

Commentary...

The valedictory speech I wish I had given

By Olivia Hougham
Guest Columnist

Dear Class of 2020:

I am not here to give you the usual “Congratulations, we made it” or trip down memory lane. Because under our circumstances, what we need is something real, something that inspires us to emerge from this time of unrest with a heightened sense of moral awareness.

While it is inevitable that the world is constantly changing, it is also inevitable that we must grow alongside it. However, when we choose the comfort of seeing the world as we want to instead of as we need to, we become oblivious to one simple fact: Our lives are not centered around ourselves.

Yes, high school was a time to get the help we needed to feel better about who we were then. But now that we’ve reached this significant milestone, we must transition our thinking to a world beyond our concerns. Now is the time to ask: Will I take responsibility for others as my civic duty, or will I just keep taking, period? Because not only does turning 18 and graduating high school deem you an adult, but these turning points also assume you must act like one.

You see, for most kids, high school is about taking the opportunities you choose for yourself and using them to your advantage. But for a very few, high school is about giving their efforts into making their school and community a better place.

The problem with this culture is that while the takers are continually satisfied by what the givers are offering them, the givers become taken for granted. No matter how hard they work, they will never reap the benefits of their success. In the meantime, the takers become so used to receiving credit for the givers’ work that they become unable to face adversity themselves. Time after time again, our society only rewards the takers because they cannot distinguish between those who seem driven and those who are driven, and that is why society has failed us all.

I am a giver. I have felt the frustration and disappointment that has come in hand with things continuously being taken from me. I have given this school my high-achieving academic performance, my dedication to the Chinese program, my athletic skills and all-league awards, my continuous

community service, and even my ethnic diversity as I was one of the only students of color at a predominantly white school. This school took all of this from me while I received nothing. Not even the smallest recognition. When I asked the school to acknowledge that I had been emotionally abused by my coaches, they simply refused. After all I had done for them, they could not give me the justice that I had so deeply deserved.

Now it’s fine that our school prefers to raise takers over givers. What is not fine is that our world needs more givers right now. Our school is a reflection of society itself. We continually seize things from others as long as we have smiles on our faces that mask our true intentions, and in this process, we have convinced ourselves that we are giving when in fact, we are doing the exact opposite. In a world that more readily accepts takers than givers, we must decide to change these standards. By asking ourselves how much we have really given and how much more we are capable of, we will learn to create lasting change in an unsatisfactory society.

Of course, it is normal to wonder why it is so wrong to put ourselves before others in a world that is already so self-driven. Regardless, you need to be reminded to not just ask what you want out of your life, but what life is asking of you. Our world needs those who are willing to solve the problems past generations have put upon ours, like preventing another global pandemic, dismantling systemic racism, and solving climate change.

Yes, for most of us, high school was ours for the taking, but the rest of our lives must become dedicated to giving. Because if anything, all the confusion, grief, and pain we’ve experienced during this time should only encourage us to build a better future for generations to come, one where our children are guaranteed a normal high school graduation, equal human rights, and the ability to know when to be a taker and when to be a giver.

The time has come to reflect on the finality of these past four years. Therefore, I would like to thank Sisters High School for teaching me how to give, and not because they encouraged this behavior, but because they took so much from me that giving everything I had became my only choice.

A N N O U N C E M E N T S

Class of 2020 Banners
New SHS graduates can pick up their free Class of 2020 keepsake banners — their banners that were on display in downtown Sisters. Banners will be handed out during the yearbook drive-up distribution event 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesday, July 1 in the high school bus lane. Those who cannot make it to Wednesday’s event can pick up their banners between 5 and 6:30 p.m., Tuesday, July 2 at the high school. Any banners or yearbooks left over will be available for pick-up when the new school year begins. For details, see citizens4community.com.

Sisters Habitat Volunteers!
The Habitat Thrift Store, ReStore, and Construction sites have recently opened up and could use your help! New volunteer orientations will take place every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at noon at the Sisters Habitat office upstairs at 141 W. Main Avenue. An RSVP is required as space is very limited in the socially-distanced meeting room. Each person must wear a mask and sanitize their hands when entering the building. A mask will be provided if needed. Please contact Marie at marie@sistershabitat.org or 541-549-1193 to save your spot.

Weekly Food Pantry
Wellhouse Church has a weekly food pantry on Thursdays. For the next several weeks, food will be distributed drive-through style from 12:30-1:30 p.m. at the Wellhouse Market building, 222 N. Trinity Way. People in need of food may drive through the parking lot and pick up a bag of food for their household. Other Sisters-area churches are joining with Wellhouse Church to contribute both financially and with volunteers to help sustain the program. Call 541-549-4184 for more information.

Circle of Friends
Circle of Friends, a mentoring program in Sisters, is continuing to find innovative ways to reach out and assist their mentors, children and families. Current needs include childcare to allow parents to continue to work, internet/computer access for online learning, supplies for at-home learning and activity kits, and even basic needs, such as food and medical access. Circle of Friends has also established an emergency fund to provide immediate response for the most pressing needs. Contact Kellie at 503-396-2572 to help.

City of Sisters Community Grants Program Applications
The City of Sisters is seeking to award grants to non-profit community groups and other entities that meet the grant criteria for the 2020-21 fiscal year. The City will award up to a total of \$40,000 in grants for Sisters community projects. Interested organizations should submit a Community Grant application and letter of interest by Friday, July 31, 2020, attention Kerry Prosser, City Recorder. Applications are available on our website: www.ci.sisters.or.us. For information contact Kerry Prosser at 541-323-5213 or kprosser@ci.sisters.or.us.

Habitat Stores Are Accepting Donations!
Sisters Habitat for Humanity ReStore is now accepting donations by appointment only. Go to the ReStore webpage at sistershabitat.org/restore/ and click the SignUpGenius button to make an appointment. When delivering your donation, go to the big gray tents in the “back lot.” There is one tent per donation day and when that tent is full, no more donations will be accepted that day. If you are donating heavy items, make sure you bring extra help with you. Staff and volunteers are not allowed to assist with off-loading. All donations are quarantined for at least 4 days before being available for sale. Sisters Habitat is not offering pick-up service at this time as a safety precaution for our staff and volunteers. Donations for the Thrift Store are only being accepted off-site at the old Thrift Store at 141 W. Main Ave. on Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 9 to 11 a.m. Parking spaces are reserved on Main Ave. in front of the building for those donating items. The Thrift Store and ReStore are both open for business Monday through Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Shoppers are required to sanitize their hands and wear a face mask before entering. A maximum of 15 shoppers are allowed in the store at any one time. For more information please contact the Habitat office at 541-549-1193 or email info@sistershabitat.org.

Sisters Community Church
Do you need help with running errands or deliveries or more? Sisters Community Church has volunteers available and is cultivating a caring community. Call Wendy at 541-389-6859. Visit the church website at www.sisterschurch.com.

Community Assistance During COVID-19 Pandemic
VAST church is eager to help, picking up prescriptions, delivering groceries or food, helping however they can. People in need can call 541-719-0587 and press 1 to be connected to Mikee Stutzman, Ministry Coordinator or email her at admin@vastchurch.com. VAST Church is willing to help as long as resources and volunteers allow.

Furry Friends Pet Food
The Furry Friends (FF) office is closed but is still offering free dog or cat food to those in need. Pet food can be left outside the Sisters Art Works building where the FF office is located. It will be marked with your first name only. Pick-ups are available at an agreed upon time. (It can’t be left outside for very long as other critters may get into it.) Please call or text Furry Friends at 541-797-4023.

PET OF THE WEEK

Humane Society of Central Oregon
541-382-3537



Meet **BROTHER**, a handsome 7-year-old Staffordshire terrier mix who is eager to find his forever family! This wonderfully adventurous pooch loves to go camping, hiking, and boating so he would make a wonderful companion for someone who appreciates the great outdoors! If you are looking for a handsome, clever and adventurous pup to add to your family, then Brother is the dog for you! Hurry down to the Humane Society of Central Oregon and meet Brother today!

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SISTERS HOMELAND REALTY
ALI MAYEA, Principal Broker/Owner
541-480-9658 • 541-588-6007

Please call the church before attending to verify schedules as buildings begin to reopen.

SISTERS-AREA CHURCHES

Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church (ELCA)
386 N. Fir Street • 541-549-5831
10 a.m. Sunday Worship
shepherdofthehillslutheranchurch.com

Sisters Community Church (Nondenominational)
1300 W. McKenzie Hwy. • 541-549-1201
10 a.m. Sunday Worship (with signing)
sisterschurch.com | info@sisterschurch.com

St. Edward the Martyr Roman Catholic Church
123 Trinity Way • 541-549-9391
5:30 p.m. Saturday Vigil Mass
9 a.m. Sunday Mass
8 a.m. Monday-Friday Mass

Calvary Church (NW Baptist Convention)
484 W. Washington St., Ste. C & D • 541-588-6288
10 a.m. Sunday Worship | ccsisters.org

The Episcopal Church of the Transfiguration
68825 Brooks Camp Road • 541-549-7087
8:30 a.m. Ecumenical Sunday Worship (Sunday school, childcare) 10:15 a.m. Episcopal Sunday Worship (Sunday school, childcare)

Chapel in the Pines
Camp Sherman • 541-549-9971
10 a.m. Sunday Worship

Sisters Church of the Nazarene
67130 Harrington Loop Road • 541-389-8960 | sistersnaz.org
10:45 a.m. Sunday Worship | 2sistersnaz@gmail.com

Westside Sisters
442 Trinity Way • 541-549-4184 | westsidesisters.org
10 a.m. Sunday Worship
6 p.m. Worship the 3rd Tuesday of each month

Vast Church (Nondenominational)
541-719-0587 • 9:37 a.m. Sunday Worship
Meeting virtually and in small groups. See vastchurch.com for details.

Seventh-Day Adventist Church
386 N. Fir Street • 541-595-6770, 541-306-8303
11 a.m. Saturday Worship

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints
452 Trinity Way • Branch President, 541-420-5670;
10 a.m. Sunday Sacrament Meeting

Baha’i Faith Meetings
Devotional Gatherings, Study Classes and Discussion Groups. Call for location and times • 541-549-6586