


Hat's off

The Class of 2018 celebrates at local high schools

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Students accepted their diplomas, turned tassels and tossed mortar boards into the air as many local high schools held graduation ceremonies Friday. There were tears and hugs, promises to keep in touch, and reflections and hopes on a bright future lying ahead.

Trinity and Eastern Randolph high schools kicked off the evening of pomp and circumstance with 6 p.m. ceremonies followed by Asheboro, Randleman and Southwestern high schools at 7 p.m. and Providence Grove and Wheatmore high schools at 8 p.m.

Graduates of Asheboro High School were encouraged Friday evening to make the most of their new lives while being posi-

tive influences on others.

Some 322 seniors received their diplomas in ceremonies under a clear blue sky at Lee J. Stone Stadium. Principal Brian Saunders offered words of wisdom, including from Dr. Seuss: "You do you." Saunders said each of them had special talents and skills to discover and use.

He urged them to persevere, especially when obstacles stand in the way of their dreams. "Don't give up," he said.

Finally, Saunders quoted Gandhi: "Be the change you wish to see in the world."

Wesley Jennings Williams gave the senior class address, challenging his classmates to be positive influences for everyone around them. "Our world is truly broken," he said, "but keep the faith. You may be able to change the world for one person."

Alec James Schoenberg, senior and student body



Paul Church / The Courier-Tribune

UP, UP AND AWAY — The new graduates fling their mortar boards into the air Friday as the Class of 2018 at Asheboro High School celebrates.



GROUP SHOT — From left, Landon Smith, Chase McCallum and Levon McCanless combine for one last photo before receiving their diplomas at Eastern Randolph High School Friday.

Haley Aydelette / The Courier-Tribune

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president, reminded the class of their "hard work and dedication, making it to this day. It's the start of a new day. What will you do with it?"

With that said, Schoenberger said it was their night to celebrate, being "in Lee J. Stone Stadium one last time."

Dr. Terry Worrell, superintendent of Asheboro City Schools, awarded the C.C. Cranford Citizen Cup to Isaiah Thomas Ridley. Gayle Higgs, faculty member, presented Kendall Elizabeth Allen with the Edward L. Hedrick III Most Valuable Student Award.

As seniors donned caps and gowns preparing for commencement exercises, excitement filled the air. Azorion Medley said, "It feels great. I accomplished everything I worked for to get my diploma."

He said he would celebrate with family and friends by going to the beach. Then he wants to "advance my skill level to get the job I want."

Darrick McLean called graduation "a huge milestone in my life. All the hard work has paid off." He also planned to spend time at the beach with family and friends.

Then it's off to Winston-Salem State University in the fall, where he hopes to walk on to the football team as a defensive lineman. Academically, he wants to major in sports management.

Gisell Munoz said she was "really excited and proud of all my classmates for their four years here. Asheboro High School will always hold a special place in my heart."

After a graduation celebration, Munoz will enter the University of North Carolina at Charlotte in the fall to major in nursing. She said she hopes to be a pediatric nurse.

At Eastern Randolph, Principal Greg Batten, in his special remarks to the graduating class of 182, assured them that while they'll mostly go on separate paths, they'll always have one thing in common — they will always be Wildcats.

"Enjoy this graduation night together, enjoy these days together, and know that life will take you in different directions," he added to a packed crowd at in Burton Cates Stadium.

Valedictorian Eric Lewis Kidd reflected on his time as a Wildcat and urged his classmates to have confidence and courage in the years to come.

"At the end of the day, the only thing stopping you is yourself."

Salutatorian Zachary Michael Miller spoke on how this materialistic society encourages us to find our worth in successes instead of character.

"I challenge everyone to live not for their successes, but for others."

Several students took a moment to turn reflective.

Johanna Smith said, "I'm pretty excited for this next, new chapter."

She managed volleyball and football, was in the yearbook club and served in the Student Government Association



Photo by Tim Moody

PROUD MOMENT — Members of the Class of 2018, numbering 225, stand in front of their seats as the solemn ceremony begins Friday night at Randleman High School.

as senior class treasurer. After graduation, she plans to attend Randolph Community College for two years before transferring to UNC Pembroke to pursue a degree in crime scene investigation.

She joined two other students on stage to present the senior class gift — five crape Myrtle trees on campus.

Taylor Smith said she was "excited and I'm ready to go. I've waited 13 years for this — I'm ready to go."

Smith worked through high school at Beaver Creek Barbeque. She also plans to attend RCC after graduation and hopes to pursue a career in forensics.

Yaneli Salinas, who will also head to RCC to pursue a nursing degree, said she was nervous, "but it definitely hasn't hit me yet that we're actually graduating."

Chase McCallum, who played baseball and basketball in high school, is another one bound for RCC for two years, after which he plans to transfer to N.C. State University to study agriculture.

"I'm excited for the next chapter in my life."

Micheal Monroe added: "I'm just so happy to be finally graduating."

Monroe played football his freshman year and plans to join the U.S. Army after graduation.

Summer Lee, at Providence Grove High School, joined the 137-member Class of 2018, in an excitement over what the future holds.

"It feels so unreal, but I'm ready to go on and pursue my dreams," said Lee who was a member of the Beta Club, marching band, theater, chorus and yearbook club. She plans to attend RCC's photography program before transferring to Appalachian State University to earn a degree in journalism.

Braxton Hinchey, joking that "I don't want



Contributed photo

MILESTONE — Members of the Class of 2018 begin the processional at Southwestern Randolph High School where 237 students received their diplomas.

to grow up," started a landscaping business his sophomore year in high school and now tends to 15 yards in the area. He plans to attend The University of Mount Olive to pursue a degree in agriculture.

Andrew Whatley said he's "excited to graduate and ready for my future at Appalachian State University."

Whatley participated in SGA all four years of high school and was a member of the Beta Club. He plans to major in global studies and political science and hopes to go to law school after that.

Erin Steadman said she's "ready to go, but I'm sad to leave my friends."

Steadman participated in swim, tennis and FBLA while in high school. She plans to attend UNCC for business management.

Kylee Rosas said, "I'm beyond excited to start a new chapter in my life. I'm happy to be leaving, but in a way, I'm sad to know I'm leaving people I've always been around. It's bittersweet."

Rosas played volleyball and softball while in high school. She plans to attend Leon's Beauty School and pursue a career in cosmetology.

Tucker Page delivered the senior address at the PGHS ceremony

in the football stadium. Valedictorian was Madilyn Rhoney and Salutatorian was Vanessa Mesmer.

At other high schools, students were equally optimistic.

Before filing into the Charles R. Gregory Stadium to receive her diploma, Randleman High School's Miranda "Mandy" Goode said she was "going to miss going to Friday night football games. I'm going to miss going to school with all of my friends."

Kelsey Sweatt said she would miss "the comfort of high school and being in my element," but confessed she was "really excited about what the future holds."

Tanner McGee admitted he was kind of sad but also glad. "I know that I'm looking forward to the future, but I'm kind of sad I'll be away from my friends that I've been with since middle school."

At Southwestern Randolph, Rebekah Sugg provided words of inspiration to the 237 students who gathered in the Ivey B. Luck Stadium to receive their diplomas.

Rounding out the Class of 2018 graduations Friday night Trinity High School had 177 graduates; and at Wheatmore, 173.



Photo by Tim Moody

ON HIS WAY — Randleman High School's Alfredo Ramon Navarrete waves to a friend as he heads into the Charles R. Gregory Stadium to graduate.



Photo by Jansy Cross

'IT'S UNREAL' — Summer Lee at Providence Grove High School Summer Lee, at Providence Grove High School, joined the 137-member Class of 2018, in an excitement over what the future holds.

(Tim Moody also contributed to this article.)

area public, private and charter schools will be published in **The Courier-Tribune's** special graduation section in the Sunday, June 10, edition.

■ A full list of graduates in