

CLASS OF 2022 PRESIDENT SHAYLA SMITH GIVES *RESPONSE FOR THE CLASS*, ENTITLED “UNLIKELY INSPIRATION”

Good Evening Everyone,

As class president, I have been given this opportunity to congratulate and speak on behalf of the class of 2022. Our success as a class, however, could never have happened, especially given all that has happened in the past few years, without the help of this community. Thank you to Dr. Stimmel, Members of the Board of Education, Dr. Criscione, Mr. Hoffer and members of the Sayville Schools administration and faculty for everything that you do and for making all of this possible. A special thanks to Ms. Ferremi and Ms. Morrell for keeping us busy and entertained throughout all 4 years of high school and dealing with all of us, I'm sure it wasn't easy.

I can't believe we are actually graduating, it's unreal. After this speech we are all officially washed up alumni. I put off this speech because public speaking and writing speeches are not my strong suit, so I spent a lot of time thinking about what I wanted to say. I thought about who could help me articulate it. I thought about asking Maggie Mongiello and Olivia Massey, two strong women who are never afraid to speak up, or Jude Ramsaywak, the model of originality. I thought maybe I should call Will Kretz because he is really clever, and then I thought maybe I should call Natasha because she's so personable, or call Liz Bossert because she's so much funnier than Katie Zito. Although I never asked them physically, they helped me in some way.... The one person I forgot to ask, was hidden in plain sight. I couldn't imagine being where I am today without the help of my twin sister Isabelle. We've been standing beside each other our entire lives, I don't think I could've made it this far in life without her standing right beside me, and I can't imagine doing this without her. Isabelle please come up here and stand with me.

People might think that COVID has defined this period of time and in a lot of ways it has. We survived masks, lockdowns, and never ending google meets. People could also characterize this period of time by technological advances. But as some new technologies have entered our lives, other things have departed. People used to actually use their lockers, which are those small metal doors in the school halls, from like 1900-2014 because of how many books they had to carry. There are easily 500 lockers in the school that haven't been opened in years. I couldn't even tell you the code to mine, only that it's in the art hallway, and I am not even 100% sure about that. Backpacks full of books have given way to Chromebooks just as music gave way to *TIC TOK*.

While all of those things are true, when I look back on my years in Sayville schools, this period is defined by all of the people in this community who taught us so many valuable lessons. While Mr. Durnin did his best to teach us about the ottoman empire, it will be his sarcasm and ability to make every situation funny that I will really remember. With all due respect to ancient Mesopotamia, I learned more from our interactions as a class and how a little humor can go a long way. From Mr. Bannon I learned that there are multiple ways to go about solving problems, all of which are correct and for some reason I feel like that's going to help me more in life than learning about Sohcahtoa. I can proudly tell you that Mrs. Anderson taught us how important it is

to take care of the world we live in, whether it was creek walks or field trips, protecting our planet is definitely more important to remember than the fact most public pools contain approximately 13 gallons of pee. Señora Bricker showed us what it means to be organized and how important it is to manage your time efficiently which is more memorable than donde esta el bano...Although I actually might use that one. You will always be remembered as our Spanish teacher, congrats and have fun yelling at kids next year in your new position.

We have something that not everyone has. We belong to a tight-knit community, and this community would not exist without the people within it. We have gone through hardships together and each adventure has brought us closer together. Especially all of the kids that received 16 hours' worth of detention after Boston. I know I will never forget them. Not every school has students that all know each other and student teacher relationships like we do. What has made these past 12 years so enjoyable for me, is getting to know all my teachers, and making new friends throughout my different classes.

The most important aspect of this community is the relationships we have all formed. We have probably all inspired each other at some point, but never acknowledged it. So I would like to call out some people who inspired me along the way. Sarah Newman, you pushed yourself past your limits at track and practiced everyday like it was a competition, propelling yourself to improve and become an All-American, ranked #5 in the nation for steeplechase. Gavin Venezia, you are never afraid to ask a question, and that is something most people do not take advantage of. You thrive because if you are confused, you are brave enough to simply ask, and many of us are grateful that you did, because we all had the same questions. Jillian Rastello, you are not here tonight because sometimes in life you have to make sacrifices in order to achieve your goals. Some of you might not know, but she is currently a cadet at the US Air Force Academy and part of their swimming and diving team. She has spent countless hours perfecting her swimming and diving has paid off, showing us how hard work and dedication is the ultimate tool for success. My point is that I have learned so many valuable lessons from each and every one of you. I challenge each and every member of the Class of 2022 to participate in one final class activity. Before you leave this field today, I challenge you to walk up to one of our classmates and tell them how they inspired you. Today's focus might be on our success as learners, but before we leave we should recognize our roles as teachers as well.

We all should be grateful for where we came from and to those who helped us get here. We would not be where we are without our parents, put your hands together for them. In some towns parents get accused of doing their kids science fair projects but in ours parents are waiting at their front door with water guns and kicking their bushes to help their kids in the senior assassin. In other districts, parents seem to always be in conflict with their schools. In Sayville, our parents and our teachers work together to ensure that we get the very best. We may not always agree how to get there, but we all work towards the same goal. In comparison with other districts we have a smaller class size, but it turns out 234 is the perfect number.