

Class of 2022 Salutatorian - Chad Moccio

Hello everyone, and welcome the Sayville class of 2022 commencement. First and foremost, I would like to thank Dr. Stimmel, Dr. Criscione, Mr. Hoffer and members of the Sayville Schools Administration, members of the Board of Education for everything they do, and I'd like to thank Sayville Faculty, family, and friends gathered here today. It's truly an honor to be able to speak in front of you all and to represent Sayville's outstanding graduating class of 2022. Now if you were here at last year's graduation, I know what you may be thinking. The last student to speak at this podium kinda looks like me, and her last name sure looks a lot like mine. That's probably because it was my wonderful sister, Nicole, who absolutely nailed her speech as class president. I'll go out on a limb and say it's a pretty rare occurrence for two siblings to speak in consecutive years like this, so there is pretty much not a single person out there who can relate to the position I'm in here. And of course, Nicole gave me a really tough act to follow, but there's no pressure, right? I'm sure some of my family members will let me know who the better speaker was later. I guess we'll see.

After giving much thought to what I wanted to talk about here today, one thing kept circling through my mind. I decided that I wanted to talk about music, which may come as a surprise to many of you. I have a very special passion for music. But if you think about it we all do, in a way. It brings people together, whether you're in a huge crowd at a concert, dancing at a wedding, jamming out in your car, we all have music that we love and listen to brighten our days. I have been able to learn how to make music and this has been a very important aspect of my high school experience. I've lost track of how many times I've mentioned playing the trombone, and had somebody respond with the same four-word question every time: "You still do band?" I know, it's crazy. Or maybe it's just something that I never made known about myself for the simple reason that I thought people would judge me for it. I used to reply back to this question by saying, "Yeah, I still do it, since I'm pretty good at it, I figured it will look good for college." I'm apologizing now to everyone who heard that answer from me.

I lied.

I didn't stick with music to list it as an activity on a college application, I kept doing it because I loved it. But for some reason until fairly recently, that felt like something I couldn't tell people. Perhaps as I watched our time here at Sayville High School winding down to a close, it hit me. One of the most enjoyable and memorable parts of my four years here should not be treated as some extracurricular I did on the side.

I watched the class of 2021 graduate last year, seeing many of my closest friends and my sister leave Sayville high school. But not many people know that I sat over on the side of the field, one of the kids wearing white--Kids who deserve a lot of credit by the way--playing "pomp and circumstance" as all the

graduates walked out. Nobody knows that I sprinted into the school to put my trombone away and sprinted back out to take pictures with all the people I cared about in their caps and gowns. On the other hand, I'd bet that far more people sitting here today can remember when I scored a touchdown at our homecoming game on the opposite side of this same field. It's interesting how that works. One thing makes you feel like you're on top of the world, and the other thing you would rather not mention.

I even worried about talking about this today, because I felt that some people in the audience may be thinking to themselves that I could've chosen a number of different things other than band to discuss in my graduation speech, and that's ok. I had given it much thought and decided that if this speech is that last mark I can make on Sayville high school, I at least want to go out knowing that everyone here today knew the person I really was. And music is a big part of that, not something I want to hide.

If we look around at this community gathered here today, every single person's life is uniquely theirs. Not one person's life is the same as another's. We don't know what someone may be going through, stressing about, or what they may go home to every day. Since everyone's life is different, the things that bring a person joy will vary for each individual too. And as people, we all have the right to do the things that make us happy, free from judgment. When we leave high school and have this fresh start, I hope that everyone finds that thing and never stops doing it if they have already found it. High school can be a scary place sometimes when you get caught up in your appearance and try to fit in or be "cool." We tend to let the opinions of other people weigh far too much. Our definition of cool changes when we leave here today, though. No matter what it is that you choose to do in this life, if you have a passion for it, then it is cool.

Every single person that is sitting here today has something "cool" that they do. It can be playing a sport, an instrument, creating art, scientific research, it doesn't matter. If you love doing it, then it's cool.

We leave this place after today and we have a clean slate in a brand new environment to be the person we want to be. I know that all of these graduates sitting here with me today have the potential to do great things and have bright futures. If I have one wish for you all, it's that you never let other people make you shy away from doing what you love or chasing your dreams. Everybody has different goals and things that drive them, different things they hope to achieve to find happiness. The pursuit of happiness, it's in our constitution, a natural right given to each and every one of us. So go out and pursue it. We're entering the most crucial stages of our lives, and we only get one. One life, one shot deal. And when we look back on it, we shouldn't have regrets, we don't want to be saying to ourselves: "I wish I would've done this, or I wish I tried that." If you have a dream, just go for it, and you will be surprised at what you discover you are capable of.

I played in my last concert not too long ago, finishing off with the same song we do each and every year, The Music of the Beatles. As the song went on, I thought of all the memories and friendships that came

from music over the past four years. Some of my closest friendships have come from seeing the same people everyday 5th period. In fact, this year's valedictorian and I sat next to each other in the trombone section for our senior year. Mrs. Vanboxel has always liked to say there's a strong correlation between music and academics, maybe she's onto something there. She proudly calls us her smartest section ever. I'm sure Gene could tell you just how much fun I was having each and every day in class. Music will always be something that I can look back on and be thankful that I was a part of, and I want to encourage everyone graduating to get involved with things that they can enjoy and say the same, no matter what others may think about it.

Popularity is something that is valued in high school, and our strong desire to fit in can dictate our actions. But those days are behind us. It is time to forge our own paths as we move on to the next chapter. The person you are is not set in stone, not even close. We're entering a period of huge changes.

I was talking to my physics teacher, Mr. Nielsen, who ironically is at his wedding at this very moment. Congratulations to him. In a sense he is moving onto a new stage of his life in the same way all of us are. We were discussing how a lot of pivotal things are going to happen in the time between this point in our lives and when we reach the point he is at right now. Some really great things, some not so great things too. It's all part of the journey that is starting for us as soon as we leave this place, when we get the chance to create the life that we want to live. But what is life if we're not doing what makes us happy? If we're not being true to ourselves? Go out and find a career that you enjoy, surround yourself with people who make you smile, laugh, and build you up. And as far as the people who want to bring you down, because there will always be those people, let them motivate you to keep moving forward.

I know I had a lot to say there. But there's still one big question to be answered:

Did I say it as well as my sister did?

To my graduating class of 2022, I look forward to seeing you down the road and seeing people you become. Thanks for a fantastic four years and for all the memories. Remember to pursue that happiness, and do you. Best of luck in your futures, let's go change the world.

Thank you.