



Photos by Bill Bradshaw/Wallowa County Chieftain

The confetti flies amid tossed mortarboards at the conclusion of commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2022 from Joseph Charter School on Friday, June 3, 2022.

Joseph Charter School graduates 23

By **BILL BRADSHAW**
Wallowa County Chieftain

JOSEPH — The threat of continued rain Wallowa County has experienced recently forced the graduation ceremonies for the Joseph Charter School Class of 2022 into the gymnasium, rather than the planned football field, but it didn't dampen their spirits.

Superintendent Lance Homan welcomed the 23 graduates by recounting their four-year high school experience.

The year that ended in 2019 — their freshman year — he called "fairly normal."

Then, there was 2020. First, in January, the school was forced to close for several weeks after the gymnasium burned and smoked out the rest of the school. That was followed in short order by the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, that led to online classes and a disruption of the sports seasons. Last year saw an attempt to get back to normal — albeit with masks and distancing — in the building, and some students continuing to study from home.

This school year has been the first really normal one since before the fire.

Now, the graduates have the

opportunity to go off into the workforce, college or whatever they plan.

Homan said this year's class was the seventh he has sent into the world as superintendent.

Graduating this year were Corin Gabriel Armentrout, Nathaniel William Bazer, Javon Christopher Besotes-Brown, Kyle Ann Braden, Megan Virginia Brock, Trace Andrew Collier, Ian James Goodrich, Hayden James Hite, Chase Mitchell Homan, Piper Kate Larison, Bayden Wolfe Menton, Harley Edward Miller, Destany Maria Rosana Moore, Hailee Marie

Musia, Reece Douglas Nelson, Sarah Jean Orr, Darbi McKenzie Thomas, Chloe Mae Walker, Claire Allyn Webb, Bradley Neil Wilcox, Emma Rose Williams, Maggie Larae Zacharias and Catherine Grace Zeigler.

Chase Homan — the son of the superintendent and his wife, Michelle — and Orr were named the male and female athletes of the year.

Co-valedictorians were Menton and Zeigler, while Larison was the salutatorian.

Claire Webb sang the national anthem at the beginning of the ceremony and a special song,

"The Climb," part way through it.

As the graduates were directed onto the stage by Homan, to receive their diplomas from school board member Kim Tingelstad, first-year principal Jason Gorham read a list of each graduate's plans for the future and scholarships received.

After the ceremony, the grads went into the school cafeteria where they could mingle with each other, friends and family and receive presents. Then, they adjourned to downtown Joseph for a traditional parade up and down Main Street where their photos already hang from posts.



Co-valedictorians of the Class of 2022 Bayden Menton and Catherine Zeigler lead their class onto the stage Friday, June 3, 2022, during commencement ceremonies.



Newly-minted Joseph Charter School graduates of the Class of 2022 take part in a traditional parade down Main Street after commencement ceremonies Friday, June 3, 2022.



Joseph Charter School teacher Kendall Hayes, left, presents awards to co-valedictorians of the Class of 2022 Bayden Menton and Catherine Zeigler during commencement ceremonies Friday, June 3, 2022.



Sarah Orr has a thoughtful message on her decorated mortarboard Friday, June 3, 2022, during commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2022 at Joseph Charter School.



Joseph Charter School graduate Trace Collier surprises Principal Jason Gorham with a bear hug Friday, June 3, 2022, during commencement ceremonies for the Class of 2022.

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