2006 to oversee and sustain funding for several humanistic endeavors,

including Great Ape Trust of Iowa; Earthpark, proposed to be built along the shoreline of Lake Red Rock near Pella; and the U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy. From 1978 until 2001, he was president of Des Moines-based Townsend Engineering Co., a family business acquired by the Dutch company Stork Foods in 2005.

Townsend told the graduates that their generation, the first in history with full access to information and knowledge accelerating at an ever faster rate, lives in exciting but challenging times. "You must use this knowledge wisely," he said.

Within 25 years, the world will hold 10 billion people, "each expecting and deserving to be fed, clothed, sheltered and educated," Townsend said. "How would you assess those trends today, with just over half that population? Layer on that the scourge of human ignorance, meaning religious fanaticism, and it's easy to see that your time here will require more than just making the mortgage and getting your kids into a good school.

"At least five times in the Earth's history, life has gone through a sort of ecological funnel, with large majorities of all life going extinct, leaving just a relative few to repopulate this globe."

Most scientists have concluded that the planet is entering one of those phases now, and though the effects of global warming and a burgeoning population are not fully understood, "they are certainly enormous and undeniable," Townsend said. "Together, they will propel our species through this major restructuring."

The projects under the umbrella of Townsend Vision are designed to provide some clarity in a landscape complicated by the impact of technology and globalization, the ethics of genetic engineering, health and fitness, workforce development and the national debt, according to Townsend.

He said Great Ape Trust's collaborations with bonobos and orangutans – and, eventually, gorillas and chimpanzees – offer understanding into the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. Earthpark, whose mission is "inspiring generations to learn from the natural world," will offer several ecologically friendly platforms to help visitors learn how to live in restorative harmony with the rest of life on Earth. And, he said, the Center for Citizen Diplomacy will work to ensure that the

revelations gained in those complementary sciences of human insight and restoration can be shared around the globe.

Working in concert and coordinated with other thoughtful efforts, those three institutions offer strategies to assist today's generation in addressing universal threat, according to Townsend. "It is not hyperbole to say yes, you can save the world," he said. "And it desperately needs saving."

Townsend also used the occasion to promote "ecological literacy," his proposal borrowing from a model created by the Audubon Institute of Louisiana to more fully utilize Iowa's Des Moines and Raccoon River corridors by tying together seven central Iowa cultural organizations located near them: the Science Center of Iowa, Des Moines Botanical Center, Blank Park Zoo, Living History Farms, the Neal Smith National Wildlife Refuge, Great Ape Trust and Earthpark.

"Imagine a group of independent educational attractions, working together to coordinate complementary missions, messaging, marketing and fund-raising," he said. "Imagine them all collaborating with professional educators from schools, colleges, universities and research institutions to deliver their particular, focused experience within the broader message of life. Together, they could tell the full stories of ecology, conservation, restoration, sustainability, bioethics, cognition, nutrition, science, energy and growth.

"Imagine neighborhoods, towns, cities, schools, farms and businesses, all eventually designed and developed by adults nurtured within this overarching theme. Now imagine the impact such a reality and reputation would have on families living here, visitors coming here, [and] businesses and workers relocating here. We would distinguish ourselves in a fashion worthy of wide emulation, admiration and respect."

ABOUT GREAT APE TRUST:

Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a scientific research facility in southeast Des Moines dedicated to understanding the origins and future of culture, language, tools and intelligence. When completed, Great Ape Trust will be the largest great ape facility in North America and one of the first worldwide to include all four types of great ape – bonobos, chimpanzees, gorillas and orangutans – for noninvasive interdisciplinary studies of their cognitive and communicative capabilities.

Great Ape Trust is dedicated to providing sanctuary and an honorable life for great apes, studying the intelligence of great apes, advancing conservation of great apes and providing unique educational experiences about great apes. Great Ape Trust of Iowa is a 501(c) 3 not-for-profit organization and is certified by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums (AZA). To learn more about Great Ape Trust of Iowa, go to www.GreatApeTrust.org.

About Earthpark:

Earthpark is organized as a not-for-profit entity, governed by a 20-person board of directors chaired by former Iowa Governor Robert Ray. Business leaders, educators, scientists, philanthropists, and former state government leaders serve on the Earthpark Board. Earthpark's education elements have been mapped by a national Education Design Team. A Science Team has begun forming recommendations for appropriate research opportunities at Earthpark. To learn more about Earthpark, go to www.earthpark.org.

About U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy:

The U.S. Center for Citizen Diplomacy is a national organization dedicated to serving the many organizations active in citizen diplomacy through development of resources which will enable the establishment of best-practices in citizen diplomacy and the recruitment of persons to serve as U.S. citizen ambassadors to the world. For more information, visit www.uscenterforcitizendiplomacy.org.