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Bernie High School Graduating Class of 2022 Ceremony Held on May 14th

MAY 17TH 2022 BY DEE LOFLIN

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Bernie, MO - The Bernie Class of 2022 received their diplomas at a ceremony in the Bernie High School Gym on Saturday, May 14th.

Among the chairs where the graduates sat was a chair with a cap and gown on it. The class chose to honor a fallen classmate at the ceremony, John William Atkinson IV. At the beginning of the ceremony each member of the class placed a flower on the chair to the song, "I'll Live On," some wiping away tears as they did so.

"Some days we feel like there isn't a light at the end of the tunnel, but sometimes in life, if you want to see the sunshine you have to stand in the rain," stated Wyatt Nimmo.

"John John, we all wish you were here today to celebrate with us. You were a bright light in a dark world and you were loved by so many," said Nimmo in his opening remarks prior to the ceremony. "I will never forget laughing at your hilarious Youtube videos and playing Xbox with you. The entire Class of 2022 will carry you in our hearts as we take the next steps in our lives. To Big John, his dad, your courageousness and resiliency through this tragedy has been an inspiration to all who knew you. You were there every step of the way even through our basketball team's state run. You have gone out of your way to make sure we're ok, and you even convinced us to jump into a freezing lake with you."

The class also celebrated their accomplishments and offered inspiration. Salutatorian John Nimmo listed several athletic and scholastic achievements by the the class. Throughout our 4 years of high school we have compiled a varsity athletic record of 296 wins 158 loss and 7 ties because somehow it is possible to tie in volleyball. We brought home 4 District Championships in three different sports. We set a record for the most wins in a single basketball season this year at 29 wins, 2 losses, while advancing to the Final Four for the first time in over 10 years."

He then offered advice sprinkled with a little humor.

"Although the academic and athletic achievements are nice to look at, but what matters are the memories we made along the way," said Nimmo. "For example, all the times in elementary the girls refused to get off the court because we wouldn't let them play with us. And we agreed to let them play with us if they could beat us. Needless to say they never got to play with us."

"Or the more recent memories when what I thought was a group of 3 weird Dexter move-in, ended up becoming some of my best friends. Memories, that is what we have made along the way."

"To my fellow classmates, I ask that you follow your dreams and do what makes you happy. Strive to be the best version of yourself. Fly through the turbulence and live life because you are all warriors. Be phenomenal or be forgotten."

Valedictorian Anna Eaton also inspired her classmates during her address.

"Life will not always go according to plan. Adversity is one of the few guarantees (behind death and taxes, as Coach Botsch would say). When you find yourself in a hang-up, it is important that you use the knowledge and experience gained within the span of your time at Bernie schools to strive towards your goals and complete your plans. Finally, Dr. Seuss leaves us with a final note of advice: You'll get mixed up, of course, as you already know. You'll get mixed up with many strange birds as you go. So be sure when you step. Step with care and great tact and remember that life's a great balancing act. Just never forget to be dexterous and deft. And never mix up your right foot with your left.

"Going into the real world can be scary. It is important to always be true to yourself and the values we've learned here at Bernie High," she said. "Always remember there is a whole community of people at home ready to support you in everything you do, even if you do find yourself mixing up left and right. Help will always be there, you just have to be willing to ask for it. Don't be afraid to mess up, instead use those mistakes as lessons

and learn from them.”

After high school principal Brad Botsch read each senior’s name as the school board handed out the hard earned diplomas he stepped to the mic again for his final thoughts.

“Be kind,” Botsch said. “In a world where you can be anything, be kind.”

"Have a backbone. Don't be a pushover, or vulnerable to people who will take advantage of your generosity, your money, or your time. Know your limits and when it's time to stand up for yourself....kindly say "no".

"Knowledge is not power. The implementation and application of knowledge is power."

Botsch offered the Class of 2022 the same advice he offered the Class of 2021.

“Know that...you really don’t have to post, tag, Snap, record ping or TikTok every aspect of your life,” he said. “Put down your phone, look other people in the eye and just have a conversation from time to time.”

And then the time to part ways came. The Class of 2022 tossed their caps in the air. They then exchanged handshakes and hugs with both tears and laughter. It was now time to make the choice Eaton left them with at the end of address.

“Today is the day! Your mountain is waiting. So...get on your way,” she said, quoting Dr. Seuss. She then finished with a line of her own. “Or don’t, the choice is yours. Thank you.”

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