

DALLAS HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION



BILL TARUTIS PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Sunglasses were the order of the day for Dallas High School seniors entering Mountaineer Stadium for the school's 51st annual commencement.

LAKE-LEHMAN HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION



BILL TARUTIS PHOTOS/ FOR THE DALLAS POST

Members of the Lake-Lehman High School Class of 2012 applaud after the national anthem.

It was a difficult year

By SARAH HITE
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Dallas High School Class of 2012 salutatorian Somiah Almeke, left, valedictorian Angelina Hoidra and third-highest honor graduate Deep Patel.

Students reflected upon a difficult year while relishing in being the first class to graduate from the new high school at the Dallas School District's 51st commencement ceremony on June 15 at Mountaineer Stadium.

Class President Sara Flaherty told the audience that graduation is more than just accepting a piece of paper known as a diploma.

"Together, we have grown from naive children to young men and women of experience and knowledge," she said. "We have learned from each other to laugh, love, grow and succeed. We have learned to deal with the roughest of times and we have learned that, even in devastation, there is always a shoulder to lean on."

Flaherty said students should keep that reality in mind during the ceremony and recognized all the experiences the students have shared throughout the years.

She also reflected on the class's experience in the new high school, which opened at the start of the 2011-12 school year.

"The last year of high school is exciting in itself, but this year we have had the privilege of experiencing our last year in a brand new school," she said. "New classrooms to learn in, new technology to allow us to excel, new policies to better our safety and new facilities to give outstanding opportunities in extra-curricular activities."

Flaherty thanked the school board and administrators for their leadership, faculty and teachers for knowledge and guid-



Rebecca Stull sings the national anthem at the Dallas High School commencement ceremony.

GRADUATION AWARDS

For a list of Dallas High School graduate awards, log onto www.mydallaspost.com.

ance and families for their support and roles as "the backstage crew."

The graduation featured a tribute to Thomas Lynch by his friends, Amanda Kotch, Chelsea Martin, Elizabeth Hoover and Andrew Santora. Lynch died in a vehicle crash in February.

"Tom was the type of person that once you met him, you could never forget him," said Kotch. "His smile was truly contagious. Tom was always happy and always had the same goofy smile on his face. Whether he was running the halls of the school in a gorilla suit or wearing his infamous tie-dye pants with the big hole in the

right knee, or just cracking one of his endless jokes, Tom always knew how to make people laugh and found genuine joy in making people smile."

Kotch said Lynch was involved in Boy Scout Troop 281 and lived his life to the Scout oath.

"Tom lived the Scout law every day, always trying to help people whenever he could lend a hand," she said.

Kotch said Lynch became an Eagle Scout on his 18th birthday in December, and then followed his dream to become a member of the U.S. military. He signed on

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Anxious to move forward

By SARAH HITE
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Lake-Lehman High School Class of 2012 salutatorian Kristen Diction Boyle delivers her commencement address.

Lake-Lehman graduates were fidgeting with their robes before they even sat down for the high school's 54th annual commencement on June 13.

The 144 young men and women seemed anxious to start on the path to adulthood, even before speakers addressed the crowd.

Student speakers reflected on the accomplishments of the class and asked their classmates not to focus on their mistakes of the past but the potential of their futures.

Though Class President Kevin Katchko Jr. started his speech with a tongue-in-cheek quote from comedy writer Robert Orben about the lack of individuality at graduation ceremonies, Katchko said the idea is "truly a key to success."

"Individuality shows that each person has a little something that makes them different from the person sitting next to them," he told his classmates.

He congratulated the class on all of its accomplishments, from sports achievements to the unprecedented senior Christmas program to raising \$50,184 for charity through senior projects - the highest total the school has ever seen for such endeavors.

"This class contains amazing, motivated students, hungry for what the world will bring to them in the future," said Katchko. "No matter what the future will bring, and I'm sure it will bring many struggles, this class will be ready."

He thanked teachers and parents who supported the class throughout its 13 years in the



Lake-Lehman High School seniors enter Edward Edwards Stadium for the school's 54th annual commencement.

LAKE-LEHMAN GRADUATION AWARDS

- Red Jones Leadership Awards
Kristen Boyle and Kevin Katchko
- Citizenship Awards
Lindsey Bennett and Matthew Gorski
- James L. Nicholas Memorial Scholarship
Taryn Talacka

school system.

Though he said it was challenging to find the right words to use in addressing his class for the last time, he managed to find one word that encompassed all he wanted to say.

"I believe this class fits the description of a few words really well. The words include wonderful, first-rate, notable, remarkable, exceptionally outstanding and distinguished," he said. "Does this class not model the ones just listed? These words all fall under the definition of the word 'great.'"

Student Council Co-President Rachel Holena told her fellow seniors to respect their past but not to let it determine their future.

She asked her classmates to learn from their mistakes, as she did when she was younger.

Holena said she and her brothers loved to climb in the McDonald's Play Place when they were younger and never wanted to leave, but their mother would refuse to take them back if they didn't listen to her

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LAKE-LEHMAN SCHOOL DISTRICT

New budget includes daycare center, decreased health costs

By SARAH HITE
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The Lake-Lehman School Board narrowly approved the budget for the 2012-13 school year, which includes funds to develop a district-run daycare center, decreased health care costs for teachers and other spending strategies.

In a 5-4 vote, board members Andrew Salko, James Welby, Richard Bombick, Walter Glogowski and Kevin Carey voted for the budget while Mark Kornoski, Bo Kreller, Karen Masters and David Paulauskas voted against the measure.

The \$26.8 million spending

plan raises taxes to 9.27 mills, a 4.26 percent increase for Luzerne County taxpayers within the district.

A mill is \$1 for every \$1,000 in assessed property value. The plan has \$25.4 in revenues, leaving an approximately \$730,000 deficit to be offset by the district fund balance, which is akin to a savings account.

This translates to an additional \$56.81 per year for the average assessed property value of \$150,000 in Harveys Lake Borough and Jackson, Lake, Lehman and Ross townships. Residents in Noxen Township in Wyoming County will actually see a decrease in their tax bills due to district rebalancing.

In a 5-4 vote, board members Andrew Salko, James Welby, Richard Bombick, Walter Glogowski and Kevin Carey voted for the budget while Mark Kornoski, Bo Kreller, Karen Masters and David Paulauskas voted against the measure.

Kornoski said he couldn't vote for the budget after the board voted to offer teachers a 2.6 percent pay increase for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years at a special meeting on June 15.

The district did manage to save money on health care as planned. Superintendent James McGovern said the district had planned to seek health care outside the Northeastern Pennsylvania School Health Trust but remain in its vision and dental programs. The two parties came to an agree-

ment after the trust filed a lawsuit against the district.

"We will receive the benefits we proposed but it will be through the health trust," said McGovern. He also said the district still intends to withdraw from the health trust by June 2013, and that will not affect teachers' contracts in the future.

Residents expressed concern over the district's financial future after a presentation by business manager Tom Melone. "These numbers are terrify-

ing," said resident Todd DeRosa.

One item at the peak of discussion was the district's proposal to renovate a portion of Lehman-Jackson Elementary to make way for a daycare facility staffed by Hildebrandt Learning Center employees.

McGovern said \$100,000 has been budgeted to determine whether the plan is feasible as an alternative revenue source for the schools.

Residents questioned why the district partnered with a childcare facility from outside the district.

"You're eliminating small businesses from this area," said resident Gail Ide.

McGovern said there will be

guaranteed profit from the center after rates are established and he said the center would run alongside other childcare facilities in the area, not compete with them.

The board also appointed five counselors for the district's summer camp program, one of which is Barbara Paulauskas, wife of board member David Paulauskas. Paulauskas abstained from the vote and Bombick voted against the measure.

McGovern said five positions were open and the district received 17 applications for the positions.

The board also accepted the resignation of head baseball coach

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