

July 2, 2020

Serbia Celebrates the DCECHS Class of 2020: Q&A with Victoria Bailey

Victoria Bailey, born in Winston-Salem and raised in Davie County, delivered a powerful speech at the Davie County Early College 2020 Commencement ceremony, after she was voted as the Academic Speaker for the class. Her magnificent delivery and impactful message were both impressive and appreciated during a difficult time. Not only did she touch the hearts of those in Davie County, she spoke directly to her family who joined remotely in celebration. Her family was not across the state or even across the country. Her family joined the virtual service from Serbia. She even eloquently delivered part of her speech in Serbian. We wanted to learn more and Victoria graciously shared about the experience in this Q&A session.

Q: *Who from your family joined for the virtual ceremony from Serbia?*

A: I had several family members who watched my graduation ceremony.

- My grandparents (Alexandar Milev and Rosica Milev)
- My aunt, uncle, and their two daughters (Ivanka Milovanović, Darko Milovanović, Corinne Milovanović, and Alexandra Milovanović)
- My great-aunt and uncle (Mirjana Botić and Ilija Botić)
- My cousins (Jelena Botić and Branko Botić and his wife)

Q: *Would they have traveled in for your graduation if we were not in a pandemic?*

A: Yes, there was a visitation plan in place and finalized before the coronavirus outbreak. My mother and aunt intended to visit Serbia from April 20-April 27, to celebrate the birthday of both of my grandparents. By the trip's end, they all were to return to North Carolina to join in celebrating my birthday, college graduation, and high-school graduation. The reason being all three events were within a two-week timeframe. My college graduation ceremony was May 8, my birthday is on May 13, and our high school graduation was May 16. Plans were set in place months prior and were unfortunately canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Q: *What did that mean to you to have them watch?*

A: To have my family watch the ceremony overseas meant I could, though in a limited manner, share this monumental achievement with them. I grieved over the lost possibility to celebrate properly in-person, to miss hearing from the crowd their jubilant cheers and thrill. I whole-heartedly contribute my academic success to their continual support. They have provided me a loyal backing, staunch motivation, and assured confidence. As declared in my graduation address, "I would not be here if not for you." My mother, the true pioneer of my victories, celebrated with me at the in-person ceremony.

Q: *What was their response to your speech and you speaking directly to them as part of it?*

A: My family was thoroughly overjoyed after hearing my speech. I was met with a deluge of compliments. They were overcome with tears, expressing how proud they were of me. I was further congratulated for my public speaking ability, articulation, and impactful presentation. Being voted as our class Academic Speaker meant a tremendous honor and with it, a sincere commitment to two crowds: my class and my family. The Serbian address featured in the speech was a complete surprise to them. They have never had the chance to hear my speeches before and this meant dearly to them.

Q: *Your speech was inspirational to your fellow classmates! If they were to take just one thing from your speech, what do you hope they take away?*

A: I would hope my classmates pay tribute to the underlying significance of the Phoenix. The class of 2020 was struck with abrupt misfortune—our Senior year utterly shadowed by the looming threat of a public health crisis. We were expected to swiftly adjust and accommodate. A time meant for significant, irreplaceable milestones became characteristic of a nightmare. Yet, our class is exemplified by generational perseverance. We are Phoenix. We are resilient. We are steadfast. We are champions despite circumstances.