

Class of 2016 one of North Pocono's 'most competitive'



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for

KYLE WIND, STAFF WRITER / PUBLISHED: JUNE 4, 2016

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JAKE DANNA STEVENS / STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER North Pocono graduates throw their caps into the air at the end of graduation on Friday.



Yatsonsky

COVINGTON TWP. — Just a few months ago, when Joshua Toth was stressing out about what college he should choose and how his decisions will affect his career path, his father offered some levity.

“My dad looked at me and said, ‘Josh, I still don’t know what I want to be when I grow up,’” the North Pocono High School salutatorian told about 250 classmates at Friday’s graduation ceremony. “I laughed, but later when I thought about it, I realized how great it was that after all of his successes — and yes, some failures too — he is still learning, trying new things, still creating himself.”

During a speech that quoted psychiatrist Thomas Szasz, former President Abraham Lincoln, rapper Drake and science teacher J Croom, he encouraged his peers to seize opportunities life will continually offer regardless of whether the moves take graduates into unfamiliar or unplanned territory.

Many of the jubilant graduates celebrated the milestone in North Pocono High School's gymnasium by decorating their mortarboard caps with glitter, flowers or paint.

All of the speakers at the ceremony — from the salutatorian through Superintendent Bryan McGraw and valedictorian Kyle Yatsonsky — stressed the class of 2016's many achievements.

"We have deservedly been touted by our educators as one of the most competitive academic classes in North Pocono history," Kyle said in a speech that quoted former President Ronald Reagan, country singer Garth Brooks and fictional boxer Rocky Balboa.

Leaders reflected on a class that raised more than \$5,000 worth of gifts for children in need; whose Science Olympiad Team placed first in the region three years in a row; whose soccer, baseball, track and field and softball teams won an array of honors; and whose drama students were behind high-level productions including "Lucky Stiff" and "Footloose."

The valedictorian urged his classmates to not lose the passion that fueled their achievements through high school and made it clear he has high expectations of his peers in the next phases of their lives, even if it won't always be easy.

"We can make advances in literature, medicine, sustainability and global peace through our actions, desires to learn and inextinguishable passions to achieve," he said.

"Undoubtedly, in order to reach these goals, we will encounter severe and real limitations and pain along the way. However, our success will be reflected in our ability to use failings to learn, adapt, and triumph."

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Valedictorian

Kyle Yatsonsky

Hometown: Jefferson Twp.

Parents: David and Linda Yatsonsky

Activities: AP Scholar with Distinction, captain of Science Olympiad, National Honor Society, baseball, basketball, golf, peer tutoring, volunteer for the VA Medical Center's dentistry department, participated in research regarding local bird species' food web

Plans: Attend a seven-year program to become a dentist through Westminster College and Case Western Reserve University dental school

Salutatorian

Joshua Toth

Hometown: Jefferson Twp.

Parents: Paul and Lorraine Toth

Activities: National Honor Society, AP Scholar with Distinction, Science Olympiad, captain of the chemistry team, gifted enrichment program, varsity golf team, volunteer at Logan Memorial Cemetery and the Jefferson Twp. Recycling Center, Anthracite Golf League; black belt in martial arts

Plans: Attend the University of Scranton working toward an eventual doctorate in a bioengineering field