

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

## **Benjamin Jensen's Introduction of Huntington School Board President Bill Dwyer**

Good afternoon. To many of you, Bill Dwyer is the president of the school board who has served for three years. You might also know him for being president and boys' director for Huntington Village Lacrosse or a "coach" if you are one of the boys on a lacrosse team in that organization.

I know Bill in a different light. I know he can ride a unicycle. Bill has been my neighbor my whole life and because of this, I have many fond memories from spending time with him, his wife Karen and his three sons, Brad, Brendan and Ethan.

Bill taught me to ride a bike. He set me on a bike and told me that riding was easy and that I could do it. It may sound like your standard "learn to ride" speech, especially when I add that I was reminded to keep peddling. Yet, I could sense Bill's genuine confidence in me and desire to see me succeed and it worked. I started riding furious circles in the front yard.

I also spent an afternoon in a mud slip-and-slide in his yard when an average hot summer sprinkler day turned extraordinary. Bill introduced me to skateboarding and to Thanksgiving Day football games at the high school.

So, I am grateful for the many good things Bill Dwyer has introduced me to and I am now pleased to introduce Bill Dwyer to you.

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### **Dante Allen's Introduction of Principal Dr. Carmela Leonardi**

As John Quincy Adams said, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader." Good leaders have the ability to ignite that spark in others, to get them to do the things that they normally would not do. Good leaders are very passionate and believe in what they are doing and get others to believe the same.

All of these characteristics come to mind when we think of our leader, our principal Dr. Leonardi. Dr. Leonardi has served as Huntington High School's principal since 2001. Before that she was at Woodhull [Kindergarten Center] and Huntington Intermediate School. Prior to Huntington, she worked in Lawrence School District. She also worked in Franklin Square. Dr. Leonardi graduated from Hofstra University with a Ph.D in reading and cognition. She completed two professional diplomas and has several teaching certifications. Oh my God, that is a lot of school!!!

Her strong belief that all students can learn has driven her to work closely with her staff and to be a great leader.

With that, I would like to introduce our lovely principal, the boss lady, Dr. Carmela Leonardi.

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## **Rebecca Deegan's Introduction of Salutatorian Michelle Byrne**

This next speaker is someone very close to my heart. She is without a doubt recognized for her intelligence and dedication to her schoolwork. However, anyone that has gone to school with this girl the past few years will be able to tell you that nobody could be as devoted to their friends, their family, and especially their heritage as she is.

She has been involved with Irish Step dancing her whole life; at times it has been her whole life. It is well understood that she is never to be bothered during March, when her busy schedule prevents her from doing anything but attending her "Feshes" or recitals. Too many times during this month, the suggestion of plans for a Friday night will receive a response of, "Are you kidding me?! I'm going to sleep. I have a fesh tomorrow!" However, despite how annoyed she sometimes seems to be with the whole ordeal, her friends know that she would not be able to live without this chaotic activity.

What is most incredible is that she is somehow able to balance her dancing with her schoolwork, though these are both activities that require one's full attention. How she is able to put such incredible energy into everything she sets out to do is very impressive; I imagine she doesn't sleep much. However, her devotion, work ethic, and of course pride in herself and her heritage, are noticed and admired by all. Also noticed is her ever-present loyalty and compassion toward her friends and classmates. Her infectious

laughter can be heard throughout the hallways, and is enough to brighten the mood of anyone having a bad day.

I am fortunate enough to call her one of my best friends, with the knowledge that her busy schedule will never prevent her from helping a person in need. Cornell University will be extremely lucky to have her, and she will be sorely missed by the Class of 2011 and all of Huntington High School. Please give a very warm welcome to our salutatorian, Michelle Byrne.

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## **Danielle Cerezo's Introduction of Valedictorian Carolyn Fante**

Thank you, Jonah for the wonderful introduction.

Carolyn Fante, widely known as Carrie, came to Huntington in her freshman year. From there, she quickly proved herself to be of impressive scholarship material. She rose to the top, competing against the brightest of Huntington High School. But I'm sure you are all aware of her incredible academic achievements. I'm here to tell you about the Carrie I know.

When Carrie first moved to Huntington, I'm sure she was apprehensive. But not once did she miss an opportunity to meet new people. She tried out for the soccer team and joined several clubs. She played an integral role in the volunteer community, serving dinners at HHHI every week, helping to run a prom for the older citizens of Huntington and participating in any and every student government event--even though she was never an officer. Carrie joined the school newspaper, rising to become managing editor and eventually one of two editors-in-chief. She served as the president of the National Honor Society, essentially "running the show" for the prestigious organization. She is also a member of four other honor societies and countless clubs, contributing her dedication, enthusiasm, and ambition to each.

In the four years I have known her, Carrie has been a constant support. Through her presence at school plays, sports games, school events and outside activities, she has given both her close friends and her acquaintances

encouragement. She is always willing to help with a tough science lab or homework question. It is a testament to her character that she would help explain a concept that she had learned three years ago.

Although her grades and club memberships may give this illusion, Carrie is not a slave to her education. She is good company, an excellent book recommender, and an incredible friend. She is willing to go to great lengths, both literally and figuratively, to see the performance of one of her friends. And we always have a great time. Carrie is a wonderful person to be around. She is constantly happy, bringing sunlight to any situation. I am so blessed to count her as one of my best friends.

Though the days of AP Lit reflections, physics labs and economics graphs may be over for some of us, our lives still go on. We will soon part ways, each going to his or her respective colleges. Though I will dearly miss the Class of 2011, I know that everyone who has been a part of this section in our lives will go on to do extraordinary things.

And now I am sure you are all eager to hear from the remarkable young woman you have heard so much about. Please join me in welcoming the 2011 valedictorian, Carolyn Fante.

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## Valedictorian Carolyn Fante's Address

Thank you so much Danni. I want to once again welcome everyone to tonight's long awaited ceremony. Tonight is the end of a long journey, and the start of the new one. Some people have been going to Huntington schools for 12 years, others less, but tonight we will all be leaving together.

As some of you know I came to Huntington four years ago from Brooklyn. Now standing here after living in the suburbs for four years, I can still remember what Huntington looks like to an outsider: crazy and blonde, an interesting place for a Brooklyn redhead!

The first time I was ever in Huntington was the day of the St. Patrick's Day parade when we were looking for houses during eighth grade. I remember seeing mobs of people painted green and wondering what kind of place I was moving to.

My first experience with this school was soccer tryouts. The number of girls with long straight hair that ranged from blonde to brown confused me and made me believe that I was stepping into the suburban land of blonde cheerleaders that all my city friends had warned me about.

Before I moved I thought homecoming was just something that happened in Hilary Duff movies, and I had no idea what lacrosse was. Although I have to say, people in Huntington are equally misinformed about the city. I had one person, during my first weeks in Huntington look at me in complete confusion as I explained that in the city, houses are connected to the house next to them.

But, now as I look back, I see how assumptions and pre-conceived notions can be wrong and how important it is to keep an open mind for new experiences.

It turns out Huntington doesn't have a cheerleading team anymore, homecoming is actually pretty fun and I wouldn't go back and trade being on the soccer team, even to skip the dreaded two-a-days. There are truly incredible people in Huntington who I have loved knowing over the past four years. They have impressed me so much and while I may have initially thought there were too many people with blonde hair, I have discovered that Huntington is rich with diversity – diversity of views, personalities, styles, interests and backgrounds – more than I can count! The talents of my classmates have never ceased to amaze me, whether in theater, athletics, art, music or academics, we all have so much that we bring to the table. I am surprised everyday by the things my classmates have done. Don't forget about what you have achieved in high school and keep building on it because each of us has the ability to do something great and wonderful with our futures.

However, it's not just the successes that we must learn from and carry with us. There is just as much that we can learn from our failures. In college and in life we are going to have to be prepared to deal with failure – we have to learn from it and not be discouraged by it. We don't have to be perfect at something to enjoy doing it. I can easily admit that I will never be a professional soccer player or even a varsity soccer player in college, but I still love playing soccer and want to keep playing. I am also not the stereotypical valedictorian who has never gotten a bad grade in her life. When something happens, such as getting a 13 on a chemistry quiz, the only thing you can do is study harder for the next one, or take a different approach to studying. Never be afraid to ask for help if you need it and never be discouraged because something didn't work out the first time. Everyone sitting here today has some amazing talent that they will find, if they are willing to keep looking.

Over the past four years our teachers have been so supportive. They truly want us to succeed and figure out our strengths. I want to thank each and every teacher in Huntington, because without them the school would not be what it is. I want to thank Mr. Finello and Dr. Leonardi for all the time and effort they put into our school.

And then there are my friends. They are the ones I could not have made it through high school without. They are the ones who I have texted when I was up at 3 a.m. finishing a paper or who studied with me the night before an AP, though sometimes the amount of studying that got done is questionable. Tonight is bittersweet, mostly because next year, I will not get to see them everyday. Most importantly, I need to thank my parents, who have been there every step of the way and were the ones who encouraged me to make the most of my new school. I hope I have. To all the parents here tonight, thank you so much for everything that you've given us.

Now four years since we have started high school, I think we have all changed tremendously, and we will continue to change and grow in college. I am now so grateful for my experiences at Huntington High School, both the good and the not so good. I hope my classmates can say the same. Congratulations to the Class of 2011!

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### **Shayne Larkin's Introduction of Superintendent John J. Finello**

In Superintendent Mr. Finello's profile on the Huntington website, the first sentence reads that he is "Huntington through and through." As a student who's attended the Huntington Public Schools her entire academic career, I can attest to this statement. My earliest memories of Mr. Finello take place in Washington Primary, where I spent my first through third years of education, where he was my principal. He was precisely the man you'd want to have governing a large body of small children. Standing at the entrance of Washington each morning, he had a warm smile and a calm demeanor that could dissolve the anxiety of any 7, 8 or 9 year old.

Mr. Finello spent little time in the shadows, as his soothing aura and assuredness eased chaos in the lunchroom and on the playground, and rallied youngsters at various functions. Eventually I left Washington, but Mr. Finello remained a prominent administrative figure in my life. As a member of the marching band, I've spotted Mr. Finello at each parade the Blue Devils have marched in, proudly watching and applauding with the same bearing I fondly remember from my days at Washington.

Like me, Mr. Finello attended Huntington schools from kindergarten until he graduated. He obtained a Bachelor of Science degree in education at St. John's University in 1972. Mr. Finello simply could not stray far from the town he loves, and he began his teaching career at Huntington the same year.

Mr. Finello's deeply embedded Huntington roots gave him a powerful ability to connect with his students, and he gave them the treatment that he was given during his youth that ultimately resulted in his inability to leave. He went back to school and earned a Master of Arts in Education at Adelphi University in 1975. Finally, in 1985 he received a Professional Diploma in education administration at C.W. Post, which deservedly landed him the role as our superintendent. At one time or another he has served as the district's elementary science coordinator, assistant principal of Huntington Elementary School, principal of Washington School, assistant superintendent for curriculum and instruction and of course superintendent of schools since July 2001.

As if you thought he'd never leave this district, unfortunately, the time has come that we must bid him farewell. He is retiring after 39 years, and he will be very sorely missed. A man who is a part of Huntington as much as he cares for it, I give you Mr. John J. Finello.

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## **Class President Alexa Giammarino's Address**

Throughout the past four years we have all watched each other grow and become the young men and women we are today. We have started our journey through life together, but now it is time for us to seek our futures independently. The different roads we can take will compliment our many different personalities and talents.

Growing up beside so many eccentric and unique kids, I have seen talents beyond this world. Star athletes, hard working geniuses, creative artists and loving people. They have all centered their dreams on fulfilling their talents and pursuing the impossible.

When I was young I always dreamed of being a star. Maybe on Broadway, maybe in a movie, I just wanted to see my name in lights and to know that I earned every ounce of it. Such a little dream has pushed and motivated me to go out and strive for what I wanted. I am smart enough to know that things don't always come easy in life. It may take long and multiple tries but I know one day my dreams will turn into reality. The path that I have chosen beholds burrows of intellect, creativity, and happiness.

Everyone is on a path all leading to a million different wonders, however it is up to you to choose which of those wonders you want to discover and explore. Accentuate your talents and reach for nothing but the stars. Hard work will eventually pay off, but always make sure you are steering with your heart.

Whether it is on to college or off to working, I have no doubt in my mind that my fellow classmates will go on to do great things. Our dreams are too big to be stopped and our determination will not let anyone get in our way of reaching the top.

Reflecting back on my years at Huntington High School I cannot thank my family and teachers enough for showing me how rewarding a little bit of hard work and dedication can be. Their supportive attitude has only encouraged me to move on to bigger and better things, while always holding on to the love that they have provided me.

As the President of the Class of 2011, it is now my duty to present Huntington High School with the senior class gift. This year we have decided to give a podium to symbolize our hopes for many more successful classes filled with astonishing abilities and unlimited accomplishments.

The podium is a place to celebrate achievement and recognize talent. It is the center of ceremonies, where one may proclaim his or her greatness from the complexity of enthusiasm, keen senses, and passion. When one speaks at this podium, remember our class - the class which has made it past all obstacles, achieved extraordinary goals and successfully graduated from one of the greatest high schools in the country. Congratulations everyone, we did it!

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## G.O. President Alexandra Kiley's Address and Introduction of Class Advisors

In eighth grade, I was the Finley Middle School President. One of my priorities was to organize a school dance. I had this grand “inclusion illusion.” It would be a glitter-coated, dimly-lit extravaganza. Our entire class would attend. Every few months, I persuaded administration to give it a go. I made flyers and accosted my poor unsuspecting classmates, urging them to buy tickets. And without fail, before each dance, we'd sell like twenty. Needless to say, each time the dance was canceled.

Only within my last year of high school did I come to terms with the truth behind those unsold dance tickets. It wasn't apathy. I'm sure that at some schools, dances are pretty happenin'. Huntington is not one of those schools, but that isn't bad. Huntington students are eclectic and don't all fit the same mold. I've realized that everyone has their own thing – even if it's not the same. I'm happy that we're all so different. I'd much prefer to support my classmates in their various games, concerts, food drives and plays than to have everyone at one dance.

The good thing about the Class of 2011 is that we're so diverse. I don't mean that “redistricting has given us a cross section of varied economic and racial groups”. I mean that we're all different and it's great! How boring would it be to live in a world where everyone was exactly the same? I know that it's cliché, but we really do represent the “best of the best” in so many different ways.

As our high school years have progressed, I've seen us embrace our differences and become more supportive of one another. Our classmates have distinguished themselves in a variety of disciplines. Not only are we comprised of all-state athletes, nationally recognized musicians, renowned artists and national merit scholars but we have shared these talents with the school. The activities we have run, as a class, through clubs and

through the school have not been limited to dances and parades (which I do still like by the way). They have been a true reflection of our separate talents, skills and identities.

The success that we have achieved as a Class cannot be mentioned without recognition of Mrs. Lori Kenny (Ms. Pyzocha as we still may know her) and Mrs. Eliana Oranges. These two extraordinary ladies have been our advisers from the beginning of freshman year and have led us tirelessly through Homecomings, Playfests, Car Washes, Movie Nights, Safe Halloweens, Breast Cancer Walks, a Talent Show and, of course, Prom. Mrs. Kenny and Mrs. Oranges are a perfect representation of our grade – showing our diversity. Though a ninth grade biology teacher and eleventh grade Spanish teacher may seem to have nothing in common, well...they don't have much in common. But, they sure have made a perfect team. With their different backgrounds and varied passions, our advisers have always pushed us to utilize our talents and creativity and celebrate this diversity. Not only are Mrs. Kenny and Mrs. Oranges incredible leaders, they are also wonderful mentors and friends.

Before I welcome them to the podium, I'd just like to say goodbye. I couldn't have picked smarter, kinder, wackier or better group to spend high school with. I know that the Class of 2011 will bring its spirit, diversity and enthusiasm to the world. Next year in travels, colleges and careers, I'm sure that you will all be a force to be reckoned with. Good luck Class of 2011 and thanks for everything. Mrs. Kenny and Mrs. Oranges will you please come up to graduate us.

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

It is an honor for me to welcome students, faculty, parents, family members and members of the School Board here tonight.

Before I present my remarks I would like to take this opportunity to thank fellow administrators and deans for their work with students and their families. A special thank you goes 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 support students, teachers, administrators and parents alike.

Huntington High School has a proud and proven tradition of academic, artistic, and athletic excellence. This tradition has been upheld over the years thanks to the talents of the student body, the support of dedicated families and the planning and hard work of educators who are experts in their respective content areas and pedagogy.

Members of the class of 2011 have shown a passion for life and a dedication to peers that are both strong and genuine. They enjoy expressing their individuality while at the same time they team up with peers to support their community by volunteering for local organizations and fundraising for needy causes. The class of 2011 has gifted athletes who will be playing competitive college level lacrosse, football, wrestling, and basketball. Those

who are artistically talented have competed in visual and performing arts events gaining accolades and awards.

A large number of the seniors before you took AP exams, played in band and orchestra, sang in chorus, and participated in school plays of professional caliber. They are for the most part gifted and generous young adults who are following their passions at the same time that they plan bright futures.

And now some hard data about all that they have accomplished. Many of our seniors challenged themselves with Advanced Placement courses that have the potential of earning them college level credits. 119 seniors took AP exams. 54 took three AP exams or more with 7 students taking five and 3 students taking six AP exams each for a collective total of 297 AP tests.

For this senior class, the college center processed 1,490 college applications. As of today the class of 2011 received \$ 10,776,423 in scholarship money, an increase of over 3,000,000 from last year. 93% of the 259 students sitting here today will be going to college. 4 % will attend career oriented programs, 1% will be taking a gap year traveling to Israel and joining AmeriCorps before beginning college and 2% will join the workforce.

Students will be attending Harvard, Cornell, University of Pennsylvania, the Julliard all SUNY and various out of state public and private colleges and universities including: Boston College, the Cooper Union, Fordham University, James Madison and Loyola University, United States Merchant

Marine Academy, Northeastern and Northwestern University, Purdue, Tulane, and Villanova University to name a few.

Some of the interesting majors they have selected include: forestry, photography, elementary education, computer science, naval architecture, vocal performance, film production, political science, accounting, nursing, health science, software engineering, marketing, fashion design and merchandizing, criminal justice, culinary arts, wildlife science, athletic training, biochemical, mechanical and electric engineering, English, business, occupational therapy, social work, video game design and development.

The exciting careers you are pursuing will present both challenges and satisfactions. Stay true to yourselves. As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. believed: "Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter." I encourage all of you to remain focused on the goals you have set for yourselves and conclude with the words of Mother Theresa of Calcutta. I hope she will inspire you over the years in the same way that she continues to inspire me:

People are often unreasonable,  
Illogical and self-centered;  
Forgive them anyway.

If you are kind, people may accuse  
You of selfish, ulterior motives;  
Be kind anyway.

If you are successful, you will win  
Some false friends and some true enemies;  
Succeed anyway.

If you are honest and frank,  
People may cheat you;  
Be honest and frank anyway.

What you spend years building,  
Someone may destroy overnight;  
Build anyway.

If you find serenity and happiness,  
They may be jealous;  
Be happy anyway.

The good you do today, people will  
Often forget tomorrow;  
Do good anyway.

Give the world the best you have,  
And it may never be enough;  
Give the world the best you've got anyway.

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

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## **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.

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## **Superintendent John J. Finello's Address**

Thank you for your introduction Shayne.

Members of the Board of Education, colleagues in administration, distinguished members of the faculty, class officers, families, friends and most importantly members of the Class of 2011. It is a pleasure to stand before you as your superintendent of schools on this day of celebration, this day of graduation.

I would like to begin by talking about journeys and how sometimes the journey brings you back home. In some ways, today, for me, is about being home. On this same day in 1968, I was sitting in one of those chairs inside the auditorium. I can say with certainty that I didn't expect to be the superintendent of schools in Huntington and a commencement speaker today.

Your life journey is unpredictable and will provide challenges, rewards and joys as you travel the many bends in the road. If you master the art of listening to your mind and heart while trusting your instincts, you will greet the unexpected with wonder not fear. Look beyond the comfortable choices, be a little daring and trust in yourself.

In some ways the world you are going into, while far more prosperous is far more complex and complicated, than the one I faced in 1968. You have proven through your many accomplishments that you have acquired the

skills and knowledge to succeed. So engage your mind, your instincts and your heart in every decision you make. Engage your whole self and the journey will reveal itself with the passage of time. The lesson I learned when I chose to become a teacher was to love what you do, or don't do it. Don't make a choice because it pleases others or ranks high on someone else's scale of achievement or even because it seems to be, simply the logical thing to do at that moment on your path. Make the choice because it engages all of you.

Freedom to choose can sometimes feel like a terrible burden, but the burden is greatly lightened when you have faith in the unique individual you are, when you recognize your talents, acknowledge your shortcomings and realize you have everything you need for this journey of life.

Now let's talk about going off-roading. When you go off-road, when you start taking risks, your ambitions and limits get to know each other and implore you to reach beyond a comfortable grasp. Be ready for the unplanned experiences. Sometimes they're the very best of all. In fact, the most revealing moments are the ones that are unplanned. It's tempting to search for comfort, to play it safe but every once in a while you will get into a difficult or overwhelming situation; don't be discouraged – learn from it and move on. Realize that you cannot do everything by yourself. Seek advice, counsel and support, ask for help. Remember to return the favor, do something good for someone else.

You are about to encounter a world larger than the one that you have known. You'll audition personalities, outfits and styles until you find the one

that fits. When it comes to the world, engage it in every possible way. You will stamp your imprint in the hearts and minds of others. While you are doing this, don't be too vain, laugh at yourself. Trust me, if you don't, others will do it for you. Enliven everything you do. Leave the computer screen, put down the iPhone and get out that front door.

Thank you to the parents, guardians, family and friends, those who have sacrificed so much for today's graduates. You have done your job well. You have instilled greatness of character into the graduates seated before us. They may surprise you, puzzle you, even defy or challenge you. They may not become a doctor, lawyer, billionaire or Nobel Laureate. And that's OK. We know you have worked so hard to get your graduate to this incredible place. Today is an important day for you, time to let them go, an acknowledgement of one chapter closed. Share the pen, so they can write their own next chapter.

And finally to our graduates, remember that throughout this journey, the only limits that really matter are the ones you put on yourself. Know yourself, trust yourself, and don't blink. If you do these things, when you look back or maybe when you look down from this podium as I am right now, you will know that this journey has led to a rewarding and fulfilling life.

Thank you and congratulations to the Huntington High School Class of 2011.

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## **Trustee Christine Bene's Address**

Thirteen years ago I stood in front of you at Woodhull School. That Meet the Teacher night I looked out at a sea of faces; parents wondering what will become of their kindergarteners. Well parents, look at them now. Accomplished scholars, musicians, artists and athletes. They have surpassed our expectations.

To our amazing children: We have watched you grow into extraordinary men and women. Now it is time for you to travel on. You have been given the foundation here at Huntington High School. Use it to your advantage. Life is a journey. Be kind, easily forgive, be funny, slow down and enjoy what you are doing.

First impressions do matter. Don't let life pass you by. Use everyday to its fullest. Believe in yourself and never let anyone tell you, you can't. You can. Soar to new heights. Dream your dreams and make them come true. Remember a smile and laughter is your best defense against whatever challenges you face in life.

And don't forget Mom B. Come visit. My door is always open and I will have food waiting. Keep in touch. I am so very proud. I love you all.