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Largest Graduating Class in Decades

JUNE 01ST 2017 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Poplar Bluff, Missouri - A total of 340 students graduated from Poplar Bluff High School on Thursday, May 25, at the Black River Coliseum – the largest graduating class since 1980, according to district records.

The Class of 2017 was the first to graduate from the new state-of-the-art campus facility and the last group for Mike Kiehne to lead as principal, the beginning and end of a chapter. He will be succeeded next school year by Mike Owen, who presently serves as assistant principal at the High School.

“We’re doing things a lot differently than we were six years ago when I was hired,” said Kiehne, who accepted a superintendent position in Marble Hill. “But I’ll tell you one thing: We packed the house tonight!”

Education officials utilized the Graduation Center, the ICU program and advisory class to keep students on track to earn diplomas under Kiehne’s administration. Owen plans to move forward with those tools, which helped to increase the graduation rate significantly since 2011.

“In high school, these support systems are almost built in,” salutatorian Katie Huskey stated to the audience. “...As we leave this built-in support system, we cannot forget to find another one.”

Valedictorian Hunter Aud noted that he believes his classmates have the potential to make a difference. “Out in the crowd of graduating students, I see a group of hard-working, determined people ready to positively impact the world around them,” he said.

The graduating seniors collectively earned over \$1.5 million in scholarships, the counseling department reported.

Class president Samara Kilgore concluded her speech with advice from multi-E Emmy Award winner Alan Alda. “You have to leave the city of your comfort and go into the wilderness of your institution. You can’t get there by bus, only by hard work and risk and by not quite knowing what you’re doing, but what you’ll discover will be wonderful. What you’ll discover will be yourself.”

Shown in the photo: Principal Mike Kiehne presents distinguished graduate Maddi West a signed white robe for being voted the most inspirational classmate.

Article and photo submitted by Tim Krakowiak, Communications/Marketing Director, Poplar Bluff R-I School District

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