

Commencement 2021

Welcome to the friends and family of the Sayville High School Class of 2021. Welcome to our Sayville High School alumni. Most of all welcome and congratulations to our Sayville Senior Class of 2021. This has been a year like no other but that is not where I want to begin this conversation.

I'd like to take us all back in time some 13 years ago. To our seniors' first day of school. Seniors, most of you were kindergarteners entering one of Sayville's three outstanding elementary schools. You came to school that first day dressed in new clothes, bright backpacks and shiny faces. Your mother, father, grandparent or someone else who was close to you held your hand. Many of you were excited, all of you were at least a little nervous.

But some of you were terrified. Your eyes were wide, maybe even a little tearful. Your arms were wrapped around your mother in a vice-like death grip. There was no way that you were going to let go. Who of us today cannot relate in some way to that terrified young child from 13 years ago? What was going through his/her mind?

- The child could be thinking: What was going to happen beyond those big, imposing school doors?
- Who are the people I will meet? Will they be kind?
- Am I going to change? How will I change?
- Will my loved ones be there when the day was over?

What happened next was what I as your principal called "The Peel." Not a banana or an apple peel. The "peel" that I refer to was much more personal. A caring adult from the school would talk with your mom. We would assure you and her in a soft but confident voice that everything was going to be okay. Then gently we would peel you loose from Mom's legs. (Sometimes it would take a few moments for the circulation to return before Mom could blow you a kiss and encourage you to take your next step in life's great journey. Oh man, that could be a tough and very emotional moment for all of us.

But that's how it goes. When you live in a great town like ours the teachers and your families work together to nurture and protect you. We assured your parents, we got you to class, then your teachers and you took care of the rest.

Now look at you. Thirteen years has gone by in the blink of an eye. How you have grown, what incredible experiences you have had; what awesome memories you take with you.

On June 7th you got to return to where your school years started. You've also had a chance to visit the Middle School. From these vantage points you've had the chance to see how far you have come. But these visits did much more than that. You demonstrated to all who saw you that everything did turn out okay. You inspired our younger students and you delivered to all of your teachers proof that your hard work and their hard work has truly paid off.

What can be said about this year that hasn't already been said? So today I simply want to celebrate your resilience. Working with your teachers, principal, assistant principals and staff you found a way to make every day count. Whether learning in class or on line - you showed up. When things didn't work one way you found another. When they said, "we'll be lucky if we make it to October, you've made it to June.

Through all the challenges this year threw at you, you figured things out- you acquired knowledge and you performed both inside and outside the classroom. There were those who said

cancel - you said push on. Though our seasons and events may have appeared unusual at times, your performance was, as always, spectacular. Thanks to you, your teachers and your coaches we had art, music, theater, song and sports.

With each event that you participated in this year you brought our schools and our community one step closer to normal. And now on this last official day of your Sayville Schools career, as you are poised to take your next great step in life's adventure, let me say to you this: our world needs you- our world needs your creativity, compassion, and zeal. Our world needs solutions, healing and peace.

We see in the news that all too often our world can be a risky and sometimes dangerous place.

-to those of you who will join the front lines in service to your neighbors: to those of you who aspire to be first responders, health care providers, and *especially to our remarkable four seniors who are joining America's armed forces*, we salute you and thank you in advance for your service.

Yes, the world can be terrifying at times but it is also exciting and full of opportunity.

In closing let me leave you with these two thoughts: Your school journey started when you first stepped through the school's big doors as a scared young kindergartener. Now as you are about to step through the door into a much larger world, it is your parents and teachers who wish they could hold onto you with a vise-like death grip. I speak for many of us when I say that part of us never wants to let you go. How we wish we could hold onto you for even just a little bit longer.

But we know we can't. The world needs you and you need to go it into it. There is no doubt that with your talent, knowledge and wisdom you will grow and, as you do, you will make the world a better place. May God bless our nation, our town, and may God bless the Sayville graduating class of 2021!