

# **Huntington High School's 151<sup>st</sup> Commencement**

## **Principal Dr. Carmela Leonardi's Address**

It is an honor for me to welcome students, faculty, parents, family members, our superintendent and members of the School Board here tonight. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the assistant principal, Mr. Noce, all department administrators and deans for their continued support of students and their families.

A very special recognition is extended to the teachers and support personnel who are committed to the success of every student at Huntington High School and continue to take a personal interest in their academic and social development. Our gratitude is extended to secretaries, security and custodians who work daily to provide an optimal environment for students, teachers, administrators and parents.

Many of those in the audience tonight have graduated from this very high school and know firsthand that Huntington High School is an incredible place of learning and one where lasting friendships and lifelong commitments are made across socioeconomic and cultural lines. What I will share with you today are examples of how the graduating Class of 2012 is upholding this great tradition of excellence in academics and leadership.

This class includes gifted, generous and determined young men and women who have made us proud over the last four years and who will continue to do so in the future. The students that you see here tonight organized the first school wide fundraiser to fight cancer through the Relay

for Life and were able to raise the unprecedented amount of \$128,673. Their commitment, however, went well beyond the honorable task of raising money when they put the spotlight on those members of our school family who have taken up the personal fight against this dreadful disease. Their stories, so courageously shared, and their unwavering determination built community spirit and gave us hope. Relay for Life was not about supporting a worthy organization or about charity, it was about refusing to give in or be afraid of things we cannot change. It was not about supporting themselves or their family members, but about improving the future of those who will come after them. For the members of this graduating class failure to help others is not an option.

The Class of 2012 has raised money for a variety of other philanthropic causes as well as travelled to New Orleans and Alabama to build houses for Habitat for Humanity. One of our students travelled to France during his junior year becoming fluent in a third language and immersing himself in a different culture. Another came here from Haiti after the earthquake and was so successful at HHS that she will be attending Columbia University in the fall. Still another has already built a lengthy acting resume, appearing in an episode of Law and Order. She will be attending Point Park University to study acting/musical theater. 31 students conducted an internship in district schools, at Huntington Hospital and at Cushman & Wakefield Commercial Real Estate Appraisals. Our students have conducted science research and have been finalists in many competitions. They have been recognized for their academics, their athletic abilities, and their achievements in fine and performing arts over and over

again. The Class of 2012 has gifted athletes who will be playing competitive college level lacrosse, football, swimming and diving.

Many of our seniors challenged themselves with Advanced Placement courses that now have the potential of earning them college credits. 96 seniors took AP exams. 53 took three AP exams or more with 11 seniors taking five and four seniors taking six exams.

For this senior class the college center processed 1,486 college applications. As of today the Class of 2012 has received \$12,849,554.00 in scholarship money. 85% of the 262 students sitting here today will be going to college. 1% enlisted in the military, 1% will be taking a gap year traveling to Israel and 3 % will be joining the workforce.

Students will be attending Columbia, Princeton, Cornell, Harvard and Yale. They have been accepted at institutions of higher education such as NYU, Vanderbilt University, Boston College, Northwestern University, Georgetown, Fordham, Boston University, James Madison, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Villanova Penn State, School of Visual Arts, Maryland Institute College of Art, Berklee College of Music, Carnegie Mellon, The Citadel, Case Western Reserve University and Vassar College.

Some of the interesting majors they have selected include: neuroscience, psychology, communications, biology, education, international business, speech and hearing science, nursing, criminal justice, marketing, fashion design and merchandising, exercise science, photography, environmental science, technical theatre, graphic design, vocal

performance, chemistry, physics, music entertainment, culinary arts, physical therapy, pharmacology and marine transportation.

As you can see, our future will be in very capable hands. And now a final thought for our candidates. As you pursue your dreams and strive for success, remember that you are defined by your values and beliefs. Continue to focus on the difference you can make in your own life and in the life of others. Never lose your generous spirit or underestimate the value of service to others.

Congratulations to each member of this graduating class and their families, may you continue to experience great success in your future endeavors and remember that “like faith, a great education is empty if it does not affect the way we live our lives.”