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WHRHS 2019 GRADUATION CEREMONY

Submitted by Denis Kelly

Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) held their 62nd Commencement on Friday, June 21. Some 498 graduates in the Class of 2019 gathered on the Tozier Stadium football field to be celebrated with friends and family.

After the Senior Choral Group sang the Star-Spangled Banner, and All School Council President Gabriela Santos led the "Pledge of Allegiance," she began the student speaker program of the ceremony with opening remarks.

Reflecting on their four years at WHRHS, Santos said, "Some challenges seemed long and difficult, while other obstacles we conquered with ease. We have come together today to celebrate all of it – the times we stayed strong when the road became rough, stayed loyal when our friends and family needed us and most importantly, the times when we succeeded when the odds were against us. All of these trials have contributed to making us the people we are today."

Senior Class President Arianna Valenti spoke next, noting that though "we've had our ups and downs over four years, we have all achieved in the end." And while she and her classmates may not remember everything about high school, she for one will remember the highs and lows of soccer.

"I scored a game winning goal to help the team advance to the county finals, but several games later, I hit the crossbar on a penalty kick in the state championship. It happened. What high school should have taught us is we've all made mistakes and we'll continue to make them. And that's OK. Whatever your plans are for the years to come, make mistakes and learn from them."

She concluded, "Whether you plan to attend college, join the military, start a career, or even take a year off, I urge you to take risks, knowing you are going to fail at some point along the way and knowing that you will recover and be better because of it."

Valedictorian Neelay Trivedi followed with a message to his fellow classmates to embrace uncertainty, stating "Play by your rules. Be guided by your vision, your ideas, and your sense of purpose. Congratulations Class of 2019. You deserve it. You made it to this point. Now welcome to the jungle. Face it with courage, compassion and a whole lot of crazy."

Principal George Alexis shared with the graduates portions of his favorite poem by the English Poet John Keats, "On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer." In particular he cited the memorable lines of the

)continued on page 4)

Photos by WHRHS



(above) Seniors in the WHRHS Choral Music Program form the Senior Choral Group to sing "The Star Spangled Banner" at the beginning of the Commencement Exercises.



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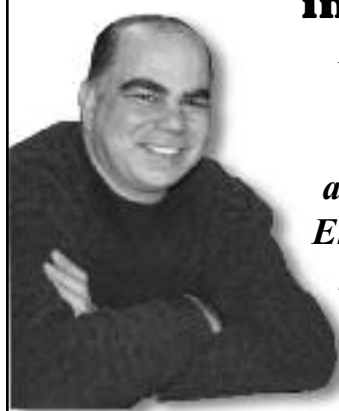
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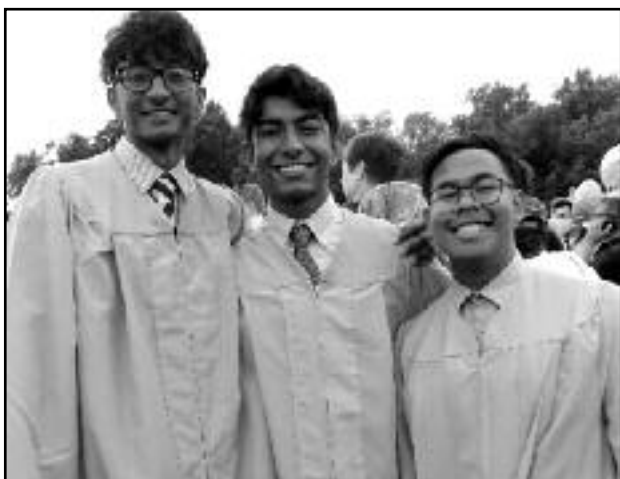
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GRADUATION CEREMONY (continued)



(above, l-r) Class of 2019 Students speakers Gabriela Santos, All School Council President; Neelay Trivedi, Valedictorian; and Arianna Valenti, Senior Class President, await the start of the WHRHS Commencement



(above, l-r) WHRHS 2019 classmates and friends Saicholan Pillai, Vinjay Balan, and Vincent Lesaca celebrate their graduation immediately following graduation.



(above) 2019 WHRHS graduate Mia Kurzman, holding a bunch of roses, makes it clear her heart – and her career aspiration -- is to become a nurse.

poem that might be also used to describe the depth and the breadth of learning that the members of the Class of 2019 have absorbed during their four years at WHRHS, “Much have I traveled in the realms of gold/And many goodly states and kingdoms seen.”

WHRHS Board of Education Vice President Rita Barone said she was inspired in her choice of message to the graduates, by the performance at this year’s WHRHS “Spring Choral Concert.” It was the song senior soloist Sophia Perez sang, “titled, “You Say,” by songwriter Lauren Daigle. She said at the time, she was feeling the weight of the responsibility about deciding what to say to the Class of 2019 at graduation.

“What could I say that would potentially resonate with all of you,” Barone said she asked herself. “Then I attended the Spring Chorus Concert and, music often being a muse, I knew what I was going to say to you graduates today, and this is it: This Board of Education, the

administrators, the faculty, staff and your families strive every day to provide you support – in your academics, athletic competitions, extra-curricular activities and wellness initiatives. The reason we do this is simple. It is so that when you leave here, you know the single most important fact about yourselves, and that is: ‘You Are Enough.’ There is no better success focus than to know that you believe in yourselves.”

Superintendent Dr. Elizabeth Jewett ushered the members of the Class of 2019 into their future. “Members of the Class of 2019,” she said. “Today we celebrate the end of one chapter of your life - in which collectively you have excelled in the classroom, athletic venues, fine and performing arts, community service, and numerous extra-curricular activities and programs - and we mark the beginning of a new and exciting next chapter. Now I will ask the members of the Class of 2019 to please stand. We have one last task for you before you throw your caps and line up for the recessional: Please move your tassels from right to left. Congratulations, Watchung Hills Regional High School Class of 2019. Let the recessional begin.”

Photos by WHRHS



(above, left) Principal George Alexis concluded his Commencement Address saying to them: “Congratulations, Class of 2019. We are proud of you, and you have our very best wishes.”

(center) Dr. Elizabeth Jewett, WHRHS Superintendent sent the Class of 2019 graduates on their way, sharing with them the inspiration story of Eric Weihenmayer, an American athlete, adventurer, author, activist and motivational speaker, and the first blind person to reach the summit of Mount Everest on May 25, 2001. In 2005, he co-founded No Barriers, a nonprofit organization with the tagline, “What’s within you is stronger than what’s in your way.”



(above) WHRHS Graduate Elizabeth Wood receives her diploma from Dr. Elizabeth Jewett, WHRHS Superintendent.



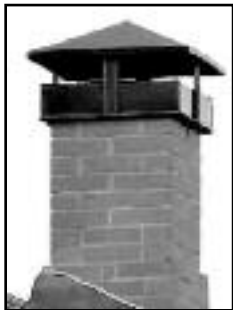
(above) Group of Class of 2019 graduates form a cadre of WHRHS Warriors during the procession into Tozier Stadium at the school’s 62nd Commencement, Friday, June 21.



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WATCHUNG HILLS STUDENT NIHARIKA IYER EARNS HER GOLD AWARD

In working towards her Gold Award, an 80-hour service project through the Girl Scouts organization, Niharika Iyer discovered her interest for helping popularize early STEM education. To target this issue and develop a maintainable solution, she created a five-course program that utilized activity-based learning called “STEM Saturdays” for older elementary school aged children which found its home in the Warren Township Library on June 1st and 8th, 2019. Research has shown that in comparison to other OECD nations, the United States has traditionally had lower test scores in areas related to STEM. The STEM-centric jobs showing rapid growth and are typically in the field of computer science. The lessons developed reflected Iyer’s belief that these can best be tackled by introducing young children to a variety of subjects that fall under these topics. The attendees participated in programs called All About Atoms, Building Basics, Chemistry of Water, Number Theory Tips and Tricks, and the Logic of Programming over the course of the two Saturdays in June.

With the help of some of her Watchung Hills Regional High School peers who are well-versed in the subjects, Iyer ran activities such as creating a Rube Goldberg machine to teach engineering, building model atoms using marshmallows and gumdrops, and forming characters in SCRATCH programming. Those familiar with the Gold Award project know that sustainability is an incredibly important aspect. In order to ensure that as many students as possible benefit from this project, Iyer has created kits containing activities and worksheets that can be found in the Warren Township Library.

Niharika Iyer’s “STEM Saturdays” project would not have been possible without the incredible support of the Somerset County Library System staff, her advisors Mrs. Holl, Dr. Cooper, and Ms. Katie Thomas, and the peers who helped her organize and run the lessons: Vivian Zhang, Mayur Sharma, Sana Mamtaney, Jagdeep Bhatia, Calvin Khiddee-Wu, Jessica Young, Cassandra Apuzzo, and Melissa Gallic.



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2019 SENIOR AWARDS AND MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS CEREMONIES

Submitted by Denis Kelly

Watchung Hills Regional High School (WHRHS) graduating seniors were congratulated on Tuesday, June 11, 2019, in the school's Performing Arts Center (PAC), during two ceremonies: a Senior Awards Assembly for the Class of 2019 and a Memorial Scholarship Ceremony.

Awards at the Senior Awards Assembly were presented by WHRHS faculty and administrators. Scholarships at the Memorial Scholarship Ceremony were presented by representatives of the awarding family, foundations or community organizations, including parents, family members, organization members, or WHRHS Administrators or faculty.

Both ceremonies were opened with the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance, led by

Class of 2019, with Opening Remarks by Principal George Alexis.

Salutatorian Jessica Yan spoke to her fellow graduates during the Senior Awards Assembly. In her remarks acknowledging the completion of high school for her and her fellow graduates, what she called one of the "most significant milestones of their lives," she urged her fellow classmates to remember their last four years buoyed by the irony that what made high school so special, like everything else, was that it was also messy, that it was also unpredictable. "That's what made it so beautiful," Yan said. "The past four years have been so imperfectly perfect. Still, we made our impact." She wished all her fellow Class of 2019 members: "Good Luck" in their future endeavors.



(above) Class of 2019 Salutatorian addressing fellow classmates.

Photo by WHRHS

RECIPIENTS OF ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS AND SCHOLARSHIPS:

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

English: Excellence in English, Isabella Zhou; in Creative Writing, Lola Constantino; in Journalism, Rebecca Baitel; and in Expository Writing, Isabel Vala.

Mathematics: Clifford A. Warren Excellence in Mathematics, Peter Linder; in Calculus, Maia Buckwald; in Statistics, Hannah Tobin; and in Computer Science, Timothy Zhang.

Science: Excellence in Biology, Neelay Trivedi; in Chemistry, Geena Razdan; in Environmental Science, Rohan Kansagra; and in Physics, Adnan Contractor.

Social Studies/History: Stephen Bartlett Excellence in Social Studies/History, Shea Keenan; DAR Excellence in History Award, Mariam Ivaniashvili; and DAR Good Citizens Award, Tarana Ranjan.

World Languages: Excellence in Chinese, Ian Martin; in French, Joy Liu; in German, Leanna Villarreal; in Italian, Rishi Bhatnager; and in Spanish, Amanda Nunes.

Business: Excellence in Accounting and Business, Shuaib Bhalloo; in Child Development, Briana Costa; and in Culinary Arts, Rebecca Fenton.

Fine and Performing Arts: Nancy O'Reilly Excellence in Art, Anna Kaplan; in Ceramics, Elizabeth Bruno; in Acting, William Broder; Best Director Award, Kathleen O'Mullan; in Photography, Catherine Ray; in Video Production, Madelena Goffredo; Band Director Award, Ishika Agrawal;

Choral Award, Claire Vickery; John Philip Sousa Award, Ryan Branco.

Athletics: New Jersey State Interscholastic Athletic Association Scholar-Athlete, Alexis Beechner; Skyland Conference Scholar-Athletes, McKenna Frey and Evan Bujnowski Somerset County Scholar-Athletes, Jacqueline Lee and Clement Shao; and Excellence in Athletics and Leadership, Jessica Carrieri and Edward Williams.

Co-Curricular: Color Guard Award, Ariana Stoddard; Marching Band Award, Andrew Muller; Excellence in U.S. F.I.R.S.T. Robotics, Timothy Osifchin; Dr. Thomas F. DiGanci ASC Award, Gabriela Santos.

ASC Awards: Gabriela Santos, Anna Baitel, Sofia Kwon, Sabrina Lane, Lauren Soled, Alyanna Tam, Eshikia Kaul, Megan Gerges, Rebecca Baitel, Ayla Prinzcicalli, Kelsey Carlucci, Saumya Yellamelli, and Annabel Liao.

Senior GLC Awards: Arianna Valenti, Sophia Cho, Jessica Carrieri, McKenna Frey, and Devika Govindarajan.

Interact Community Service Club Awards: Gabriela Santos, Annabel Liao, Gianna Pento, Isabella DiSturco, Carly MacManus, Elizabeth Morris, Riya Mehta, Aditya Loganathan, and Srisaumya Yellamelli.

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL RECOGNITION

Coccia Foundation: Isabella DeSturco, Sean Klinger, Jade Singh, Gianna Tautonico, and Michelle Zoppi.

Courier News Academic All-Star Program, Neelay Trivedi.

Eagle Scouts Recognition: Warren Troop 228, Nathaniel Holl; Watchung Troop 32, Enzo Ruta; Green Brook Troop 129,

Nicholas Couch and Griffith Humphrey; Millington Troop 56, Ben Binstock, Kip DeGeorges, James Lavender, and Zach Rossi.

Girl Scouts Gold Award Recognition: Warren Township, Emily Bisci, Megan Gerges, Annabel Liao, Jamie Linton, Gabriela Santos, and Megan Vetter; and Green Brook, Rhea Kalyanpur.

National Merit Finalists: Ishika Agrawal, Joy Lui, Jeremy Cui, Annika Schmidt, Sarah Dang and Timothy Zhang.

Elmer Bieler Award (School Spirit), Alexa Renzo and Wesley Kuehne.

Scott Andersen Memorial Scholarship (WYBA): Shea Keenan and Elisabeth Morris.

Bob Beckert Scholarship: Alexis Beechner, Stella DeMizio, and Enzo Ruta.

Sandra Blumberg Memorial Scholarship: Rebecca Figueiras.

Anthony Bottoni Memorial Scholarship (\$1,000): Kevin Badger.

Dawn Gayle Coury Memorial Scholarship: Anastasia Benc.

Juan Carlos Cruz Memorial Scholarship: Christopher Meireles.

Chris Drewry Memorial Scholarship (Baseball & Softball): Ben Ant and Julia Mianowski.

Maija Golden Memorial Scholarship:

Cathleen Luo and Rebecca Baitel.

Joe Heath Memorial Scholarship (\$500): Elizabeth Bruno.

John Herdman Memorial Scholarship: Dana LaCapra.

Christopher Noble Ingrassia Memorial Scholarship

(Scholar Athletes): Jacqueline Lee and Clement Shao.

Matthew Kantor Memorial Scholarship:

Tim Osifchin and Chris Trovato.

Aaron Christopher Karol Scholarship: Kevin Badger, Hannah Bella, Isabella DiSturco, Liam Feeley, Sophia Perone, Gabriella Santos.

L. Suzanne Kenney Memorial Scholarship:

Anastasia Benc and Enzo Ruta.

Matthew Kiefer Memorial Scholarship (Most School Spirit):

Lauren Soled and Lucas Stasil.

Anthony Mascia Memorial Scholarship:

John Schipani, Jr. and Vincent Viotto.

Jerry Mobus Memorial Scholarship

(Outstanding Achievements in Athletics): Francesca Infante-Meehan.

Dr. William Peiffer Memorial Scholarship: Alan Ho.

Anthony R. Prasa Sr. Memorial Scholarship: Frank Medina.

Peter C. Rovtar Memorial Scholarship: Michael Sullivan and

Francesca Infante-Meehan.

James J. Straine Jr. Memorial Scholarship (\$5,000):

Michael Sullivan.

Ernest Wessel Scholarship: Neelay Trivedi (Valedictorian)

and Jessica Yan (Salutatorian).

PTO SCHOLARSHIPS:

Green Brook PTO: Jessica Yan (Academic) and Sophia Perone

(Community).

Warren Township PTO Middle School: Elisabeth Morris and Sean Ayers.

Watchung Hills Regional High School PTO: A. Academic:

Julia Heilberg, Eshika Kaul, Gabriella Santos, Victoria Tartivita, and Jessica Yan; B. Financial, Sean Ayers, Anna Baitel, Alexis Beechner,

Eshika Kaul, Elisabeth Morris, and Michael Sullivan;

and C. Service Scholarship: Alexis Beechner, Rhea Kalyanpur,

3. Enzo Ruta, 4. Gabriella Santos, and 5. Michael Sullivan.

WHRHS Education Association Scholarship (WHREA):

Elisabeth Morris.

SCHOOL RECOGNITION SCHOLARSHIPS:

Army ROTC: Francesca Minervini.

Caruso Accounting Award: Enzo Ruta.

Giovina Coscia Memorial Scholarship (Pomptonian): Rachel Miller.

Evans Scholarship Foundation: John Maher.

Dr. Theodore Kozik Memorial Scholarship: Elizabeth Wood.

Raoul Wallenberg Humanitarian Service Award: Anthony Levine

Robert Wood Johnson Blood Services Scholarship: Anna Baitel.

WHRHS Soccer Association: Jessica Carrieri and Shray Parimoo.

WHRHS Wrestling Booster Club: Frank Medina.

Dunellen-Green Brook Rotary Club: Jessica Carrieri, Eshika Kaul;

Ishani Shah; and Juhee Shukla.

Green Brook Education and Athletic Foundation: Sophia Perone –

Academic; and Jessica Carrieri – Athletic.

Our Lady of the Hills Knights of Columbus: Jillian LoGiudice.

Warren Township Lions Club: Sean Ayers; Alexis Beechner;

Andrew Idak (Barrett Davies Scholarship); Elisabeth Morris;

Carly MacManus; Michael Sullivan.

Warren Township Republican Committee: Breanna Van Skiver.

Warren-Watchung Rotary Club Memorial Scholarship:

Sean Ayers; Anastasia Benc; and Michael Sullivan.

Watchung Hills Elks BPOE 2252: Sean Ayers; Anastasia Benc;

Enzo Ruta; and Michael Sullivan.

Watchung Exempt Fireman's Association Scholarship: Enzo Ruta.

Watchung Fire Department Artie Jacot Family Scholarship:

Anastasia Benc.

Watchung Fire Department Kenneth Schmidt Scholarship:

Enzo Ruta.

Watchung Lion's Club Scholarship (James Clemens-contact):

Michael Sullivan and Jacqueline Toscano.

WHRHS Marching Band Parent Association: Ryan Branco.

WHRHS Soccer Association: Jessica Carrieri and Shray Parimoo.

WHRHS Wrestling Booster Club: Frank Medina.

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LOUIS R. ARONEO - 80 YEARS

Louis R. Aroneo, 80 of Gillette, NJ entered eternal life on July 3, 2019. He is survived by his loving wife of 57 years, Barbara (McLaughlin,) their children, Lisa Ciullo, Jerry Aroneo (Tracy), Gregory Aroneo (Gloria), and Andrea Briggs (Mead) and thirteen grandchildren: Christian III, Claire, Austin and Zachary Ciullo; Amelia, Gerard and Emily Aroneo; Grace, Erin and Norah Aroneo; Katie, Mead IV and Kyleigh Briggs. He is also survived by his sister, Marie Watson, his aunt, Connie Aroneo, many nieces, nephews, cousins, sisters and brothers-in-law and his fellow firefighters.

Born in Orange, NJ son of the late Vera (Magliaro) and Rocco Aroneo, Lou was raised in East Orange, NJ and graduated Clifford J. Scott High School. He earned an associate degree from Essex County College.

He was employed by NJ Bell Telephone Company, retiring his position of engineer in

1994. He maintained an active membership in the Telephone Pioneers of America and the Association of BellTel Retirees. He enjoyed a second career as Fire Official for the Townships of Long Hill and Milburn retiring in 2011.

Lou was an active member of Stirling Volunteer Fire Company for forty-eight years, where he continuously served as an officer for over forty-five years and as Chief for over a decade. In 2011 he was bestowed the honor of Chief Emeritus. He was a member of the Long Hill Township Planning Board from 1975 to 1989. He also volunteered as a member of Long Hill Township First Aid Squad and was a member of the Long Hill Township Senior Citizens Club. He served his country in the US Army National Guard from 1958-1964. Lou was an active member of St. Vincent de Paul Roman Catholic Parish.

It is with deep regret and heartache that the Stirling Fire Company announces the passing of Chief Emeritus, Louis R Aroneo "Lou" on July 3rd 2019. Lou joined the Stirling Fire Company in June 1971, 48 years ago, and served over 35 years as an Officer. Lou was one of the most senior members with excellent knowledge, experience and dedication. He had the greatest love for the fire service and all of its members. "As a Firefighter or an Officer my #1 priority was looking out for the safety of the members!" ~ Lou. Although he would never say it, he was a Hero to the many residents he helped protect, to all of the members who he mentored and volunteered or worked with, and especially to his family and friends. We will all miss Lou and our thoughts and prayers go out to Lou's family.

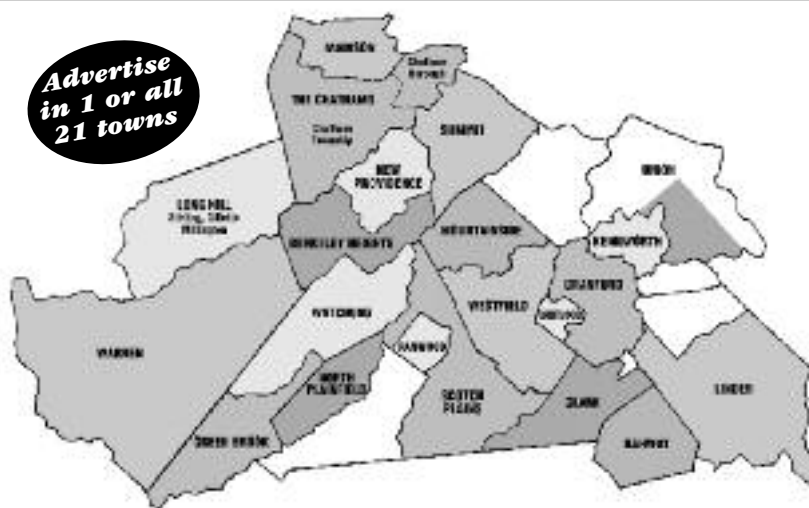
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Each week, guests will participate in vocal and physical warm-ups and work on songs with the chorus. The chorus sings a variety of music, including old-fashioned love songs, Broadway, Disney, Beatles, and more.

Pam Hegarty, whose first introduction to the chorus was through the "Sing A Cappella Series" stated, "If you enjoy singing and the idea

of creating music with a group, try Hickory Tree Chorus. I was greeted with such friendly support and encouragement that I knew I'd made the right choice. I learned a lot about music during the series and continue to learn more now that I'm an official member. As much as music, this chorus is about camaraderie and joy. Come join us!"

The award-winning Hickory Tree Chorus performs regularly throughout the community, produces an annual show, and awards an annual \$1,000 scholarship to an area high school girl continuing her vocal music education in college.

For more information, or to register for the free "Summer Sing Series", visit hickorytreechorus.org, email info@hickorytreechorus.org or call 908-377-1399.

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