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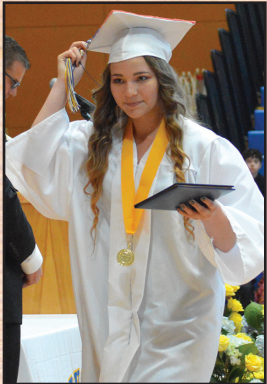
Savannah Norman



Emily Obenauf



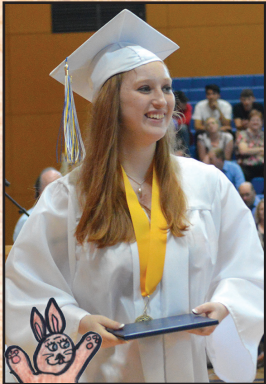
Jacob Pasko



Cierra Premo



Kylie Scott



Kendra Stefan



Isaiah Thompson



Laura Tonnung



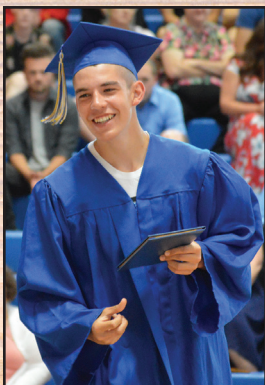
Jade VanPelt



Jenna Watson



Tyler Wolf



Radek Zikmund



Principal Nate Underwood



Class President Charity Coleman



Guest Speaker George Spaulding

FAREWELL

I wanted to start off by saying thank you to everyone who's come before me to speak today. It's not easy to come up here and talk in front of so many people, so let's give them another round of applause. Family, friends, faculty, coaches, neighbors, and everyone in between, thank you so much for making it out today to be here with us for this really important day. The support and excitement from everyone so far has made this experience so much fun for me and I just want to express how grateful I am. So, from the bottom of my heart, thank you.

Over the past few months, I have heard, "This is our time." I've heard that being said to graduates for years and I've never really thought much about it. Since becoming a senior myself, it's finally started to sink in. What is it my time for anyways? Have these past 18 years not been my time? And as seniors in high school, we've all been subject to advice, both optimistic and pessimistic about what is to come for us now that we are becoming adults or young adults or just high school graduates. I don't know what I would be considered at this age quite yet. Some people will tell us how excited they are for us and others will remind us of how difficult life is about to get. Rather than assuming just one of those people has to be right, I've come to the conclusion that they both are.

See, for the past 18 years, we have been guided by family and educators and loved ones around us. They have shared their wisdom and insights and they have raised us and taught us in the way they deemed best. Our single most significant role as individuals has been just to learn. Our job has been to be students. While I would like to congratulate everyone for concluding their time as students, I know that this isn't what's happening today.

Because regardless of the paths we take, whether it be college, trades, armed forces, the workforce, wherever you may be headed, as fresh high school graduates we are just beginning our time as students.

As I have thought on what it means to be on my own once I graduate, I realize that I am not losing a role, but rather taking a bigger one on. We have been students, observing, learning, and growing for every single day for the past 18 years and we will continue to be students for the rest of our lives. I don't know if this role has an expiration date or if we will ever grow out of being students, but as far as I know, that time, it isn't ending today. As we step out as students into the classroom of the

world, we have a whole new curriculum and a whole new set of lessons that life will come to teach us.

Under the care of our families and educators, we have been pushed to do this learning. The thing about being a student this time is, we aren't going to be forced to do it. Sure, the real world will force you to learn how to do your taxes and get a job, but I'm talking about the other stuff. Life is not going to force you to learn to be a kinder person. Life is not going to force you to learn how to live joyfully. Life is not going to force you to learn how to pursue your passions. When people say it's our time, I think part of what they mean is that it is our time to take complete charge of our personal growth and learning from here on out. But that is equally exciting as it is nerve-racking and it will be just as much of an adventure as it will be a challenge.

I think we will all soon come to find that with each encounter, experience, and relationship comes a lesson of some sort. Regardless of if you choose to look for it, I promise that it's there. We are still so young and we have so much left to learn, so my piece of wisdom on being a student is this; you will get what you seek from your experiences in life. Keep your head up and your eyes open, because the lessons tend to breeze by quickly or at least until you learn them.

Now I know that everyone learns in different ways, and most people learn only through personal experience, but I do have some quick lessons or words of advice that I think will really help us all in the coming years. First off, and this one is really important to me; treat others with the understanding that we are all struggling with something. We get so wrapped up in our worlds and we forget to just be kind to each other. Have some empathy, broaden your perspective and understand how your negativity affects others. Not everyone can handle it. Just do everyone, including yourself, a favor by choosing kindness. On the topic of perspective; I think it's best that we just swing that door right open because there is a whole world out there and you'll spend your whole life in the living room if you don't get out there, and I don't mean that literally. There are so many lenses in which life can be seen through. Life is so beautiful, but sometimes it just takes the right lens to truly see that.

Class of 2019, as we go into a materialistic world and

pursue well-paying jobs and shiny things, I ask you to not place the value of your physical possessions over the value of that in life which cannot be bought. Believe me, I know how corny that sounds, but it's true. I ask that we not be so arrogant to believe that we have nothing to learn from life and especially from others. I believe in our class as a whole and I am confident in the students we are and the teachers we will become.

Now I want to say thank you to all of the people who have provided us with the bits of wisdom to help us succeed in life thus far. To all of the parents, stepparents, step-in-parents, and all other parental figures; thank you! This day is a milestone not just for us, but for many of you too. All of the time, money, and energy that you have all put into making a day like today even possible does not go unappreciated. To Mrs. Hyde; I know that she's not here but I wanted to thank her for being the driving force to get many of us out of here and onto our next step of life. Thank you for helping us smooth out the kinks in our plans and thank you for always making us feel like we had someone on our side. To Ms. Safier; thank you for your patience with us. Thank you for speaking your truth with conviction and for teaching us the lessons that aren't quite in the books. To Mr. Brown; thank you for teaching us to seek the full truth. My time as your student, especially this year, has pushed me to broaden my perspective and question my beliefs in pursuit of the whole picture. To Mrs. Titus; thank you for your unwavering kindness. I can genuinely say that my day was brightened every time I saw you in the library. A heart like yours is so hard to find, and Vernonia High School is beyond lucky to have you. To Vernonia; thank you for holding a place for us to grow into the people we are today. Thank you for teaching me that I will always be more than just how others view me. Although many of us will be heading off soon,

regardless of how ready we might feel to get out and explore more of what the world has to offer, I think that many of us are leaving a piece of our hearts here. I know I sure am. Lastly, to the class of 2019 as a whole; thank you for your open heart. It's been a pleasure learning alongside you all and after all of this time, it's bittersweet to see these days coming to an end. With that being said, congratulations guys, we made it!



Savannah Norman
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