

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

## **School Board President Emily Rogan's Address**

On a sweltering Sunday afternoon, not quite thirty years ago, I sat on that field out there when it was still grass, not turf. I remember everything about that day; the pink sundress I wore, the bad perm I had, the party at my best friend's house.

I was off to Cornell, to become a doctor and live someplace, anyplace, but Huntington. I wasn't going to get married until I was at least thirty years old and I wasn't sure I ever wanted to have kids. Well, I did make it to Cornell. Aside from that, not much of my plan stuck. I changed my major, got married at 24 to a guy from Huntington, became a journalist, had two kids, and moved back here to raise them. And today I'm speaking to you as school board president. This was definitely NOT in my plans.

But I have no regrets. I'm not sorry about one decision that led me to this very moment, right now. Because I've learned that life is not a linear experience—it's more of a loopy curvy, up and down, and kind of all over crazy path. And...as much as you make plans, and that's a wonderful thing, the most valuable skills you need are those that help you manage when your plans don't work or your dreams fall through. How will you handle disappointment or adversity? What will you do when faced with an unexpected challenge or tragedy? Will you be resourceful and adaptable? Will you seek alternatives and be willing to try something different? Will you have compassion for others? Because those are the life skills that will truly serve you well. Of course your grades matter. Your accomplishments

matter. College and career? Yes, they matter. But your substance as a human being--that is what matters most.

For most of you, the years ahead will be filled with many firsts. Maybe you'll learn to cook for the first time or do your own laundry. You'll have to manage your own schedule & figure out how to balance the pull of socializing with the demands of your studies. Some of you will face true failure for the first time. Others will experience the exhilaration of success, the kind that comes from working really hard at something and seeing the fruits of your labor. You'll fall in love and have your heart broken for the first time. And you'll probably experience these moments on your own, away from the safety net of your home. Finding the people who'll have your back when your parents aren't there is an important part of growing up.

You're going to discover that it's OK not be perfect, that in fact we are all quite fallible. You're going to learn that you grow the most from the mistakes you make and the difficult times, not from the moments that come easily and you get right.

I'll end with a tale of two trees: a great oak and a small sapling. The trees grew side by side along a river, and one night a tremendous storm came. When the storm passed and the sun rose, the oak tree was lying on its side, roots pulled right out of the ground. But the sapling stood where it had been before the storm, roots firmly in the soil. In its rigidity, the oak tree was uprooted. The sapling survived because it yielded to the storm.

Be strong like the oak tree, but make sure you have some of the sapling's flexibility too. Be willing to bend, to be open to the possibility of change, and the reality that you don't have much control. You'll find life may be a little easier when you are prepared for the unexpected.

On behalf of the Board of Education--congratulations. We wish you great success as you begin this next phase of your journey. And don't forget about Huntington, the place that nurtured the roots that ground you and gave you the wings to fly away.

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

## **Class President Samantha Palmer's Address**

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Leonardi, Mr. Polansky, my teachers, parents, classmates, and class advisors, Ms. Tedeschi and Mr. Bruckbauer for their hard work and dedication over the years; and congratulations to the graduates of 2012. Standing here today, as the president of the Class of 2012, it is my pleasure to present Huntington with the senior class gift.

With the help of the class officers, we decided to give flags that surround the parking lot, welcoming you into the school. We believe these flags add character and beauty to the school grounds, reflecting the even more beautiful character of what goes on inside the school. Furthermore, these flags symbolize the determination, ability and diligence that the Class of 2012 embodies. When viewing a flag, you must look high into the sky with your chin tilted up. The Class of 2012 always holds their heads held high, ready to overcome anything and achieve everything. However, no gift can deservingly represent how greatly we have changed and impacted Huntington High School, mostly for the better. Unlike the flags, our class will leave a legacy that will not fade or die with time.

Standing here today not as your president, but as your friend and your classmate, there are a few words I would like to share about compassion. Compassion has always been my motivation for my heart to be moved into action. Compassion, I believe, is the source behind what we all call success. Sometimes I feel as if we have been taught a formal definition of success.

Good grades, a college education and eventually a job. However, I believe that success is the ability to pursue your passions and loving what you do. I have learned that the Class of 2012 is full of compassion. We have scholars, performers and athletes; students who have truly inspired me.

However, compassion can be difficult to master. Just like our minds, our hearts need time and experience to mature. Luckily, we have the remainder of our lives to develop skills to help our hearts grow. We should be growing a heart that truly wants to pursue our goals, rather than doing what we feel obligated to do. Recently, a close friend asked me if my mind was as chaotic and ongoing as my actions. Truthfully, this was a difficult question that I wasn't quite sure of the answer to. What does go through my mind...what do I think about all the time? I'd probably say that decision-making often crosses my mind, as it probably does for most of you as well.

All of our lives we have been taught to make the good choice, the right decision. Yet, I am starting to learn that decision-making should be about compassion. What you truly love will always be in your best interest. But, how do we define what we love and how do we decide what to do with ourselves? And I think this is what our hearts need to learn. At least this holds true for me.

To some of you who I've known for 13 years, and others who I have met here at the high school, I want to remind you to develop strong relationships and take advantage of intellectual opportunities, for this has helped me get through high school. But more importantly, I want to advise you to mature your hearts. Take a moment once in a while and stop thinking.

Instead, listen to your heart and do what you love. Throughout high school much of what we do is to make other people happy, whether it's for our teachers, parents, friends or coaches. And much of the rest of our lives will consist of this, too. However, make sure you find time in between all of the chaos to take care of your own heart. Whether yours has been damaged or warmed during your time at Huntington, there will always be a small piece of it that will lie here with our classmates. Since our time together, I can surely say that my heart has gained a deeper understanding of compassion. For this, thank you. Congratulations to each of you, and remember to hold Huntington close to your heart.

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

## **Salutatorian Justin LoScalzo's Address**

Welcome to Huntington High School's 151<sup>st</sup> commencement ceremony. This ceremony marks not only the end of one chapter in the lives of the members of the Class of 2012, but also marks the start of a new and exciting chapter.

I would like to open with a few "thank yous." First and foremost I need to thank my family, in particular, my parents, brother, and sister who have been extremely supportive of me throughout my academic career. I would not be standing here without them. They have all pushed me towards success and have helped me achieve the goals that I have set fourth for myself. Next I would like to thank my friends. I am privileged to have met so many wonderful people through this school district. My friends have always been there to provide me with advice and encouragement whenever I have needed it. They have been there for me in good times and bad, and for that I thank them. Finally I would like to thank all of the wonderful teachers and administrators I have had over my thirteen years of education here in the Huntington School District. I have been honored to receive an education from this district and without them it would not have been possible to produce the distinguished group of people who sit before you as the Class of 2012.

Thirteen years ago, many of us began our schooling at Woodhull as Kindergarteners, and here we are today as graduates of Huntington High School. Others began their academic careers elsewhere, but no matter what;

we are all here graduating together. I could not have created a more unique and remarkable group of people who I would want to call my classmates. The Class you see before you is composed of talented and accomplished individuals, including intellectuals, musicians, artists, and athletes. Together these individuals make up not only a Class, but also a family.

It is hard to believe that the time has come that we must say goodbye to the Huntington School District. Time is an interesting thing. It seems to move quickly when we do not want it too, but slowly when we do. For example, the last seconds before a win at a sporting event, or the last seconds of a class we may, well not be as fond of as others, seems to take forever. These seconds appear to last a long time, but as we look back, years have passed by in the blink of an eye. Over the last four years we have developed memories and relationships that will last forever. As we move on in life, it is important to be conscious of time. These four years of high school, we will never be able to redo again. It is as simple as that. Do not attempt to control time that has passed; it is physically impossible. Instead, take control of the present and make the most of it.

Benjamin Franklin once stated, “Dost thou love life? Then do not squander time, for that is the stuff life is made of.” As you move through life, be sure to take advantage of each and everyday: do not put off what you can do today for tomorrow. It is a waste of time, and you can never be sure what tomorrow may bring you. Take advantage of each and every opportunity presented to you in life, because an opportunity today may not be an opportunity tomorrow. Seek out all the passions of your life and be

sure to try new things, they may spark an interest that you never knew existed.

I speak of the importance of taking advantage of time, but the prime aspect of time is to enjoy it. Have the time of your life each and every day. Time is going to fly by over the next couple of years just as the previous years have. Do not forget to take a moment every now and then to reflect on time that has passed, that way you can make the most of the time you have in the future that you have control over. I have always been told that it is not all about where you end up, but how you get there.

Do not take shortcuts in life simply because you want to reach an end goal sooner, you may miss out on the rewards the experience of reaching the end has to offer. The journey is just as important as the destination. Life presents us with challenges each and every day; many times, obstacles that we have no control over. Take the time to overcome these obstacles in a manner that you will be proud of looking back on. If life presents you with a situation you are not particularly fond of, make the most of the situation, and turn into an experience you can learn from and be happy about. If you treat every situation at hand with the utmost of care, there is no way that you will not find happiness and success in what you are doing.

I am confident that each and every member of the Class of 2012 is capable of accomplishing anything in life that they desire. Whether it is becoming a lawyer, doctor, teacher, professional athlete, member of the armed forces, or anything else the imagination can think of; the members of this class can, and will be whatever they want. No matter where you end up

in life, I hope that you will never forget the memories and relationships you have developed here at Huntington High School. Remember to take the time to reflect on events such as today as you move through life. I wish the best of luck to each and every one of my classmates. Congratulations Huntington High School Class of 2012!

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

## **Superintendent James W. Polansky's Address**

The time has come. After 13 years of primary and secondary education, you leave Huntington High School well versed in English, math, science, history, technology, other languages and cultures, the arts, and athletics. As importantly, you've been educated in an environment within which your parents and teachers have prepared you to communicate and express yourselves positively and productively. And I am not necessarily referring to use of a large rock as a message board, however I find it amazing that in this ever-expanding digital world, The Rock works like it does.

You have been encouraged to find yourselves as individuals, to pursue your interests, to understand the meaning of tolerance, and to do what you believe is right and yes, even when no one is looking.

Members of this class have experienced the crests and valleys associated with adolescence. You have laughed and cried together; climbed and descended together; and celebrated and mourned together. Regardless of the path you choose, you will always share your Huntington experiences and the contributions you have made individually and collectively to the fabric that defines this school community.

It is joyful to reminisce of the past. I warn you, however, not to become an individual to whom others refer as having peaked in high school.

People who live in the past are often hesitant to compete in the present and fearful of looking ahead. Living in the past – well, there is just no future in it.

Let's consider the "icebox," for example. Food had been placed on ice since the Chinese created blocks in 1000 B.C. and 12th century Richard the lion-hearted licked frozen sherbets sent by the sultan of Syria. By the early 1800's, the U.S. emerged as a leader in harvesting ice on a commercial scale. During the hottest months, perishables were kept in iceboxes -- cabinets that distributed perfect circulation to prevent food spoilage. Mechanical refrigeration went into production in the 1920's. Those resistant to the improved technology focused on building bigger and better iceboxes. Unfortunately for them, by 1950, 80 percent of the country had gone "modern." Ice harvesting became nostalgia. If you ask a teenager today to define an icebox, the best you might get is an uninformed answer, such as "an on-line place to chill."

Growing up, I recall that whenever a new technology would emerge, people would immediately think it was is the greatest thing since sliced bread and rush out to buy it. The mindset... surely no one will ever invent something better than this!

Can today's graduates envision a phone with a rotary dial or even one with a cord? Although your parents can recall such items, kids today have no idea how rough we had it back then! We'd need to duck into a linen closet within cord length for privacy. Even the first cordless phones would look

foreign today and weighed nearly five pounds. But I know that I just had to have one.

During my formative years, typing an assignment was accomplished on a manual typewriter with keys that moved upward when you pushed down on them, making an imprint of the letter on paper. And those typewriter ribbons! Black on bottom, red on top. When you'd try changing them, they would often end up in a tangled mess. They were soon replaced by electric typewriters, computers, tablets, etc. And as we all know, electronics transform at an exponential rate in today's global marketplace. There were the cameras that used film and negatives, vinyl records, 8-track tapes and audiocassettes, Betamax and VHS video tapes. Although the youth of today may recognize some of them as ancient artifacts, others might appear as unfamiliar as a television that required one to actually get off the couch and turn a dial to change the channel. Only a decade ago, I set aside an entire walk-in closet for those VHS tapes that used to keep my kids entranced. Couldn't live without them. Today they sit and gather dust.

And what has happened to the written language? In today's digital era, expressive language and penmanship have been transformed and/or replaced by touch keys, voice-to-text, and text abbreviations such as OMG, LOL, IMHO, BTW and many others my own kids tell me stand for one thing when I know they mean another. Additionally, I have never been comfortable receiving an e-mail that ends with a winky emoticon.

Graduates, you will likely see the day when your grandkids ask you to tell the story again about iPads, Androids and Kindles – how you actually

had to use your finger to swipe across the screen to make a new page appear. "Tell us that one again, grandpa!" Although life's moments are often fleeting, keep in mind that when one door closes, another opens. Change today is near instantaneous.

Always remember where you came from, but do not accept the status quo. Who knows? There may be a cultural shift somewhere down the road that battles immediate gratification and that helps patience regain virtuous status. Or the rebirth of a trend where kids need to learn to entertain themselves, maybe by drawing, maybe by writing, by playing make-believe ... by doing something other than staring at a flickering box.

Hockey great Wayne Gretzky said it plainly, "I learned early that I miss 100 percent of the shots I don't take." Graduates every day will present a new opportunity. Whatever it is, you need to be ready. Ready to think creatively. Ready to adapt at a moment's notice. Ready to take a chance on yourself, your loved ones and/or your community. And no matter what the situation, never, ever let anything or anyone convince you to compromise your integrity.

Congratulations and good luck!

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

## **Valedictorian Juliana Coraor's Address**

I asked Kaja to introduce me because I wanted you all to see the person who is responsible for who I am today. Besides cooking for me and giving me rides, she has been my best friend since the moment we were born. Although we bicker and squabble at times, I know she will always be there for me even when we part ways in the fall. I love you, baby sister, and don't ever forget that.

It took me forever to write this speech, not because I had nothing to say but because I had too much to say. Should I talk about our experiences in high school, our transformation over the years, or some of the numerous successes we have had at this school? Who should I thank for helping us get this far: our parents, our teachers, or our friends? (Probably all of them.) What lesson should I ultimately say we all learned from high school: how to pass math or how to properly ask someone to the prom? Finally, I realized that all of these questions were leading me away from what graduation was truly about. It isn't about what we have done or have learned in the past, it is about what we will do and will learn in the future.

Graduation is not a time to lament leaving all of our friends behind; it is a chance to wonder about what new ones we will make in college, in 20 years from now, or even in 50 years from now. It is a time to question what life changing experiences we will have, and whether they will be for better or for worse. What will we discover in the future? What will we inspire? And ultimately, where will we end up?

However, as exciting as the future may seem at first glance, understandably it also gives us all cause for apprehension. Up until now we have proclaimed our independence and self-reliance, but for all of our statements, we still were minors and went home every night to our parents. After high school, though, we will no longer be able to rely upon our parents or other adults to the same extent that we did earlier. We will be on our own in a way we have never been before and frankly that's pretty scary.

This means that it is more imperative than ever that we understand who we are and accept that each of us is fundamentally different from the rest of the people in this world. We are each unique and incredibly gifted human beings, all with special talents that will help us to succeed in life. It is up to us to recognize and use those talents in the best way possible.

So ultimately, I ask you to picture in your mind what you will become: a doctor, a fashion designer, a businessman. Remember that dream you have always had, whether it is to be rich, get married, or simply just to be happy. Finally, keep those thoughts in mind as you venture forth from here into the world. Be yourself. Be different, and have confidence that you will get to wherever you are meant to be in life. If you do all of that, there is no need for me to wish you good luck.

# **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.”

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

### **Joseph Straub's Introduction of Superintendent James W. Polansky**

Over the years here at Huntington High School, I've done a lot, to say the least, and, I've met a wide array of people. I would just like to share some of the things I've done and people I've met with you. I remember freshman year homecoming I found myself hanging with some of the upperclassmen marching band members. It was eleven o'clock at night after the dance and all I can remember thinking is, "wow, how the heck are they still talking about marching band." They were boasting about the program to me and how meaningful it was to be a part of Huntington's marching band. They had passion.

I remember a bus ride home from an away lacrosse game in 10<sup>th</sup> grade. It was on that bus ride that I learned what the true definition of diversity was. I was sitting next to some of the preppiest lacrosse kids I know. On the other side of the bus, there were kids speaking in slang saying words I didn't even understand. Ta-roy, stood up and called me out. I stood up and the next thing I know he calls me Sandra Bullock. Still, to this day, I have no idea why that is one of my nicknames.

Now, I don't know about you, but the thought of staying up from 6 p.m. until midnight arguing over the color difference between Kelly Green and Forest Green and which one would look better on the top of our Pineapple; sounds like a great time. Spending homecoming float night with Lizzy, Alana, Brielle, Kristina, Sarah, Samantha, Jill, Katherine,

Danielle, Erin and AJ made me realize how much drive some people can have. We always seemed to put differences behind us and build the best float ever. Two years in a row, might I add.

And one of the most lasting memories I have here at Huntington High School is Relay For Life. At one o'clock in the morning, the chief operating officer of the American Cancer Society New York-New Jersey region visited our relay. She was extremely impressed and noted that “she had never seen a Relay so alive and spirited so late in the night.”

Now, I'm sure you are all wondering how the heck any of this relates to me introducing Superintendent Polansky. So, I'll try now to clear some of it up for you.

A graduate of SUNY at Albany, Mr. Polansky earned a Master of Business Administration degree at Hofstra University and an advanced graduate certificate in educational administration at SUNY at Stony Brook. He is well-known for his energy and enthusiasm and has already enjoyed two decades of success as a teacher and administrator in Long Island schools.

But over the past year, I have grown to see Mr. Polansky in a different light. There is no doubt that he has energy and enthusiasm and deserves all of those degrees he has hanging on his wall. But, there is more to him. Within Mr. Polansky, in my opinion, is the same passion as the band students, the same diversity as the lacrosse team, the same drive as student government members and the same spirit as the student body. Mr. Polansky is Mr. Huntington.

In his brief tenure, Mr. Polansky has already made great improvements to our school district. Though his passion, diversity, drive and spirit; “Mr. Huntington will continue to make great improvements to our community.

I’m blessed to stand before you, as a self proclaimed Capt’n, to introduce to you, our new superintendent, Mr. James Polansky.

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

## **Brielle Blatt's Introduction of Honored Teachers Camille Tedeschi and Erik Bruckbauer**

My favorite memory of the Class of 2012 is when as juniors, we beat the seniors in the homecoming float contest, making history at Huntington High School. Our Captain Crunch float had a 15 foot tall ship that rocked back and forth in a sea of milk with a life size captain at the front.

As Vice President, I have had the opportunity to take part in planning many school functions, including the homecoming parade and dance, building the float, Playfest, Battle of the Classes, planning prom, and fundraising. The Class of 2012 student government officers considers themselves overachievers, as we often call ourselves "Team Go Hard." We have spent a great deal of time making sure everything got done, though we spent half of the time fighting as we planned. Once we were done with planning, we would fight some more! This was mainly because a lot of us have very strong personalities. But that's what makes us so proactive; we are each very motivated and have tons of Blue Devil pride.

We could not have successfully done all of this without our two advisors - Camille Tedeschi and Erik Bruckbauer. They have advised the classes of 2009 and 2012 and are looking forward to the class of 2016.

Ms. Tedeschi teaches AP World History and a women studies course. She graduated from Walt Whitman High School, obtained an undergraduate degree at Pace University, and a Master of Arts in social studies education at Stony Brook University. Her passion for learning is so great that she returned to school to study

at Queens College, where she obtained a Master's degree in library science. She was voted most talkative by her high school classmates, which does not surprise us. If you ask anyone, they will agree that Ms. Tedeschi is motivated and enthusiastic. Her interactive and hands-on teaching methods bring history alive in the classroom. She is a world traveler and has studied in Vietnam, Japan, Hong Kong, Thailand, Hawaii, and Cambodia, among other countries. I truly see her as a role model because she is so dedicated to her students and will never stop learning.

Mr. Bruckbauer grew up in Smithtown and graduated from Smithtown High School. He earned his Bachelor's degree in political science from SUNY Plattsburgh, a Master's degree in secondary education from Dowling College, and a second Master's in educational administration from Stony Brook University. Mr. Bruckbauer has been teaching social studies at Huntington High School since 2002. Known for his great sense of humor, students say that his class is their favorite period of the day. His dedication and passion for humanities is evident, as he has taught almost everything the social studies department offers.

Some of my fellow classmates have admitted to taking his courses strictly because they love Mr. Bruckbauer and wanted to have him as a teacher. It is clear to anyone that Mr. Bruckbauer genuinely loves his students and his job. Both Ms. Tedeschi and Mr. Bruckbauer are the type of teachers you can go to for advice and feel comfortable with. They have guided all of the student government officers through stressful times and have provided us with tools we will use as leaders in the future.

Ms. Tedeschi and Mr. Bruckbauer, we can't thank you enough. We will miss you as we move onto the next stage of our lives. It is my pleasure to introduce Ms. Tedeschi and Mr. Bruckbauer as our honored teachers.

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

## **Kaja Coraor's Introduction of Valedictorian Juliana Coraor**

Not many of you know our valedictorian, Juli Coraor. Those that do know her only know her as someone smart, someone who works hard in school and someone who gets good grades. But, I have known her for 17 years. I have shared a room with her for 15 years and I have been going to school with her for 13 years. And I know her as more than just some smart student. I know her as a loving, caring, friendly sister.

My sister and I have always had a sort of competitive relationship that started when we were born. I was born first, 25 minutes before my sister. I learned to read first, and I learned to write first. But she learned to walk first, and that was something that I just couldn't stand. So every time she would start to walk, I would crawl up behind her, grab her diaper, and pull her to the ground.

We fought all the time when we were little, and we still do. She yells at me for driving too fast and I yell at her for making me late. But despite the fighting and the yelling, we have grown to be best friends. We talk and watch movies together and give each other advice. She is a truly remarkable sister and student and I hope all of you appreciate her as much as I do.

So now, I would like to welcome the valedictorian of our class and my twin sister, Juli Coraor.

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

## **Madison Biernacki's Introduction of Huntington School Board President Emily Rogan**

Fellow graduates, distinguished guests, faculty members, and families, I have the honor this evening of introducing Mrs. Emily Rogan, the current president of the Board of Education.

Mrs. Rogan and her husband, Bob, have been family friends of my parents since their days at Huntington High School.

After living in New York City for several years, Emily and her husband moved back to Huntington to raise their family. A strong advocate for public schools, and the Huntington School District in particular, Mrs. Rogan was sure to send her own children through the schools she holds dear to her heart.

In addition to being President of the School Board, a fellow graduate of Huntington High School, a mother, a wife, and a friend, Mrs. Rogan is a true role model. She works tirelessly as a leader in the field of education, and is constantly giving back to her community. Over the past year, Mrs. Rogan has so generously helped advise me on my transition from high school to college, and I cannot thank her enough.

Without further adieu, I like to welcome Mrs. Emily Rogan.

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

### Haley Brown's Introduction of Principal Dr. Carmela Leonardi

Hello, as many of the seniors know there is a dress code in the high school. On May 31<sup>st</sup> I was called down to the main office and I thought to myself "here we go again." However, as I was walking to the main office, I saw Dr Leonardi in the hallway. As I approached her I started to pull my shorts down further. She greeted me with her usual warm hello and she told me she wanted to talk to me. After the warm welcoming, I knew this wasn't about the dress code. Instead, she asked me if I would introduce her at graduation. I was so honored that the rest of the day I walked around with an enormous smile on my face and told all of my friends that I was making a speech at graduation. Then it hit me: **I have to make a speech at graduation!**

I knew Dr. Leonardi only as our tiny principal. But then again, being a height of 5'9, anyone is small next to me. Nevertheless, don't let her size fool you. Her accomplishments exceed her height and what I have come to learn about her is remarkable. How was I ever going to speak about all of her accomplishments??!! For instance, she was born in Puglie, Southern Italy! At age five she wanted to become a teacher, which is certainly different from me because I wanted to become a princess. Dr. Leonardi came to America when she was 16 years old with only her sister to accompany her. I can say that "she came to America with a dream" and she has surpassed it by becoming a principal with a PhD in reading and

cognition. She felt that education is so crucial in a child's life and that the greatest minds should be teachers.

Dr. Leonardi's first job was teaching pre-K. She described this experience as "crazy" but worth the challenge. A little while after, Dr. Leonardi tried out teaching the older grades before realizing she wanted to fill a bigger role in the schools. She became the principal of Huntington Intermediate, or Jack Abrams as most people know it today, and there she felt like home. During her leadership at this school, Huntington Intermediate earned a New York Excellence in Education Award. This award gives a special recognition to schools that do an outstanding job training their staff members through the use of professional education and learning programs. When she was asked to become the principal of Huntington High School, the thought of leaving was devastating. But she knew that she could make the best out of any situation and make Huntington High her new "home." And in 2001, she did just that. Dr. Leonardi finally achieved her dream, however she did not stop there. She knew this job could help answer her many questions. Such as "How do students learn best?" and "How can I help the students achieve their full potential?"

She came to America speaking Italian, or as they say in my family "the language of the Angels". She also speaks English and Spanish among others. She supported the refinement and expansion of English as a Second Language and Spanish Bilingual courses. She is always looking for ways to challenge students in their studies. For instance, the number of AP level courses, as well as the scoring of 3 and above on the AP tests, has also increased under her administration. She looks for ways to "show off the high

school.” One of her most recent ideas was to hold tours of the high school for parents of upcoming freshman. She asked students currently attending the high school to give the tours because she felt the parents would want the student’s perspective. I was one of the lucky few to be chosen, and it was a wonderful experience. Before the tours began, she gave a brief speech about what is offered at Huntington High. And you could tell by her enthusiasm that she is so proud of every student and staff member here. She loves having the opportunity of seeing her students grow up and watching what path they choose for their future.

As I have come to realize, Dr. Leonardi is our own personal super woman. She wants students to take advantage, never lose interest and be open to new ideas; and realize that people become “richer in life” with an open mind. I don’t know about you, but I strongly believe that Dr. Leonardi is a person that every school needs and we are lucky enough to have her in the flesh. I will greatly miss such an inspiring leader and role model. I am extremely glad to have had the pleasure of getting to know our “super woman” and not just see her as our tiny principal. Here is no other than Dr. Leonardi herself.

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

## **Natalie Acton's Introduction of Salutatorian Justin LoScalzo**

Tim McGraw said it best when he said “We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere.” I know that this applies to my relationship with Justin LoScalzo because a part of him will always be with me. Through all of the years of our friendship, he has taught me so much and I am extremely grateful. Justin is an amazing person and I am fortunate to call him my best friend.

Thirteen years ago, I met Justin. He was small, kind, and of course, brilliant. Our mothers somehow knew that we were meant to be friends. I remember swimming at his house and I loved when he came over my house to play, but only after I had finished all of my work. Even back then, Justin was an exceptional person and friend.

When Justin and I reconnected in Finley, I learned that not much had changed about him. He was still the same driven, hard working and immensely intelligent person that I remembered. Justin excelled in all of his classes and got involved in as much as he could. He played soccer and baseball for Finley in addition to joining the marching band in eighth grade. I remember thinking “How could he handle so much and still remain at the top of the class?” Needless to say I was not the only person that was impressed. Justin was always a teacher's favorite student, which eventually contributed to his title of teacher's pet. Teachers could not help but love him because he worked hard and always knew what he was doing. He taught me

that hard work pays off and to get involved in as many things as I could handle.

Throughout high school, Justin has taught me so much more. As I reflect on all that we have been through, I cannot help but smile. Freshman year, I remember that he was competing with some of the upperclassmen in band, fighting for a top spot. Justin is an amazing trumpet player and as a freshman, he beat out many upperclassmen. He was section leader of the marching band his junior year and drum major this year. He has been first chair in jazz band, wind ensemble, pit orchestra and senior band. He was always smiling and really seemed to appreciate everything he was given. I learned never to doubt my own abilities, because I saw that anyone can achieve anything that they desire.

One of the most crucial lessons that Justin has taught me is the importance of patience. Justin would sit with me and explain math so that I could understand. I would easily become frustrated or distracted, but he always knew how to put me back on track. Every student that Justin has ever tutored, and it is many, will tell you that he is remarkable. He never gives up and has a way of explaining things that makes sense. I am so grateful to Justin because he has gotten me through math for the past two years. I knew that he was always willing to sit down with me before a big test and would devote himself to helping me understand. Even when I felt as if I was a lost cause, Justin would remind me of how far I have come and how I could accomplish anything that I put my mind to. I am astounded at the patience that Justin has and it truly is a gift.

Justin is one of the best friends that I have ever had. He knows me better than anyone and I know he is always there for me. I am always amazed at how, with one look at me, he knows exactly what is going on in my mind. He has helped me through so much that I cannot imagine not seeing him every day next year. I am extremely jealous of all the students at Colgate University who get to spend the next four years with Justin. He has been an extraordinary friend to me and I am always grateful to have him in my life. It is with great pride that I introduce this year's salutatorian, Justin LoScalzo.