

SAYVILLE CLASS OF 2022 VALEDICTORY ADDRESS: “ENDGAME” BY GENE WENG

[Band plays Avengers theme]

Good evening! First, I would like to thank Mr. Hoffer, Dr. Criscione, the Board of Education, and other administrators for making this event possible.

Additionally, I would like to give a special thank you to the family members gathered here today. To the parents, you have supported us so much as we have grown and none of us would be here without you. Thank you.

Next, I would like to acknowledge the band. The band shows up to so many Sayville events and is a crucial part of the Sayville community. As you now know, Chad and I both played trombone in the band, and last year at graduation we sat next to each other in those very seats playing for the Class of 2021. I'd even be willing to bet that the next year's valedictorian or salutatorian also comes from the band.

Lastly, I would like to recognize our superintendent, Dr. Stimmel. When I first met Dr. Stimmel, I didn't know him as the superintendent but as the principal of Cherry Avenue, where I went to elementary school. Dr. Stimmel has made an impact on me ever since my very first day of school. After my first day at Cherry, I was supposed to go to an afterschool program called New Life. However, with all my excitement and nervousness in the morning, I forgot to ask my parents what bus I was taking there. That was kind of a problem. At the end of the day, I watched frantically as all the other students were shuffled from the cafeteria to their buses and soon out of sight. In the midst of my panic, Dr. Stimmel came up behind me and calmed me down. He then personally drove me in his car to New Life. I'll never forget that. As this is Dr. Stimmel's last year at Sayville, I want to give a big round of applause for him. Thank you for all you've done. To me, this story really emphasizes the character of the teachers and staff at Sayville. Each is willing to take time out

of his or her day to help others. To the teachers and staff, thank you for all the work you've put in to get us to where we are today. You guys are our heroes.

Talking about heroes, I love the Avengers movies. Yeah, I'm kind of a nerd, but has everyone seen them? Ok good, because if you haven't, I'm going to warn you: I'm going to spoil all of them. But there's a reason: I think our high school years played out very similar to the Avengers movies. Our freshman year represents the first Avengers movie. We all started off super awkward, and we didn't really know what we were doing. Like eating Tide Pods? Who thought of that? But, as our freshman year went on, we formed new connections, banded together, and somehow made it through our first year of high school. Kind of like the Avengers.

[Band plays Avengers Theme 2]

Our sophomore year was *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. No one really remembers this one, or cares about it, but at the end of the day, robots took over the world. Except in our case, they weren't named Ultron, they were named Zoom and Google Meets. Yeah, that's when COVID hit us. And that's when our version of *Infinity War* began.

I'm going to be honest with you: the Avengers lost in *Infinity War*. So yeah, junior year was definitely tough. Our entire school was snapped. While half of us didn't exactly turn to dust, we were separated into two cohorts, never able to interact. While I don't think any of us actually fought Thanos in junior year, we did face other great threats. We had to suffer through lockdowns, contact tracing, quarantines, and the ever-present *bong* of a Google Meet. That's a sound I never want to hear again. Our junior year was tough. We had to face the normal junior year stress of taking SATs, APs, sports, all that, on top of the anxiety of COVID: not knowing when we'd see our friends again, not knowing when you could be contact-traced in the middle of class and be sent home for two weeks. It was scary. But, like Thor and Groot in *Infinity War*, we made new friends and joined forces in junior year. We were there for each other, always

trying to brighten someone else's day, as dark as it may have been. Like the Avengers.

Senior year was our *Avengers Endgame*. Time to collect the Infinity Stones. But instead of the Time Stone, Power Stone, and all that, we had to get letters of recommendation, activity resumes, college essays, and all that on our gauntlet. But through all the stress and things going on, we united as a class, finally coming together in person. We rooted for each other, supported each other, fought for each other. We assembled like Avengers. Well, we did spend a month trying to assassinate each other with water guns (Chad, I almost got you) but hey the Avengers got in fights too. What matters is that by the end of the year, we survived. We braved through the pandemic, we braved through our *Infinity War*. After everything we have experienced, I can say that we, as the Class of 2022, are one of the most bravest and resilient classes of Sayville High School.

And now after we have united together, it's time to depart. Even the Avengers went their separate ways after *Endgame*. Next year, regardless of your plans, you may find yourself in unfamiliar settings and even *Far From Home*. If you're ever stuck, remember the powers you gained from Sayville High School and the Sayville community. While we weren't bitten by radioactive spiders, we did gain the power of forming webs and connections with the people around us. While we didn't get an unbreakable shield, we did gain the unbreakable power of resilience. Remember, even heroes can fall, fail, or lose. That's what makes them human. But they also stand back up and fight back, never willing to accept defeat. That's what makes them heroes. As a class, we faced intense, unique challenges throughout our time at Sayville High School. . . and we beat them! That's why we are here today! As we enter our New Life, we won't have our teachers to guide us or Dr. Stimmel to drive us. But, Class of 2022, remember we are heroes and nothing can stop us. Thank you.

[Band plays Avengers Theme 2 to the end]