

## **Director Kim Kelleher's Independence Day Bike Parade Speech**

Good morning, everyone, and Happy Fourth of July!

Before we begin our parade, I'd like to recognize some very special members of our community. If you are a veteran or currently serving in our military, would you please raise your hand or give us a wave?

Thank you. Let's give them a round of applause. Because of your service and sacrifice, we have the freedom to gather together today, raise our families, build our community, and enjoy the opportunities we have as Americans. We are grateful for each of you and for all you have done for our country.

Kids, I want to talk to you for just a minute. Today is a fun day. You decorated your bikes, put on your red, white, and blue, and came out to celebrate with your friends and neighbors. But the Fourth of July is about more than a parade. It's a day to remember how lucky we are.

We live in a country where we can go to school, play with our friends, share our ideas, practice our beliefs, and dream about what we want to be when we grow up. Those freedoms didn't just happen. They exist because generations of people worked hard, sacrificed, and served to protect them.

One of the things I love most about our neighborhood is that we are all different. We come from different families, backgrounds, and experiences. We may not always think the same way, but we all belong here.

That's what being a good citizen is all about. It's treating people with kindness, even when they're different from you. It's helping a neighbor when they need a hand. It's including someone who feels left out. It's showing respect, taking responsibility, and caring about the people around you.

When you see a veteran today, remember that they chose to serve something bigger than themselves. They made sacrifices so that all of us could enjoy the freedoms we have today. That deserves our gratitude and our respect.

And here's something important: the future of our country isn't just in Washington, D.C. It's right here. It's sitting on these bicycles. It's standing beside parents and grandparents. It's the kids in this neighborhood.

Every time you choose kindness over meanness, respect over disrespect, or helping over ignoring, you make our community stronger. Those little choices matter.

We are fortunate to live in a neighborhood where neighbors know each other, where kids can play together, and where families can gather like this. That's something worth celebrating.

So today, let's remember that being American isn't just about where we live. It's about how we treat one another. Let's be grateful for our freedoms, proud of our community, and committed to showing dignity and respect to every person we meet.

Thank you again to our veterans and active-duty military members. Thank you to all the families who came out today. And thank you, kids, for being the future of our neighborhood and our country.

Now let's have some fun and start this parade! Happy 4th of July!