

RAJ KANNAPPAN'S INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER RICK SCHWARTZ

Delivered at The Road to Freedom Seminar:
Secrets to Advancing Free Enterprise Over Socialism

Hosted by The Center for Entrepreneurship & Free Enterprise
Young America's Foundation

National Headquarters, Reston, Virginia

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Good morning! It's my honor to introduce our first speaker of the day – Rick Schwartz – who believes that happiness and fulfillment in life come from earning your own success.

I learned this firsthand a couple years ago, on a cold December day in Dayton, Ohio.

I was meeting Rick at his office to discuss a story I was writing about him; his wife, Jane; and his company, Winsupply, for our YAF publication, "Libertas."

Rick told me about the amazing opportunity he had a year out of college to join Winsupply: a company founded in 1956 on the principles of free enterprise and entrepreneurship. Today, Winsupply's a leading wholesaler of construction and industrial supplies and equipment with 600 locations nationwide.

In 1972, Rick was only 23 years old – about the same age as many of you – when he was hired to automate business systems so every Winsupply location could be more efficient.

In 1998, he became president and CEO.

And under his leadership, sales at Winsupply tripled to nearly 3 billion dollars a year.

Today, Rick is Winsupply's **chairman of the board**. And last year, sales at Winsupply were nearly **4 billion dollars**.

I invited Rick to speak to you today to fill a gap.

Because how often do you get to hear from a **successful business leader** who knows **EXACTLY** what free enterprise looks like **on the ground** – **inside an organization** – because he's lived it every day for nearly **50 years**?

Today, **free enterprise makes earned success possible** for the 6,000 people who work at The Winsupply Family of Companies.

We want you to hear Rick's story because we believe it will inspire you to **advance free market ideas** when you get back to campus.

Defending our free market system is important because it's under attack.

That's the reason why Rick and Jane Schwartz directed their family foundation to so generously support our **Center for Entrepreneurship & Free Enterprise**, our **Road to Freedom Seminars** and **many other initiatives** at YAF, including the **Reagan Ranch**, where they've served on the **Board of Governors** since 2011.

Standing up for what you believe isn't easy, and Rick knows that firsthand.

He was in your shoes back in the late 1960s, when he was a college student at the **University of Akron in Ohio**. That campus is just 13 miles from Kent State University, where four students were shot by the Ohio National Guard in 1970 during a campus protest of the Vietnam War.

Rick had decided to study industrial engineering, and to join the **Air Force ROTC** at a tough time in U.S. history, when people in the military were being **undermined** – even **villainized!** – because of the **national controversy** over the war.

But Rick had chosen to serve his country out of **duty** and **honor**. And he wanted his voice – **an alternative voice** – to be heard among the **clamor** and **noise** of protests on campus.

So Rick and his peers – in uniform and on campus – stood up for what they believed.

After graduation, Rick became a **commissioned officer in the Air Force**, and then spent 25 years in the **Air Force Reserves**, retiring as a lieutenant colonel.

But his experience on campus changed him.

Over the years – because of his work at Winsupply – Rick's taken every opportunity to do **exactly** what you're trying to do today:

To get an alternative message out to the masses, and advance the case for free enterprise over socialism.

As we face the challenges ahead, we need to share stories about free enterprise at work, and how it's a force for good in the world.

And we're doing that today.

Won't you please help me welcome **Rick Schwartz**, who will tell us how Winsupply's business model gives **everyday people** the freedom to **earn their own success.**

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