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Rockville High School's Valedictorian and Salutatorian Plan Careers in Medicine

Class of 2022 Persevered and is Resilient

VERNON, Connecticut – Two “brilliant scholars” are the valedictorian and salutatorian of the Rockville High School Class of 2022 and with their classmates will graduate from Rockville High School Thursday evening.

Rockville High School Principal Jason Magao said 194 students are expected to receive their diplomas.

“Perseverance” is the hallmark of the Class of 2022, Magao said. The class was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, losing spring sports and being forced to learn remotely after schools closed in March 2020. The Class of 2022’s junior year was equally difficult and it began its senior year still having to wear masks to school. Students also experienced the social justice movements that swept the nation.

“These students have endured more than COVID,” Magao said. “It’s been a heavy, heavy four years for these kids.”

“We want our students to be resilient, and the Class of 2022 is the very definition of resilience,” Vernon Superintendent Dr. Joseph P. Macary said. “Whatever was thrown at these students, they adapted. Together with their teachers, they faced something that was unprecedented. Together they worked hard and achieved. These are traits that will serve them well in life.”

The Vernon Public Schools, in partnership with family and community, is committed to provide a quality education, with high expectations, in a safe environment where all students become independent learners and productive contributors to society.

The class has also accomplished much – success on the athletic fields, and in the classroom and the creative arts.

Magao said My Kim Lai Huyen, the valedictorian, and Kaylin Maher, the salutatorian, are brilliant and impressive young women who he expects to do well in college, lead impressive lives and contribute to their communities. “Both are brilliant scholars who are determined to make their way in the world and to make the world better,” he said.

Both are headed to college and plan careers in medicine – My Kim as a physician and Kaylin as a physician assistant.



My Kim Lai Huyen, Valedictorian



Kaylin Maher, Salutatorian

My Kim is headed to Northeastern University and plans to focus on premed and sociology. While interested in specializing in oncology and cancer research, she is also interested in exploring and addressing disparities in healthcare.

“Women have lower health outcomes than men,” My Kim said. “Women feel like their pain is not as serious and are less likely to go to the doctor. People in socioeconomic disadvantaged areas also have lower outcomes. Racism plays a role too.”

By focusing on premed and sociology, My Kim said she hopes to understand and address how different standings in society affect the healthcare people receive.

“When you go to the doctor you think you are going to be treated,” she said. “It is not fair that all people can’t get the best treatment.”

My Kim’s interest in exploring this area of medicine is a result of losing an aunt to a heart attack. She said her aunt had experienced chest pain and went to her doctor, who downplayed it. A week later she died.

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“Cardiovascular disease ran in her family,” My Kim said. “The doctor dismissed her comments about how she was feeling. That was alarming to me. I started doing research and realized it was not a one-time thing. This happens to a lot of people in marginalized groups.”

My Kim is realistic that one person can only do so much, but she’s going to try to make things better.

“I can’t do a lot myself, but I’m hoping that by bringing it up it gets people interested,” she said.

It was Rockville High School’s allied health program and a job shadowing experience that helped My Kim realize medicine was what she wanted to pursue.

She also feels like she breaks the mold of valedictorians because, although she was born in the U.S., her family spoke only Vietnamese at home.

“Valedictorians in the movies are perfect students who have never struggled,” she said. “I definitely wasn’t that stereotypical top graduate.”

When My Kim arrived at Center Road School as a kindergartener, she was enrolled in the English as a Second Language program and credits ESL teacher Kim Cheman for playing a key role in her education.

“It was hard to sit in class because I just didn’t understand what was happening half the time,” My Kim said. “I didn’t enjoy school. I felt excluded and didn’t understand.”

But once she started learning English, she had the tools she needed and worked hard in class and at home, and completed the program while still in first grade.

“Learning English made me see how fun learning could be,” she said. “That motivated me into learning the different subjects in elementary school, middle school and high school. Without Ms. Cheman, I would not be where I am today. I felt safe with her, which helped with my learning.”

Salutatorian Kaylin Maher is headed to Wesleyan University in Middletown, where she plans to major in biology. She participated in Rockville High Schools allied health program and opportunities to shadow healthcare workers, which helped her develop her goal of becoming a physician assistant.

“The shadowing experiences really allowed me to find which pathway was best for me,” Kaylin said. “It was important for me to be able to see healthcare workers in their everyday lives and to learn about different fields. I’ve had the opportunity to explore a wide array of things at Rockville, which is something I’m grateful for.”

Kaylin was also active in Rockville High School’s Creating Writing Program, which caught her eye when she was still in middle school.

“Writing has been really important to me,” she said, adding she thinks it will help her in the medical field. “A lot of people in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) are kind of aloof when it comes to interacting with patients.” She said she thinks her writing and speaking experience will help her effectively communicate with patients, as well as be helpful in research and publishing.

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