



Great Vision Great Coverage

The Gazette '20-'21

Vol. 85

May 2021

Issue 8

Farewell to the Franklin High Class of 2021

By Logan Dubel



Graduation season has arrived at Franklin High once again and saying goodbye to the Class of 2021 marks the end of many chapters in the school's history. From the return of monumental senior events, a renewed sense of normalcy following the pandemic, and the retirement of a beloved principal, this farewell is shaping up to be one of the most bittersweet yet.

While in hindsight, it is much easier to claim that the celebratory events the Senior Class will enjoy were simply destined to be, that was not the reality we were living in just a few months ago. Since March 2020, the Class of 2021 has faced countless obstacles, with no end in sight. From losing opportunities to take important standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT to visiting and applying to colleges in an entirely virtual manner and missing out on homecoming and traditional extra-curricular activities, the Class of 2021 has persevered in a nonstop fog of disappointments.

Now, finally at the finish line, the disappointments are officially over. The Class of 2021 is gearing up for a Senior Field Day, Graduation, and best of all, Senior Prom. None of this work would have been possible without the tireless and fearless work of student leaders, class advisors, and even parents who stepped in to provide their seniors with unforgettable memories.

While the traditional Senior Picnic was impossible due to Covid-19 food restrictions on campus, students did plan a Senior Field Day for May 26, immediately following graduation rehearsal. Students will have the opportunity to roam around the fields, catch up with friends, play sports, and enjoy being on campus one last time.

Graduation is set for the next day, May 27, at

the Towson University SECU Arena. Until mid-April, questions remained over whether Towson would host the ceremonies as it had in pre-pandemic times. To accommodate social distancing, Franklin students were split into two separate groups for morning and afternoon ceremonies.

Ms. Creamer, who serves as an advisor to the Class of 2021 along with Mr. Hetzler, is thrilled to see her students receive the accolades they deserve. "Graduation is going to look a little different this year, but the positive is that there will be an in-person ceremony! While I know that many seniors wish they could graduate with their entire class, I am just so glad that this year's class can have an in-person ceremony," Ms. Creamer said. "They have worked so hard over the past four years, and I know I speak for everyone at school when I say that we are so grateful for the chance to watch them all walk across the stage.

The grand finale is on May 28, with a non-school sponsored Senior Prom. While the administration team and staff are well aware of all the plans to host a gala, they were unable to support it officially since county leadership will not facilitate senior activities this year. Still, the school has helped by gently reminding students and families to check out what the Class of 2021 has planned on social media. The planning team is extremely grateful to Principal McCusker and the PTSA for their willingness to support the events to the extent possible. Seniors will surely arrive in style at the venue, Piney Branch Golf Club, which is located in Upperco. While students will receive all the limelight, the event would have never occurred without parent involvement. Back in September, parents Jill Suffel and Laurie Zukerberg knew that they had to step up to the plate.

"This was NOT the senior year any of these kids signed up for, having missed out on so much and so many rites of passage! We felt pretty early on that BCPS wasn't going to facilitate a prom," explained parent Jill Suffel. "So, Laurie Zukerberg and I began fundraising in early September, selling lawn signs, masks, magnets, to raise money so we could do something for the seniors at the end of the year!

The formal event will be catered and feature a DJ, a theme of "The Roaring 21's," raffles, and even an illusionist. To make the event as safe as possible, all students were required to turn in a waiver signed by their parents. Security guards will also be present at the venue. Even without access to many of the traditional modes of com-

munication, around 150 students purchased tickets to the gala, proving that there is a true desire for a night of fun and celebration.

After so much planning and hard work, Suffel believes that drive and persistence are what helped her and her fellow parents succeed. "We learned that if you want something enough sometimes you have to go out there, and get it done yourself! There is NOTHING we wouldn't do for the FHS Class of 2021, and hope it will be a night they will look back on and smile about for a long time!"

Aside from all the fun, students were also awarded for their academic achievements on May 20 in the Franklin auditorium. Hundreds of awards and thousands of dollars were provided from community scholarships. One singular scholarship even amounted to an astronomical total of \$10,000. Franklin administrators, teachers, and class presidents all shared kind sentiments about the seniors. Hailey Cuifo, an award recipient, is glad that she kept her eyes on the prize. "I enjoyed watching my classmates get honored after all our hard work," she said. "I realized that even if you aren't feeling motivated that you should always keep up the hard work because it will eventually pay off, even if it does not feel meaningful at the time."

While seniors only graduate from Franklin once, the year 2021 will mark the second graduation of one very important figure in school history. Principal Patrick McCusker, a 1981 Franklin graduate with a deep passion for the community, is saying goodbye for the second time, now entering a well-deserved retirement following decades of service to thousands of students across Baltimore County.

Across the board, everyone is certain that the Class of 2021 will enjoy much success in the future. "The Class of 2021's first day four years ago was also my first day at FHS; so this was my first class to watch mature through all four years of high school. It made it extra special to see how far they have come since I taught many of them as freshmen," said Ms. Creamer. "I am confident the students in the Class of 2021 are going to find success in whatever they do moving forward. The challenges thrown at them in the past year and a half have prepared them for wherever they find themselves in the next phase of their lives."

It is not the picture-perfect ending the Class of 2021 may have hoped for, but one thing is certain – the strength and resilience of these students will never be forgotten.

Franklin Leadership Transitions from Mr. McCusker to Mr. O'Connell

By Howard Yates



Assistant Principal O'Connell (left) will be replacing Mr. McCusker (right) as FHS principal in July 2021. Photo from Ms. Heidi Jones.

Mr. McCusker is retiring his job of principal at the end of June. Mr. O'Connell will be the next principal of Franklin High School.

"I love Franklin High School," Mr. McCusker said. "I am going to miss daily interaction with students and staff."

Mr. McCusker graduated from FHS in 1981 and has been Franklin's principal since 2010. He has decided to step down from his position to accept the retirement benefits earned from his 30 years of service.

Mr. McCusker doesn't have any plans for retirement, but he believes he will do more work around the house and spend most of his time at home.

He also has a very good replacement for the position, Assistant Principal O'Connell. Mr. McCusker's advice for the new principal is "Make every decision in the best interest of the students."

Mr. O'Connell has worked as a teacher, department chair, and assistant principal at FHS before accepting this position.

"Mr. McCusker identified some qualities in me early on that he believed I could one day lead a school," Mr. O'Connell said.

He admits that he didn't always intend to be a principal, but since getting some encouragement from Mr. McCusker, it has been one of his goals. He has had the opportunity to learn under a wonderful principal, and now he is ready for this next challenge in his professional career.

"Right now, I am meeting with teachers, students, and parents to learn more about their perspectives, and I am working on the transition for in-person learning for next school year."

As Mr. O'Connell moves into the role of principal on July 1, 2021, Dr. Shirl Adams-Green will be joining the Franklin's administration team at that time. Mr. O'Connell said, "Dr. Adams-Green brings with her a great deal of knowledge and experience working in BCPS, most recently at Loch Raven High School. I look forward to having Dr. Adams-Green join us in our support of the Franklin HS community."

Graduating Seniors Set Their Sights on the Future

By Bari Weinstein

Kiley Ruffhead, Kelly Ceroll, and Alyssa Moore are all seniors graduating this month. They are all taking different paths. Ruffhead chose Rogers Williams University in Rhode Island to continue her love of playing lacrosse and studying marine biology. Moore decided to go to James Madison University for nursing, and Ceroll picked Marymount University to continue her love of playing basketball and studying for a career in nurse oncology. The three girls each have a passion that drives them towards their goals.

When the girls reflected on how Franklin helped them decide, Ruffhead said, "it really had a large influence on what I want to do in life along with helping me decide what my major will be." Ceroll said Biomed influenced her college decisions because she enjoyed science classes. Moore said, "Franklin helped me realize that I wanted to help others in any way that I could, and

it helped me in my path to becoming a nursing major."

When thinking about what she would miss most about Franklin, Ruffhead said, "I will for sure miss my teachers and sports." Ceroll said she gained "friends and a lot of valuable life lessons."

Moore recalled a memorable moment she will take with her. "Funniest memory from Franklin would have to be this one time at lunch in Junior year when these kids got in trouble for not throwing away their trash, and they were all freaking out. It was so funny, but there are so many other moments like when I slipped in the mud, and way more that I don't even remember."

The girls each made a prediction about where they see themselves in the future. "Graduated from college, probably a resident in a hospital or furthering my education," Ceroll said. "In 10 years, I don't real-

ly know where I will be, but I hope I will be working and happy with my friends and family," Moore said. And if she could give advice to her older self, Ruffhead said, "Just keep going and keep working hard to achieve your dream."



Graduating senior Alyssa Moore has decided to pursue nursing at James Madison University.

How FHS is Preparing Students for Life after High School

By Lea Glaser

As the school year is coming to a close, acknowledging seniors is very important. Some of Franklin's alumni have truly made a name for themselves in their respective communities, and hopefully this year's class will soon, too. Two FHS alums and one soon to be alumni have spoken about their time at Franklin and how their experience has shaped their future.



*Pictured Noah Glaser lining up for the starting line-up, 2019.
Image from David Glaser*

Noah Glaser, a current freshman at the University of Maryland, College Park and class of 2020 graduate, has taken a path down the biomedical field while in his current studies. He is studying biology with a concentration in neurology. "Franklin has helped me understand how to make connections, not just with peers but with faculty and staff," said Glaser, explaining how FHS has shaped his post-high school life. "I also learned how to stay organized with my work and to be punctual."

Since being part of the Biomedical Sciences program at FHS, he claimed that he had an idea of what he wanted to pursue while he was still in high school. "I knew I wanted to study something in the science field, which is what I am currently doing," Glaser said. His most memorable moments of learning in high school include being proud to learn true ethics of school and work, as well as communication in making relationships to succeed.

"My biggest regret is not studying enough for the AP Biology exam," Glaser said, re-

flecting on his biggest regret from Franklin. "Those credits would have been very helpful now." It is safe to say Glaser's experience at FHS was very beneficial for his college studies and post-high school life.

Anya Litofsky, a current sophomore at York College of Pennsylvania and class of 2019 graduate, has also taken a road into the medical field at York. Litofsky is studying nursing, in hopes of becoming a nurse one day. When reflecting on how she benefited from her experiences at Franklin, Litofsky said, "I went to a private school before FHS, and there were not nearly as many people. FHS helped me branch out to other people."

Like other students at FHS, Litofsky participated in various athletic programs such as varsity soccer, basketball, and lacrosse. She was focused on her hopes of playing college lacrosse, as she played many years on a club team. A major piece of being a student athlete in college is balancing school and sports, which is something Litofsky learned in high school. "Franklin taught me how to balance school and other activities, which is helpful now with lacrosse and work," Litofsky said. Reflecting on her regrets in high school, Litofsky claimed she had none.



*Pictured Anya Litofsky defending against an opponent, 2019.
Image from Nancy Glaser*



*Pictured Kiley Ruffhead carrying the ball in the offensive zone, 2019.
Image from David Glaser*

Kiley Ruffhead, a class of 2021 graduating senior, is extremely grateful for her time at Franklin. Despite the pandemic, Ruffhead was still able to make the most of her high school experience. Like Litofsky, Ruffhead played club lacrosse across the board and was hopeful to transfer to the college level. She will be attending Roger Williams University in Rhode Island to study Marine Biology and play lacrosse. "I learned a lot like effective test taking and how to prepare for an interview, which has already helped me before I graduate," Ruffhead said when reflecting on how FHS has prepared her for the future.

Marine Biology has always been a passion of hers and being a part of the Biomed program has definitely helped turn the passion into a career. "I have gained so many friendships from Franklin and the ability to meet new people," Ruffhead said when remembering her transition from private school to public school. She also claimed taking few regrets with her from FHS, other than having her junior and senior years wiped due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Before graduation, seniors across the country will take their moments to reflect on what they have learned the past four years and what they hope they can apply moving forward. The class of 2021, like their previous graduating classes, will make an impact on the community and world.

Mental Health Impacted as Learning Continues Virtually

By Kameron Mishoe

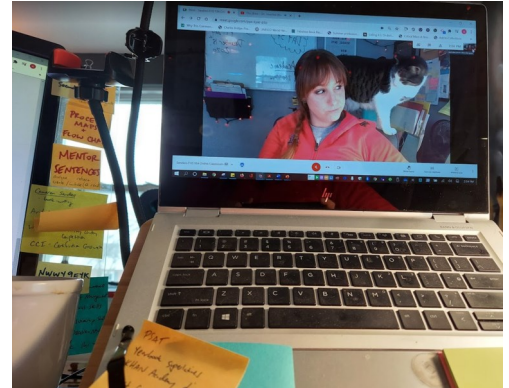
With COVID-19 abruptly cutting the 2019-20 school year short and the 2020-21 school becoming virtual, many students and teachers feel disconnected and unmotivated. This lengthy pandemic has taken a toll on many students' mental health. Teachers try their best to make virtual learning go as smoothly as possible for everyone. This 12th grade English and 11th grade SAT Prep teacher has made sure she tried her very best to make her students feel as comfortable and safe as possible. Ms. Sanders is her name, and she shares her stance on students' mental health in online school.

Ms. Sanders has been teaching 12th grade English and 11th grade SAT Prep for about 4 years now. After building her work ethic while serving in the military, she strives to make sure her students work diligently while being as flexible and understanding as possible. "When we got the initial message that schools were closing down, I thought it was going to be just a 2-week break and we would be back to finish the school year." Sanders continued, "I never thought this virus was that serious and that it would take over our lives as much as it did."

She expressed her concern for her 2019-20 seniors and their graduation. With the quarantine came a new way of teaching

and learning. "Covid has helped my teaching style because it made me think of the expectations I have with my students. It made me value my relationship with my students more." Teaching styles have had to change in order to meet the needs of students over the internet. Along with teaching styles changing, teachers and students had to alter their schedules. The average online school day for Sanders starts at 5:30 am and ends at 2:25 sometimes, later depending on how much work she has. "I teach 3 senior English classes and one SAT Prep class; I make sure to do discussion posts and interactive lessons to try to wake up my students and get their attention."

Many students' mental health has declined due to sports cancellation, overwhelming workload, and some working jobs to support their families. Sanders expresses her empathy with her students and wants to be a safe space for her students to talk. "Students becoming depressed is sad and relatable for all of us in the school system." Sanders adds, "Our class is disconnected; I have students coming to chat before and after class, and it makes me wonder if I'm the only outlet they have." Sanders communicates her concern with students' well-being when they don't show up for class for days. "I've been more lenient on attend-



Teachers adapted their homes into virtual classrooms with pets as moral support. Ms. Sanders is focused on keeping students engaged with support from her cat, NES, named after the Nintendo Entertainment System. Photo from Ms. Sanders

ance and due dates because I don't know what they have going on, but I've been so proud of my students' strength and persistence in the pandemic." On the other hand, some students have expressed their love for online school and how it gives them freedom to work whenever they want and become independent. "Whether online learning is effective or not, it really depends on the student and how they like to learn."

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