

# Quakertown Community School District

# Special Graduation Section

## The Class of 2021



# We're all in this together

Theme to QCHS grads:  
Joint success is limitless.



**By Gary Weckselblatt**

**A**fter 16 months of being kept apart and sometimes feeling isolated by a pandemic terribly difficult to navigate, Quakertown Community High School graduates heard how the resilience and commitment they displayed to one another in the last two school years will help them succeed in an ever-changing world.

Speaker after speaker, beginning with Principal Mattias van't Hoenderdaal and continuing with class leaders Matthew Catalano, Emily Maceri, Elizabeth Hilton and advisor Barry

Stoneback echoed a theme they heard from Mr. V on the first day of school.

"Your success is my success, and my success is your success," Matt said, recalling Mr. V's words.

"This idea of collaboration, and relying on each other to achieve something greater than we ever could have achieved as individuals, has been a common theme throughout our time together, and will hopefully continue for the rest of our lives," Matt said.

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# Class of 2021 Special Graduation Section

## Graduation

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More than 400 QCHS seniors graduated as the Class of 2021 at Alumni Field Friday night. Three days after the community rallied with support in a Graduation Parade down Park Avenue, grads were surprised with a fireworks display following the celebratory tossing of caps into the air.

"What a fantastic night," Mr. V said. "A wonderful night for our students and their families."

The emotional evening included the awarding of the late Gavin Stewart's diploma to his mom, who walked on the stage to receive it.

In the Class of 2021:

- ◆ 57 seniors earned membership in the National Honor Society.
- ◆ 15 seniors earned membership in the National Technical Honor Society, including Pennsylvania's first career and technical education Presidential Scholar, Raymond Slifer.
- ◆ 58 achieved Advanced Placement Scholar recognition by their 11th-grade year, including eight with Honors, 23 with Distinction, and two AP National Scholars, Rachel Anderson and Matthew Catalano.
- ◆ Five students earned AP Capstone diplomas: Kyle Harwick, Elizabeth Hilton, Ella Lucabaugh, Elena Martinez and Alexa Scheetz.
- ◆ QCHS presented 94 locally sponsored awards and scholarships to 92 seniors worth more than \$55,000.
- ◆ 10 students committed to serve our country in the Armed Forces: Ethan Ericksen, Aric Exposito, Clark Harris, Emily Maceri, Noah Marsh, Patrick McCoy, Max Pacella, Kieshla Rodriguez, Michael Staudenmeier and Caleb Rorrer.

"There is no better time to enter the world than today," Mr. V said. "There is

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# Class of 2021 Special Graduation Section

## Graduation

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no better time to make your mark. Class of 2021, now is the time to learn, now is the time to contribute. Keep acquiring those skills that enable you to be resilient and adaptable, and perhaps you will transform your world."

Elizabeth Hilton's message to her class: "No matter where we go or what we do we feed on communal success. I know for a fact that I would not be successful without the support of my family, the encouragement of my peers, and the influence of my teachers, and to that my success is their success, and their success is my success. As we sat in the auditorium half-listening to Mr. V preach this in our minds, never did I think it would have an everlasting impact, and I really never thought it would reappear in a graduation speech, but here we are so shout out to him."

Emily Maceri said: "I am proud to be a Panther because amidst all of these hardships caused by COVID-19 our class was able to make the most of our remaining high school years. I attribute that to the tenacity, grit, and resilience that each and every one of you demonstrated during these trying times. These characteristics are of the utmost importance and will carry you far in life, no matter what path you have chosen."

Mr. Stoneback, who advised the class with Sandi Frisch, Stacie Schantz and Chris Roth, said he has met many families of his students and he's found "the apple doesn't fall far from the tree."

But he asked students to remember that "your tree isn't just your own blood, but all of those people who you have chosen to be a part of that tree. Keep people in it that will always lift you up and support you, especially at your worst times."

Mr. Stoneback also thanked students for being his inspiration. "Thank you for inspiring me again. Thank you for just being you. If you continue to do that, it's all the advice you really need. We are all so very proud of you. I really love you guys and I am going to miss you."

*Gary Weckselblatt, QCSD Director of Communications, writes about the people and the programs that impact the Quakertown Community School District. He can be reached at 215-529-2028 or gweckselblatt@qcsd.org.*





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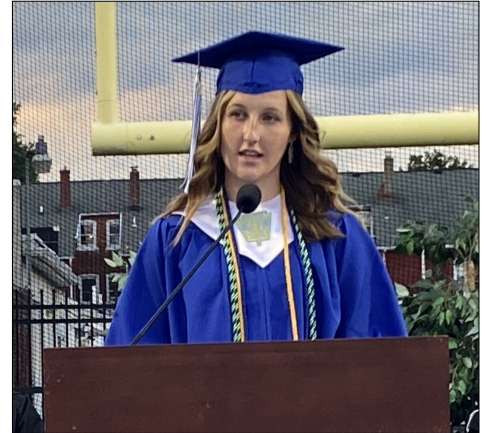
**"This idea of collaboration, and relying on each other to achieve something greater than we ever could have achieved as individuals, has been a common theme throughout our time together, and will hopefully continue for the rest of our lives."**

**Matthew Catalano**



**"Remember that whatever your plans may be, work at them with all your heart. Always choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong. And never be content with the half-truth when the whole can be won."**

**Emily Maceri**



**"Quakertown will always be a destination in our journey that holds 12 years of our lives, and to that I say thank you. And to my class, never stop looking back on the places you have been, for there are meanings to everything in life. "**

**Elizabeth Hilton**



**"We work together, teach together, and learn together. It is a collaborative effort in the context of our community. This class knows that I am a firm believer in the notion that learning is a team effort and that we are better together. Learning is a community's charge that comes with both a sense of belonging as well as responsibility."**

**Mattias van't Hoenderdaal,  
Principal**



**"Don't compare your beginning to someone else's middle. Learn something new and get out of your comfort zone from time to time. As tempting as it's gonna be, don't get the credit card. Just don't do it. Ask for help when you need it. Find what drives you and gives you passion and you'll naturally succeed. Last but not least, don't forget to call your mom."**

**Kaylyn Mitchell,  
School Board President**



**"Because of your persistence and affable nature, you have inspired me to be a better teacher. You have inspired this speech. You have inspired me to help lift others up just as I witnessed so many of you demonstrate time and time again. You have inspired me to be my best."**

**Barry Stoneback,  
Class Advisor**



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### A stage of emotions

While most of Quakertown's 2021 Commencement Ceremony produced tears of joy, there was a difficult moment for the family of Gavin Stewart, who died during the school year. Above, Principal Mattias van't Hoenderdaal hands Gavin's mom his diploma. At right, Neidig Principal Scott Godshalk hugs his daughter Megan. Below, class advisor Chris Roth hands his son Caleb his diploma. Below right, Assistant Principal Jennifer Carolla is all smiles as she hands out a diploma.





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**Graduation Video**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5NO3mqx0h8A>

