Huntington High School’s 153rd Commencement

Superintendent James W. Polansky’s Address

We have assembled here this evening to witness these commencement exercises and to honor these fine young men and women for their academic and personal growth and achievement. I have said repeatedly throughout this year, this is an outstanding group of young people.

I am not going to profess that after nearly five decades on this Earth and twenty-five years in education, I know it all. No one knows it all despite what my own son or daughter may tell you. Nonetheless it gives me pleasure to share some of the valuable things I’ve learned through the years about life from the important people in mine.

Although it may have sometimes seemed it, life is not about what outfit you wore on a particular day, your score on a particular exam, or how many goals you scores in a particular game. These are representative of the myriad details we consume ourselves with daily. The one shirt, grade or goal should contribute little to your sense of personal worth.

Life is not about sweating the small stuff. We often allow ourselves to get worked up about things that, upon closer examination, aren’t really that big a deal. Make peace with imperfection.

Life is not about holding grudges. Grudges are for those who insist that they are owed something; forgiveness, however, is for those who are wise enough to move on.

Life is not defined by grouches. Keep cheerful friends. The grouches pull you down. Do your best to maintain a positive outlook, even in challenging times.

Life is not defined by guilt trips. Take a trip to the village, the city, a foreign country, but not to where the guilt is.

Life is not defined by non-essential numbers. For example, age is simply a frame of mind and we can do nothing about the price of gas.
Life is not about what others have that you don’t. It’s all about what you have and what’s important to you and yours.

Life is not about conformity. Don’t necessarily dare to be different, but dare to be yourself. If that doesn’t make you different, then something is wrong.

Life is not about appearances. An old Scottish proverb makes it very clear that a rich heart may be under a poor coat.

Life is not about being afraid. Own up to your fears and conquer them in productive fashion.

Life is not about making millions. Follow your passion and not the money. The experiences and satisfaction that money produces can be very short lived.

This quote is attributed to many, not sure who was the originator ... “life is not measured by the number of breaths we take, but by the moments that take our breath away.”

Then what should life be about?

It’s about loving and finding special people with whom to share the grand moments, as well the everyday experiences. Surround yourself with whom and what you love.

Life is about learning. Learn more about technology, to play the guitar, gardening, or whatever. Don’t let your brain idle. Don’t ever minimize the value of your education and your aspirations to take it further.

Life is about gaining experience and learning from mistakes. At one point or another, you are probably going to do something stupid. Deal with it, own up to it and make amends if you need to.

Life is about simple things. An overstuffed sandwich, a good joke, a weekend nap - my own personal examples of life’s pleasures. Find yours.

Life is about cherishing your health. If it is good, preserve it. If it is not, improve it. If it is beyond what you can improve, seek help.
Life is about laughing and crying. Laugh often, long and loud. Tears happen; it is best to simply let them flow. There will be countless occurrences throughout your life where you will have the chance to laugh and/or cry. In fact, some of us have done both countless times this week alone.

Life is about embracing differences. Based on my experiences with these young people, this is something that they have been doing throughout their lives.

Life is about leaving a place or situation better than you found it. Members of the Class of 2014 have collectively done just that for the Huntington school community.

Life is about fulfilling your dreams. If you can dream it, you can live it as long as you’re willing to work hard enough.

Students, please recognize that as of today, you have successfully climbed but a few bottom rungs on a metaphorical ladder. I can say with confidence that you are more than ready to continue ascending. You have achieved academically, athletically, musically, and otherwise, but more importantly, you have grown as individuals and community members. You have developed a sense of admiration and respect for each other, as well as for your school. Your spirit and enthusiasm have been infectious. Now comes the time for you to share your gifts with the world surrounding.

Regardless of where life brings you, take the time to help and serve others even if it slows you down a little. As you continue to explore and develop your unique talents, remain humble. As life hands you challenges, welcome them as ways to become smarter and stronger. As you acquire material things, know that your most important possessions are your honesty, integrity, and desire to make a positive difference.

Lastly, remember that all of you share a very special bond. Regardless of where you go from here, you are and will always be Blue Devils.

May your path take you everywhere you wish to go and bring you an abundance of pleasant surprises! I am proud of each and every one of you. Congratulations and best wishes!