

SAYVILLE SUPERINTENDENT DR. JOHN E. STIMMEL: PRESENTATION OF THE CLASS OF 2022

Congratulations and best wishes to the Sayville High School Class of 2022! In my nearly 40 years of education, I have had the privilege of working with many fine students but, I can tell our audience today that the class sitting in front of us is truly extraordinary. How fortunate for your principals, teachers and I that we have been able to watch you grow from front row seats. Together with your parents, guardians, and family, we were with you as you entered kindergarten, moved up through your elementary years, Middle School, and now High School.

We look upon you with deep pride. You are worthy members of the long line of Sayville School's illustrious graduates, worthy of the title golden flashes. Certainly one of your most remarkable attributes is that you have consistently lived by the golden rule through all your school years. From the time you were very young your families and your teachers instilled in you this time-honored value of always treating others the way you yourself wished to be treated. Our world is a much better place because you are in it.

It has been said how sad that the class of 2022 had their educational experience disrupted by the pandemic. To this sentiment I reply, yes there certainly were disappointments, interruptions and frustrations over the past two and a half school years, but, in the final analysis, how lucky we all were to have such resilient and resourceful students (and staff) with which to face this crisis. During what was the one of the biggest challenges in the history of American education, it would have been easy to give into self-pity and despair. This, however, was never going to happen with the class of 2022. Your spirit and your passion energized our High School and our District. Working with your teachers and principals, you somehow found a way to make the most of whatever was thrown at you. Over these past two years you, the SHS class of 2022, helped us all to discover what deep down we always knew: the best education is the education that takes place when teachers and students forge relationships, work elbow to elbow, learn in-person from each other and learn in-person with each other.

Your resilience through the trials of the pandemic inspired all who know you. The philosopher Joseph Campbell spent his life studying history's greatest heroes. He found that the one outstanding quality common to all heroes is simply this, "A hero is someone who has given his or her life to something bigger than oneself." In

many ways both great and small you have lived up to this principle. This has been especially true during the past two years of the pandemic. You faced great challenges and reached out beyond your individual needs to help others. Where many retreated, not only did you persevere, you excelled. Where others withdrew, you found ways to extend yourselves; when there were those who cried, why is this happening to me? You asked, “what can I do for others?” For all these reasons, I can say to you that the members of the Class of 2022 are all my heroes. This is especially true for those young men and women from this class who are going on to defend our country in the United States Armed Services.

I would be remiss if I did not take a moment this evening to express my sincere gratitude to you, your families and our school community. In a career that spans 4 decades it has been a blessing to me to have had the privilege of working with you, your classmates, the educators of Sayville, the families, our incredible Board of Education in the most supportive community on earth. Please join me in recognizing Mr. Norm deVenau. After 54 years of volunteer service to the District, Mr. deVenau, husband, father of 3, former Marine, PTA representative, member of the Sayville Chamber of Commerce and (for the past 18 years) Board of Education trustee, will be stepping down. Mr. deVenau thank you for your service to our community.

In closing, the country singer named Tim McGraw performs a song that always reminds me of you, the SHS class of 2022. If Mr. McGraw doesn't mind I'm going to borrow a few of his thoughts for this occasion:

To the Class of 2022 I ask: Make time for family, engage in your faith, respect your home town and our nation; be quick to extend courtesy to others, live an ethical life, take time for fun; make sure to truly love one another...

For “I know that you got mountains to climb, dreams that your dreaming, and that one day the work you put in will be realized. Let yourself feel the pride but...

Always stay (as you have always been) humble and kind.”

To the Sayville graduating class of 2022:

May God bless you, your families, our town and our nation.

Congratulations!