

36 HHS seniors receive diplomas at commencement

Written by April Peregoy



Journeying from as far away as China, parents, family members, teachers and friends gathered together in the Holyoke High School gym on Sunday, May 10, to celebrate the commencement and achievements of 36 HHS seniors.

Words of advice, hope for the future and memories of the past were shared as members of the Class of 2009 spent their final moments together before moving on to the next stages of their lives.

Supt. Stephen Bohrer addressed the seniors, offering different philosophies and perspectives on the purposes of education. He added he believes education is the key to the ability to succeed, and wished the graduates much success in their future endeavors.

Valedictorian Dylan Bradley was praised by guidance counselor Summer Maloney, not only for his academic achievement, but also for his school and community involvement.

Opening his valedictory address, Bradley first wished all the mothers a happy Mother's Day, saying, "We all know it is you guys that have helped to make all this possible."

He also extended a thank-you to all the teachers from the Class of 2009, "who put up with us and got us through."

Bradley noted the valediction speech is supposed to be a speech of hope and looking forward to the future. He said this makes it a hard speech to write because, at this point, "not many of us have that much of our lives planned out."

Yet he reassured his classmates and their families, "We will all be successful in our own way. I have no doubt that our lives will be worthwhile."

Addressing parents specifically, he said, "I do know many of you are anxious because you feel like we have no plan, and it would make it easier on you if we had a plan. You are scared because we are your little babies, and from the moment we were born, you were in charge of everything that happened to us, and without a plan, there is no security the dreams you set aside for us will come true."

"We will have grand adventures; we will travel the world; we will become the successful people you wish us to be," he assured them, adding, "What I do know is we will fly by the seats of our pants for the next few years because, if there's one thing we learned in high school, it is that the best memories come from decisions made on a whim. We stumbled and skidded and flew by the seats of our pants and made it through by the skin of our teeth without a plan... but we made it through."

Shirley Kadlec of American Legion Post #90 and Susan Roll Walters of the Legion Auxiliary presented this year's citizenship awards, which went to Austin Tharp and Kelsey Scott.

Before presenting the Class of 2009 for graduation, Principal Susan Ortner announced, as each graduate crossed the stage, she would be handing them two keys engraved with character traits which are important for their futures: believe, compassion, dreams, freedom, happiness, hope, strength, success and wisdom.

The keys were tied with green ribbon—"a symbol that no matter how far you travel from Holyoke, you will always be part Dragon."

"Keys open doors," said Ortner. "It takes the proper key to open a door to a new opportunity. Today, you leave Holyoke High with many doors before you. This key, or those like it, could be

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called a skeleton key—one that opens many doors.

“I would like to compare that to the education each of you has earned here at Holyoke High School. The keys you have been given are like skeleton keys. They are the framework on which to build your life, or the foundation for what you do in the future.”

As students received their diplomas, Maloney announced their future plans, as well as scholarships they earned. Board members Kris Camblin and Jeff Tharp presented diplomas.

The Class of 2009 earned approximately \$287,794 in scholarship funds this year. Twenty-eight out of 36 class members will pursue higher education, three students plan to work for a period of time before pursuing a higher education and four exchange students will return home to continue their education, with one returning to the United States to attend college next year, said Maloney.

Treasured moments highlighted Sunday’s graduation program when seniors presented roses to special people in their lives.

Musical performances for the HHS Commencement included I Hope You Dance by the HHS choir, under the direction of Marcia Dalton, and The Final Countdown by the senior high band, directed by Pat Wiebers.

Class president Phawn Carper shared special memories of the senior class from their elementary through high school years, which produced smiles and laughs from the graduates and the audience, during her farewell comments.

Ending the ceremony, Carper urged a round of applause for family members of the graduates because, “We would not be here today if it wasn’t for all of your love and support.”

“Now, Class of 2009, I encourage you to use everything you have learned here in Holyoke and apply it to the rest of your lives. I know you will all do great things.”

Junior class grand marshals were Kyle Carper and Chasity Pelle, while Megan Colglazier, Molly Fricke, Duncan Brandt and Taylor Haidle served as ushers.

Baccalaureate

A baccalaureate took place before the graduation ceremony on Sunday with Lou Encinias, pastor of First Christian Church, delivering the message.

Following a senior slide show presentation, senior trio Flor Varela, Alyshia Durbin and LeAnne McWilliams sang I Will Remember You. Also during the farewell sermon, Rev. Lowell Karnes of First United Methodist Church gave the welcome, and Gordon Penfold, pastor of First Baptist Church, did the benediction.