

# **Huntington High School's 150<sup>th</sup> Commencement**

## **Salutatorian Michelle Byrnes's Address**

Thank you everyone for coming today, especially Principal Dr. Leonardi, Board President Mr. William Dwyer and Superintendent Mr. John Finello.

Anyone who has spoken to me in the past couple of months probably knows how much I have been dreading this day because I would be standing up here addressing family, friends, teachers, and, of course, the entire class of 2011. What exactly are you supposed to say to the people that you have spent the last however many years with, seeing them everyday in class and in the halls?

Part of my reluctance to write this speech was due to my fear of addressing such a large audience, but the other part was because it meant saying goodbye. High school will be over after today, and whether you are sentimental about it or can not wait to move on, every one of us must acknowledge that a chapter of our lives ends today.

When I finally sat down to write this speech, I realized that even though we are leaving high school, part of high school will be leaving with us as well. Whether it is the friends we made or the lessons we learned, both in class and out, everyone will have something to remember high school by. Friendships forged during class periods and long hours studying will continue despite the distances they will now face. Social outlets, such as Facebook and Twitter or whatever else comes along to take their place, will be there to help, allowing us to bridge the distance and keep bonds alive

while we're apart. Although we will most likely change in college and our personalities will continue to develop over the course of our entire lives, we will always hold on to at least a part of who we are now. This will help us carry friendships for many years to come, both in college and beyond.

Many of the lessons we learned in high school should also be carried into the future, and will help us excel wherever we are heading. One of the most important lessons may have been the hardest to learn. Teachers who taught us to take pride in our work have given us invaluable advice, even though we might have disliked them for harsh grading and acceptance of only our best work. If you do not have any pride in what you are doing, then why exactly are you doing it in the first place? In the future, you are allowed to choose your own schedule, what classes you wish to take and what you want to major in. If there is no pride in the assignments that you do in order to achieve your goal, then how are you supposed to take pride in your profession later in life? If there is no pride, then there is no point. Pride allows you to be confident in what you do, and helps you enjoy the tasks put before you.

Although you may not have any idea what you wish to pursue in college or beyond, like me, you will find your passion eventually by exploring your options and discovering what grabs and holds your attention. Even if it takes some mistakes and a lot of time, everyone will find their way, but they do not have to do it on their own. We have had so much support from teachers, friends, and family over that last four years, but that does not have to change with everyone going their separate ways. Whether you seek help from old friends, or new ones made in college, there will always be someone

that you can turn to for advice. Never be afraid to ask for assistance or you will not be able to reach your full potential. I for one know that I would not be standing here in front of all of you without all the help I received from various different sources, especially from my family who has been with me every step of the way.

You can always turn to the people surrounding you, even if they no longer live five minutes away; they are only a phone call away if you really need them. This made me realize that we are not saying a true goodbye today and helped me write what I am saying to you now.

Congratulations Class of 2011. I know we will all go on to achieve great things in the future.