

**Abbey D'Agostino – Remarks**  
**New England Council Annual Dinner**  
**November 1, 2016**

Thanks so much, John, and thank you to the New England Council for an award so meaningful to me. It's an honor to be here tonight to join the other incredibly distinguished and accomplished individuals receiving a "New Englander of the Year" award: GE Chairman Jeff Immelt, Rhode Island Governor Gina Raimondo and Ambassador Nick Burns. I am humbled to be in your company.

If you had told me a year ago that my Olympic story was going to make national and international news, I would have laughed. . . and thanked you for your kind optimism.

But it did. . . and for a reason I never could have imagined or prepared for. As you saw in the video, about 2 miles into the race, one of the other competitors, Nikki Hamblin of New Zealand, fell right in front of me, which led me to trip and fall next to her.

My coach, Mark Coogan, who is here tonight, can tell you — many times we have rehearsed a plan of action in the event that I fell during a race: you get up, and try to return to the pack as smoothly and calmly as possible. But that "plan" never included the step of worrying about those around you. We train to compete. By definition, that means: "to strive to gain or win something by defeating or establishing superiority over others who are trying to do the same." So what happened was the exact opposite of what we, as athletes, are conditioned to do.

While, in the heat of that moment, it's true that only instinct has time to kick in — my "instinct" was not one that comes naturally. I am just the same as any other aspiring Olympian who has dreamed of winning gold someday. To cross every finish line having completely exhausted MYself and having reached MY goals. The only way that I can and do understand my reaction is that God worked through me — to show the character of love and sacrifice which is natural ONLY to him.

So, most importantly, I want to thank God for orchestrating the whole event — for making himself known in such a powerful way. But while he was surely the conductor, so many "musicians," so to speak, laid the groundwork for my heart to respond the way it did. Those who have loved, guided, and supported me as Abbey, the human, not just Abbey, the runner. My parents, who raised me in a way that developed a spirit of freedom within running, and in all that I do. And all those who have encouraged this spirit along the way. My sisters. My boyfriend. My church family. The incredible series of teammate-sisters (and brothers, didn't forget about you, Kemoy) who have brought such joy to my running journey, from the very beginning to the elite level. My coach Mark Coogan, whose guidance, for almost 7 years, has far surpassed the track. And, last but not least, the team at New Balance, who, for 2 and a half

years, has gifted me with relentless patience, commitment, and belief within both the light and dark seasons of my career thus far. These are the people who have reminded me that what matters most is not the things we can see, or do, or earn, but the way we relate to others. The way we love.

While New England may be comprised of six individual states, we have a shared history, culture, and geography. I also think we have a shared commitment to these very same values. I grew up in Topsfield, Massachusetts, and went to school at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire, so I've got two of the six New England states covered! I am proud to call myself a New Englander and humbled to receive such a prestigious award from an organization that works every day to make New England such an amazing place to live, work, raise a family. . . and strive for Olympic Gold! Thank you all so much.