



Finale for '15 as HRV, Horizon award diplomas



GRADUATION SCENES, clockwise from top left: Alexis Viramontes lifts up her friend, Kianna Semmes, during the HRVHS procession; Horizon Christian graduates Soledad Finn and Nick Andersen lead their class under the ceremonial arches to their front-row seats; Miriam Starrett, one of 17 valedictorians at HRVHS, beams a "this is actually happening" expression as she makes her way forward for her diploma; Horizon speakers Shaun Wang (a native of China) and Hannah Kempf; on Vannet Court in the HRV gym, HRV graduates-to-be exchange high fives as they await the walk outside and onto the Class of 2015 grandstands; on the Henderson Stadium track where they won so many races, Emily Viuhkola, left, and Jestena Mattson take a fitting "on your mark" stance one more time before heading into the ceremony.

Horizon photos by Kirby Neumann-Rea
HRVHS photos by Patrick Mulvihill

HRVHS Class of 2015 'Blasts Off'

MUSICAL 'BLAST OFF'

As with every year, HRVHS graduation was filled with music. It was the final performance directed by 36-year music director Mark Steighner, who is retiring. He also debuted the school's new alma mater, which he wrote this year.

See page B12 for related photos.

Senior Noah Tauscher wrote the class song "Blast Off," presented on Friday. Recording and production was by classmate Cooper Holzman. Tauscher and fellow seniors Amy White, Caitlyn Fick and Hannah Simonds did the solos, with backup by senior members of Chamber Singers.

Give it a listen at:
soundcloud.com/noah-t/blast-off-a-graduation-song

By **PATRICK MULVIHILL**
News staff writer

Eagle voices filled the evening air with a choral farewell Friday evening.

"Give me a count down, I'm blasting off," sang the Hood River Valley High School Chamber Choir at the Class of 2015 commencement ceremony at Henderson Community Stadium.

The original piece, "Blast Off," was written by Noah Tauscher and produced by Cooper Holzman, both graduating seniors. The song was a tribute to the class's formative years in high school — and a promise not to forget them.

In total, 278 graduates walked in the ceremony. More than 300 are expected in the final tally. The class's motto was "If you want to go fast, go alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Speeches at the ceremony alternated between English and Spanish.

Diana Lachino (Spanish) and Megumi Hosaka (English) gave the welcome speech, while Janelle Pedroza (Spanish) and Cayla Sacre (English) provided the keynote.

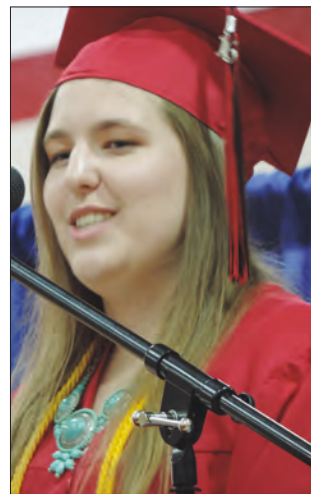
School faculty expressed pride in the graduating class. In his introductory speech, HRVHS principal Rich Polkinghorn cited the late Blues legend B.B. King when he said, "The beautiful thing about learning is that no one can take it from you."

"We affirm that these young adults have achieved something that no one can take away," said Polkinghorn.

Seventeen students earned Valedictorian status, which requires a 4.0 grade point average.

The school also honored its Volunteers of the Year, Cara Moore and Jeff Sacre, parents of 2015 grad Cayla Sacre. The "dynamic duo," as they've been dubbed by faculty, were recognized for their work lining up

See GRADS, Page B2



With God's blessing, use your tools well, Horizon grads told

By **KIRBY NEUMANN-REA**
News editor

Saturday's graduation ceremony at Horizon Christian School, attended by 200 or so family and friends, was in many ways a true family affair.

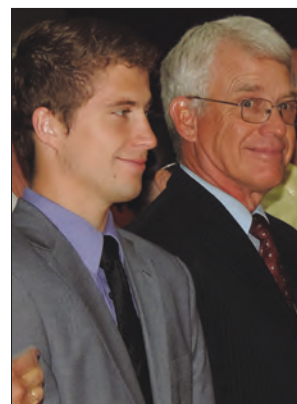
Nick Andersen of the Class of 2015 listened along with his classmates as his grandfather, Rev. Jack Hansen, delivered the keynote address.

Hansen told the students, "Surely the Lord has a plan for you, for your welfare and not to do you harm, to give you a future with hope. I can't tell you what to do beyond your time at Horizon," Hansen told the class. "I can only urge you to continue to follow the Lord's lead wherever you are."

"Your teachers have helped show you many tools to use in your life. The question now is what you do with those tools. You have tremendous potential to make a difference with your lives," Hansen said.

The senior class earned an average 3.43 grade point average, and 82 percent of the class had a 3.8 or higher. Superintendent Ken Block said the Class of 2015 collectively received \$400,000 in scholarships this year.

Class speakers were Hannah Lingel, whose father, Darren, serves on the school board of directors, and Zhehao "Shaun" Wang,



PHILIP STENBERG (Horizon 2009) joined his father, on the Horizon faculty this year.

who is from China and credited the kindness of people who gave their lives in service to Christ with helping bring him to the United States for his education.

Principal Faith Kempf introduced the 18 graduates, among them her daughter, Hannah, a top scholar and student leader at the school.

Faculty members this year included long-time teacher Oscar Stenberg and his son, Philip, a 2009 graduate who taught biology this year, and is now moving on to nursing school.

Meanwhile, Philip's brother, Brian, a 2005 graduate, has been named athletic director for 2015-16, a job Oscar Stenberg held for many years until 2014.

