

Local Schools



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Nearly 300 Graduate from Poplar Bluff High School

MAY 29TH 2016 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - The commencement ceremony on Thursday, May 12, at the Black River Coliseum marked endings and new beginnings on multiple fronts.

First and foremost, 298 students graduated from the Poplar Bluff High School Class of 2016, joining more than 22,000 alumni before them.

Class president Elizabeth Bottorff said the milestone was akin to the conclusion of a book, but challenged her classmates to author an even better sequel. “Go write your own book and make it a best-seller,” she said, earlier advising: “Take everything one page at a time and cherish every word.”

Christian Cmehil-Warn, who will attend the University of Missouri in Columbia, was named this year’s salutatorian. He talked about his struggle to choose a career path, but said with a little hard work and a clearly defined goal, anything is possible. “You’ve got a whole life ahead of you,” he said. “Make what you want of it.”

The valedictorian honor went to Jackson Rideout, who has been accepted at Washington University in St. Louis. He discussed how graduating from high school means more than just a slip of paper, the experience has shaped their lives up until this point. The past four years has also taught him that everything is not black and white. “See the gray, the unknown, the other side, and appreciate it,” he said.

A special tribute was made to the surviving family of the late Kaitlyn Pullam, who has been memorialized with a new scholarship, which went to Mikayla Ursery for exemplifying Kaitlyn's ideals and attitude. Nearly \$2.5 million in college scholarships was awarded to the graduating seniors altogether, according to Principal Mike Kiehne.

Another close to a chapter, it was pointed out by outgoing Superintendent Chris Hon in his welcoming speech, was that this class would be the last to graduate from 1300 Victory Lane. The city manager Mark Massingham, who was in attendance to watch his son walk, observed the momentous occasion in a Facebook post.

“Having a conversation today with David Johnson, Gary Melton and Ralph Stucker and realized the Class of 1966—which included my brother Terry Massingham and David and Gary—was the first class to graduate from the new high school. My son Landon and Ralph's son Aaron will graduate this year—50 years later—and they will be the last class to graduate from this high school.”

Senior High and the Middle School are in the process of swapping locations under the historic buildings plan approved by voters, which will add more than 200,000 square feet of classroom space across campus while utilizing existing property. The new state-of-the-art facilities will be open for the 2016/17 school year.

Shown in the photo are school officials seated in the background, top student Jackson Rideout delivers a graduation speech to his classmates.

Photo and article submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Coordinator, Poplar Bluff R-I School District.

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