Huntington High School’s 152nd Commencement

Principal Dr. Carmela Leonardi’s Address

It is an honor for me to welcome students, faculty, parents, family members, our superintendent, Mr. Polansky, and members of the School Board here tonight. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the assistant principal, Mr. Cusack, 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.

Educators across the state know that in this age of standards-based educational reform and the overreliance on test scores as a measure of school success, a heavy demand has been placed on the professional and economic resources of public education. What remains special and unique about the Huntington School District, however, is the constant focus on the part of administrators and teachers to provide a balanced and rich experience for all students. A valuable public education is one that allows students to explore and spread their intellectual wings while building a strong academic foundation. The years our students spent at Huntington High School allowed them to learn, explore and compete. We as adults were fortunate to help them along the way and to rejoice in their creativity, their energy and drive.
This class above all others has worked to include everyone and to extend a helping hand. Relay for Life, in its second year, generated more community spirit, reached out to a larger sector of our Town and raised more money than the previous year. Students organized community clean ups following super storm Sandy and extended their support to the surviving students of Sandy Hook Elementary School.

One adventurous and high achieving student travelled to Israel for one semester while carrying an academic load that included three Advanced Placement level classes. Another, during the summer, became involved in ongoing cancer research. Member of this class are musically and artistically talented and will be pursuing their education in the field of music performance and fine arts. Athletes among the seniors in this class will also go on to compete in boys’ lacrosse, football, baseball, swimming, wrestling and fencing as well as girls’ lacrosse, tennis, dance/kick line, swimming and fencing. This is also a very fun, spirited class. I can personally attest to that since in one of the senior pranks this year my modest Honda Civic was put up for sale on Craig’s List. I am still receiving inquiries about it.

This senior class also established strong supportive ties with peers, it was touching, in fact, to see how affected some of the seniors were by the end of their experience here at Huntington High School. On the last day of classes, they lingered in the hallways after dismissal and shed a tear or a laugh with their friends. It was clear that they will miss those who have become important to them. Each year a larger number of seniors challenged themselves with Advanced Placement courses that have the potential of earning them college credits. This year 150 seniors (up from 96 last year) took AP exams. 95 (53 in 2012) took three
AP exams or more with 9 (4 in 2012) seniors taking 6 and 18 (11 in 2012) taking 5 exams.

For this senior class the college center processed 2,092 (1,486) college applications. As of today, the Class of 2013 has been offered $24,149,593 ($12,849,554.00 was offered in 2012) in scholarship money.

College acceptances include Cornell University as well as various out-of-state public & private colleges including: American University, Boston College, Boston University, Bucknell, Carnegie Mellon, University of Delaware, Dickinson College, Emory University, Fairfield, Fordham, Iona College, Ithaca, Johns Hopkins University, Lehigh University, Loyola University (Maryland, Chicago and New Orleans campuses), Massachusetts College of Art and Design, University of Michigan, NYU, North Carolina State University, University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, Penn State, Quinnipiac, Rutgers, Syracuse, University of Southern California, Tufts, Vanderbilt University, Vassar College. All CUNYs (including the Macaulay Honors College), all SUNYs (including Nassau and Suffolk community colleges).

Some of the interesting majors they have selected include: criminal justice, computer engineering, architecture, education, molecular biology, athletic training, sports management, nursing, fashion design, illustration, speech pathology, baking and pastry arts, film/television production, mathematical methods in the social sciences, horticulture, pharmacy, and marine operations.

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 expand your experiences, remember that “There is no failure, only mistakes that give us feedback and tell us what to do next.” (Warren Bennis)

Congratulations to each member of this graduating class and their families, may you continue to experience great success in your future endeavors.