



SUPERINTENDENT'S MESSAGE

It's 'event of the year' time

In just a few days I'll be attending our high school graduation ceremony with a couple thousand parents, family members, and community members. It is my favorite school event. In fact, it is the "event of the year". Over 300 students will earn a diploma from Silverton High School. They should be proud. I speak for each employee of the School District when I say that we are proud of them. I'm thankful to the Silver Falls School District team for what they've accomplished in support of our graduates and all other students in the district. There are so many indicators of success in our school community – including our 91% graduation rate. Walk into any school in the district and you will see many examples of the support provided by our exceptional educators. I am pleased to work with each one.

There are two recent efforts that give me optimism as we plan for next year and beyond. The first is the draft Strategic Visioning Plan which was presented to the school board on May 20. You can read the draft on the school district web site (www.silverfallsschools.org) or request a copy by contacting the district office. The plan was developed over the past year with feedback from every corner of our diverse communities, and it truly reflects who we are. Nearly 700 people contributed to this document. As we move into the next five years, this plan will help us ensure that each student graduates prepared to lead a fulfilling life. This is no small goal, but in a high-performing district like ours this vision will become reality.

Our focus on EACH student is by design. This is a measure of equity and can occur only when we remove barriers and create opportunities for individual support of our students. Equity fits within our unique district where each school reflects the communities it serves. While the opportunities and programs may (and do!) vary, the support of the individual student is a constant. That's the Silver Falls way, and it is working!

I was also pleased at the recent Legislative efforts to secure unprecedented funding for early childhood education and K-12 schools in Oregon. Approval of the Student Success Act is the result of statewide public feedback about education priorities. The feedback included hard conversations about how to adequately fund schools. This is truly a historic moment for all Oregon schools. It is a generational investment, long overdue, and will make a difference for each of our students.

It's a busy time as we wrap up this school year and plan for the next. Our long-range facility planning committee is now formed, and will meet throughout the new school year. Seismic upgrades at Mark Twain Elementary and Silverton Middle School begin in two weeks. Our new district social studies curriculum will be in full effect in September, as will our Strategic Plan. This is an exciting time in education, and so much good is happening here. I look forward to hearing from our team, our families, and communities as we provide the best education around. Thank you for continuing to support your local school district.



Superintendent
Andy Bellando

Savannah Reilly – Sports lessons in leadership

Every morning on her way out the door Savannah Reilly's mother would tell her to be her best self and to learn lots, encouragement she took into the world as she moved first from the Community Roots School to Mark Twain Middle School and finally to Silverton High School.

And although changing schools three times could have been a major stressor in Reilly's life, instead – with her mother's words ringing in her ears and the lessons her elementary teachers taught her – she learned to work as an individual.

Coming into high school was not without its difficulty, however, and Reilly – whose parents are Jennifer de Jong and Jeff Reilly – said "juggling the weight and worry of grades" was initially very challenging. But now, a senior on the brink of graduation, she views the future with less anxiety.

"I am more confident in my study habits and academic ability," she said. "I am more conscious of the possibilities that are open for me. What made it possible was simply time and all of the challenges and opportunities I came across."

Many of the lessons she learned came from her involvement in extracurricular activities during her high school career – basketball, track and field, ASB, National Honor Society, LINK Crew and



COMMUNITY ROOTS

soccer all played a part – but she especially grew from her time on the soccer field.

"Gary Cameron, my soccer coach for all four years I played – his pre and post-game speeches were inspirational, moving, and also made me laugh," she said. "He helped me fall in love with the sport and work hard to better myself. I am so thankful for the life lessons he taught me through soccer. Through sports I learned how to be an effective leader. Leadership is a skill that I know I will apply to my personal and professional life."

Carson Ortega – Love overcomes differences

Carson Ortega's years at Silverton High School were full ones. Cross country, track, pep band and unified basketball all gave him the chance to learn new skills, but more importantly, they led him to new friends.

"I really appreciate how all of my coaches and teammates accepted me and helped me to be part of the team," he said.

Ortega – the son of Kevin and Rebecca Ortega – is a graduate of Silverton Middle School where he learned the value of being helpful, serving others and having confidence in himself. He carried these lessons into high school where he would eventually become mellower and more mature, while still maintaining his love for life and his friends.

Although his greatest struggle throughout his school career has been with communication – primarily caused by a speech and intellectual disability – he has never let that hold him back. And he is thankful the friends, teachers and coaches that didn't let it hold them back either.

"There are lots of adults like Mr. Cross, Mr. Satern, Mr. Petrik, Mrs. Ayers, Mrs. Emmert and Mr. Ulven who I love," he said, "but I really want to thank my friends like Daniel Rofelty, Sam Twede, Daniel Briseno, Levi Nielsen and Cooper Hannan



SILVERTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

who helped me become a part of the social life at SHS. Any differences we may have mean nothing when we really know each other. Love is far bigger than any disability or difference."

Norma Ramirez – Don’t procrastinate, be your own type of person

The past four years at Silverton High School have taught Norma Ramirez to always ask questions, to do her best and to avoid procrastination.

“I don’t procrastinate that much anymore,” she said, “which took me till the end of sophomore year to make that happen.”

Ramirez – who began her schooling at Nellie Muir Elementary School in Woodburn – transferred to Silver Crest Elementary School in the fourth grade and there she finished out her middle school career.

“My biggest challenge was being able to survive test days, she said, “Which I always have trouble with.”

In high school, Ramirez became involved in track and field, competing in both discus and shotput.

“[I]t made me talk to new people each time and I pushed myself when I didn’t want to do it some days,” she said.

During the past four years, Ramirez has had two mentors who both encouraged her and helped her through difficulties: Student Success Advocate Esmeralda Meraz, and math instructor Natasha Beliakoff.

“Mrs. Meraz was a huge part of my life during my junior year and she still is,” Ramirez said.



SILVER CREST

“I was having a tough time getting caught up and such but she was really supportive and was cheering

me on every time I was getting better grades. She also tried to help me with anything she could, which I am very grateful for. Ms. Beliakoff was my math teacher throughout high school. She was also that type of person that was very caring but also the type that tries whatever they can do make you succeed. Even though I wasn’t the best student when it came to math – even to this day – if you didn’t understand a problem or a lesson in general, she will do anything she can to retell it a different way, which – by the way – is fantastic.”

After graduation, Ramirez will take a year off from school to work and save money for cosmetology school where she will eventually study esthetics and hair design with the hope of becoming a freelance makeup artist.

Her biggest piece of advice for incoming freshman is “Never procrastinate. Find interests that you like, be your own type of person and try not to get lost the first few days of high school.”

She would also like to give a huge thank you to her parents, Elidia Sanchez and Felimon Cid Ramirez, for always supporting her in everything she does and for always loving her.

“I love you guys and I don’t know what I would do without you guys in my life,” she said.

Connor Boring-Mackie – Success starts with a simple step

Connor Boring-Mackie describes his work ethic during his freshman year at Silverton High School as “coasting.”

“As a freshman I had no idea what I was going to do with my life,” he said. “By the end of sophomore year or beginning of junior year, however, I realized that everything I did had an impact on my life later on. The grades that I was getting – at the rate I was going – were never going to get me good scholarships. So, once I found out I wanted to be a music teacher, I started giving it my all to teach myself the piano, guitar, music theory, etc. What changed was that I tried to make the best of my time at high school – both in studying and applying myself, and in being with my friends.”

From Pratum Elementary, Boring-Mackie said the biggest lesson he learned was that “it doesn’t really matter how many friends you have, it’s the quality of the friends you have that matter.” The lesson served him well, especially within his extracurricular activities – choir, Choralairs, theater and 4H.

“Choir and my 4H camp really helped me to gain confidence in myself as a leader, performer, and person in general,” he said. “Theater, however, first got me out of my shell. All the people there were not afraid to be crazy, fun, and just down right weird. My 4H camp on the other hand, really challenged me. I got to learn so much more about leadership and directing activities than I would anywhere else. The people there were supportive, kind, and amazing to be with. They encouraged me to take on more than I

thought I could and coached me through the endeavors.”

Boring-Mackie’s involvement in choir also gave him a mentor, director Cole Haole-Valenzuela.

“Mr. H took me under his wing and helped in my path through music,” he said. “I taught myself much of what I know, but whenever I had a question he was always there to give me answers. He went above and beyond of what a teacher was supposed to do and helped coach me through some rough patches in my life. I don’t think I can really explain my respect, admiration, and gratitude for him in any form of writing. He helped me find that music and Willamette University were my calling. I can’t thank him enough.”

Once graduated, Boring-Mackie hopes to major in general music and vocal performance with the eventual goal of a PhD.

“I really want to be a college professor who can teach students who love music as much as I do and be able to advocate the importance of music within our schools,” he said.

But for now, Boring-Mackie is urging incoming freshman to take their upcoming high school experience – and all experiences – one day at a time.

“Sometimes the smallest step in the right direction ends up being the biggest step of your life,” he noted. “Tiptoe if you must, but take the step. Sometimes, things are really going to be confusing. You can take millions of different steps and they could lead to



PRATUM

billions of different places. But all of the major successes always start with a simple step. Don’t be afraid to weigh your options, and take the step. We can achieve anything we set our minds to; we just have to work towards it.”

Brian Sung – Wisdom worth a million dollars

The path for Brian Sung has not always been a smooth one. As a Scotts Mills Elementary School student whose primary language was Cantonese, Sung's early school years were challenging.

"Cantonese and English do not share the same language family, hence it has certainly been hard navigating the two languages," he admitted. "Sometimes I find myself thinking in Cantonese but having the need to say it in English, or vice versa. I once found myself switching language mid-sentence without realizing it. You should have seen the faces of my friends."

As with most students, Sung's challenges did not end when he started high school, instead he learned to see them in a different light.

"The Chinese have a saying – 'Receiving wisdom is like pocketing free money,'" he quoted. "From my time at Silverton High School, I have received a million dollars, at least. The biggest contribution to my wealth comes from an event many would call a waste, yet I see it as a golden nugget. I received a B this past semester, at the most crucial point in my high school career. I was devastated. However, one of my mentors, Riane Miles, taught me that this B will be a crucial turning point, one which people will look back and say, 'This is where Brian Sung's story began.' As my stepping stone, this letter will constantly remind me that I can do better, do more. The B stands for better, not the second place people think it is."

Along with academic mentorship, Sung also received inspiration from the leaders of his extracurricular activities – FBLA and Speech and Debate.

"Speech and Debate have certainly made me a more critical thinker and developed my intellectual potential," he said. "On the other hand, FBLA is my family that I have led at the local, state, and national level. What makes these two organizations important to me is the fact that when I am immersed in them, I can completely forget about my worries and stress."

After graduation, Sung will attend Pacific Lutheran University in Tacoma, Washington.

"There, I plan to get involved in their collegiate debate program, student government, and intramural sports," he said. "My major will be business administration, with supplementary minors in marketing and accounting. I am also on track to have a concentration in business law and ethics."

Though there are many people in Sung's life who have coached and advised him, two of the most important are his parents, Tak and Bonnie Sung.

"[N]ot only did you guys bring me into this world, but you guys also lugged me halfway across the world when you realized America would be so much better for my future," Sung said. "I know you guys miss your family, your friends and the homes you grew up in. I want you guys to have documentation that I love you guys very much."



SCOTTS MILLS

Katlyn Ueeck – Be authentic and comfortable with who you are

For the first half of her high school career, Katlyn Ueeck focused on keeping her schedule light. Instead of getting involved in the typical extracurricular activities many students gravitate toward, she maintained personal downtime and developed solid friendships.

Then, during her junior year, she became a Wyldlife leader and everything changed.

"Wyldlife is YoungLife for middle schoolers," Ueeck said. "It has been a fulfilling and incredible experience. Those kids are amazing. I grew up going to Wyldlife and then YoungLife and getting to serve among the people who got me to where I am today is something I can't put into words. And it helped me decide on my career and discover my passion.

I want to be a leader and I just want to love people like Jesus."

Now, with her career path chosen, Ueeck is on the road to one day becoming a youth pastor.

"My plan after graduation is to attend Reach Training Institute in Salem," Ueeck said. "It is a ministry college through Salem Alliance Church and partnered with Crown College back East. I will do that for four years. I will also attend Chemeketa Community College for the next two years at the same time."

Ueeck – the daughter of Chris and Miranda Ueeck – came to Silverton High School four years ago via Evergreen Elementary School, where she learned the value of asking teachers for help when it is needed.

"[A] good teacher cares about your understanding in



EVERGREEN

a class," she explained, "and it's important to stay on top of your work."

As a self-described "people pleaser," Ueeck said one of her biggest challenges during high school was learning the value of living an authentic life.

"I have embraced being real at all times," she said,

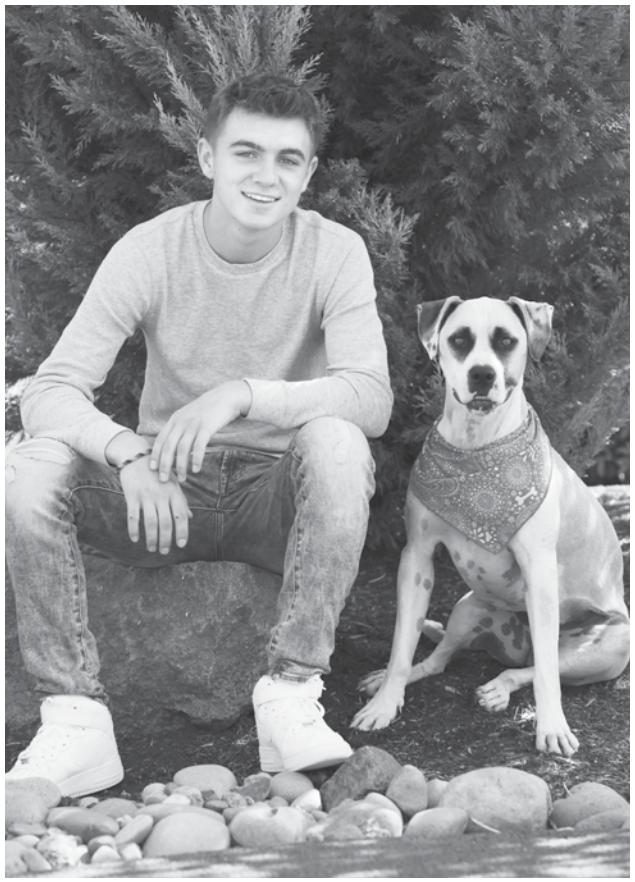
"being authentic and comfortable with who I am. I used to think I could fix things for people and the truth is that you can't fix everyone's issues. It's not your job. I used to think the most important thing was being included and accepted. Now, I've come to terms with the fact all that matters is what the people closest to me think. The people who will love me unconditionally are who I should focus on putting energy and time into. Two very valuable things you should never waste. The mentors in my life helped me realize these things."

Those mentors – Kim Emmert, Shauna Litts, and Clarissa Bay – were Ueeck's guides through high school, both academically and socially, doling out both advice and hugs along the way.

"I can't thank these women enough for being so much more than a teacher of education but teachers of life," Ueeck said. "They have shaped me in so many ways they will never know."

Although mentors like these were important, for Ueeck her parents were the real support system, providing constant guidance and care.

"[T]o my wonderful parents, I'd be lost without your guidance and love," Ueeck shared. "Thanks for pushing me to be the best version of myself and not letting me take the easy way out of things. Thank you for making me laugh and being cool, fun parents. You've always looked out for my heart and never let me down. I have the best home to come home to every day."



CENTRAL HOWELL

Drake Ulven – Treat others with respect

For Drake Ulven – son of Dan and Adrian Ulven – involvement in sports was one of the most significant parts of the high school experience.

“I played basketball all four years and it has always been important to me because of the people I’ve met and the life lessons I’ve learned,” he said. “My biggest challenge was staying focused on school but playing sports is a huge help to stay on the right path.”

His involvement in basketball also introduced him to mentor and coach Jamie McCarty, who taught him the value of hard work and maintaining a courteous attitude.

“The biggest thing I learned was to always treat others with the utmost respect because you never know who you’ll run into down the road in life,” Ulven said.

Coming from Central Howell Elementary School, Ulven said he learned early to avoid procrastination, a lesson that was expounded upon in high school.

“The biggest difference in me from freshman year would be my work ethic,” he said. “The teachers instill a strong work ethic in students and it’s done me well in life.”

After high school, Ulven plans to attend Oregon State University to study Business Management in the hopes of eventually working for his family’s company in Hubbard.

His biggest piece of advice to incoming freshman is to get involved in sports.

“[I]t will keep you focused on doing good in school and keep you out of trouble,” he advised.

Alexis White – Be the friend you want to have

Alexis White – daughter of Alex and Angel White – would like nothing more than to one day adopt a whole house full of teenagers – the more difficult the better.

“Being a teenager can really, really suck and I want to make it suck less,” she admitted. “You’re fooling yourself if you think a child is not going to be a handful at one time in their life. I want that basket-case.”

Preparing to enter Oregon Youth Alive Ministry Academy – a new, two-year vocational ministry program in Albany – White wants to one day inspire other kids in the same way she has been inspired by her many mentors at Silverton High School.

“I like to think I’m a little bit of a garden and I’ve just had different people tending the garden over the years,” she described. “Ms. Kantrowitz, Ms. West, Mr. Craig, Mr. Oosterhout, Mr. Haole-Valenzuela, Mr. Mandish and Ms. Hays – they all grew me as a person. They all inspire me to be better. They all supported me 100 percent.”

A graduate from Bethany Charter School, White



BETHANY

learned the importance of surrounding herself with people she cares about and who care about her – even if it means stepping outside her comfort zone.

“I was so anxious and timid and shy freshman year,” she said. “I was kind of one of your basic freshman. But one of the people who helped me with that was Kristie Hays, my Ag teacher and counselor. She was able to draw me out of that.”

Along with Ag, White was also heavily involved in theater, choir and art.

“Theater gave me a real family and community,” she said. “They’re my biggest supporters, other than my family and my youth group. Choir was important because I’ve always loved to sing. And I’ve always loved to doodle and draw and I especially love painting.”

Her words of advice to incoming freshman are many. “Surround yourself in the people you want for yourself,” she urged, “because it’s important to have a support system around you. Be the friend you want to have. You’ll never lose anything if you give someone else something. And you are not alone.”

Lisa Kurns – It’s OK to take time for yourself

Coming from Butte Creek Elementary School four years ago, Lisa Kurns – daughter of Michelle and Scot Kurns – was eager to start her high school career.

“As a freshman, I was enthusiastic and full of energy,” she remembered. “I wanted to do everything and I was just so excited and naive all the time.”

While she doesn’t regret the time she spent enjoying her first two years – a time before planning for her future began in earnest – they did, she noted, teach her a lesson about the value of allocating her time wisely.

“I understand that I can’t do everything without letting something suffer,” she said. “It is OK to say no. If I don’t want to do something or I feel like I don’t have time, then I am allowed to say no. It is one of my rights. Also, it is OK to take time for myself. If I am getting too stressed-out or overwhelmed, then taking some time off can help me reset and work better.”

Kurns used these early lessons throughout high school, building friendships in her classes and within her extracurricular activities – dance, theater and choir.

“These all have a sense of community and family,” she said. “I am able to express myself through them in a way that I am unable to express with my own words. I have made some of my best friends from



BUTTE CREEK

these activities and I learn life lessons from them every day I participate.”

Along with friendship, Kurns also received mentorship – most notably from Cole Haole-Valenzuela, her choir director.

“He has given me opportunities to push myself and grow even if it’s uncomfortable,” Kurns said, “but I can also talk to him and ask for help. When I have a hard day, I can go to him and he listens to me. He also knows just what to say. He cares about every single one of his students in a way that I rarely see in a teacher. He also doesn’t care about the recognition or awards, he just wants us to learn from each other, our music and just create something beautiful because we can.”

After graduation, Kurns plans to attend Brigham Young University in Idaho with the hopes of one day working as a Physical Therapist.

Her words of advice to all incoming freshman are don’t grow up too fast.

“Don’t be stupid either,” she pointed out, “but take advantage of the little time you have left as a kid. When you get to junior and senior year, you have to start making choices for your future, and it is not as fun as going to football games and hanging out with your friends.”