

Huntington High School's 151st Commencement

Class President Samantha Palmer's Address

I would like to begin by thanking Dr. Leonardi, Mr. Polansky, my teachers, parents, classmates, and class advisors, Ms. Tedeschi and Mr. Bruckbauer for their hard work and dedication over the years; and congratulations to the graduates of 2012. Standing here today, as the president of the Class of 2012, it is my pleasure to present Huntington with the senior class gift.

With the help of the class officers, we decided to give flags that surround the parking lot, welcoming you into the school. We believe these flags add character and beauty to the school grounds, reflecting the even more beautiful character of what goes on inside the school. Furthermore, these flags symbolize the determination, ability and diligence that the Class of 2012 embodies. When viewing a flag, you must look high into the sky with your chin tilted up. The Class of 2012 always holds their heads held high, ready to overcome anything and achieve everything. However, no gift can deservingly represent how greatly we have changed and impacted Huntington High School, mostly for the better. Unlike the flags, our class will leave a legacy that will not fade or die with time.

Standing here today not as your president, but as your friend and your classmate, there are a few words I would like to share about compassion. Compassion has always been my motivation for my heart to be moved into action. Compassion, I believe, is the source behind what we all call success. Sometimes I feel as if we have been taught a formal definition of success.

Good grades, a college education and eventually a job. However, I believe that success is the ability to pursue your passions and loving what you do. I have learned that the Class of 2012 is full of compassion. We have scholars, performers and athletes; students who have truly inspired me.

However, compassion can be difficult to master. Just like our minds, our hearts need time and experience to mature. Luckily, we have the remainder of our lives to develop skills to help our hearts grow. We should be growing a heart that truly wants to pursue our goals, rather than doing what we feel obligated to do. Recently, a close friend asked me if my mind was as chaotic and ongoing as my actions. Truthfully, this was a difficult question that I wasn't quite sure of the answer to. What does go through my mind...what do I think about all the time? I'd probably say that decision-making often crosses my mind, as it probably does for most of you as well.

All of our lives we have been taught to make the good choice, the right decision. Yet, I am starting to learn that decision-making should be about compassion. What you truly love will always be in your best interest. But, how do we define what we love and how do we decide what to do with ourselves? And I think this is what our hearts need to learn. At least this holds true for me.

To some of you who I've known for 13 years, and others who I have met here at the high school, I want to remind you to develop strong relationships and take advantage of intellectual opportunities, for this has helped me get through high school. But more importantly, I want to advise you to mature your hearts. Take a moment once in a while and stop thinking.

Instead, listen to your heart and do what you love. Throughout high school much of what we do is to make other people happy, whether it's for our teachers, parents, friends or coaches. And much of the rest of our lives will consist of this, too. However, make sure you find time in between all of the chaos to take care of your own heart. Whether yours has been damaged or warmed during your time at Huntington, there will always be a small piece of it that will lie here with our classmates. Since our time together, I can surely say that my heart has gained a deeper understanding of compassion. For this, thank you. Congratulations to each of you, and remember to hold Huntington close to your heart.