

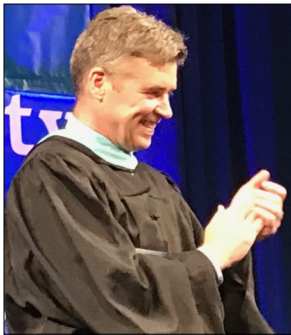


QuEd up for Education

People and programs impacting our QCSD community

June 17, 2019

Principal Dr. David Finnerty to 385 QCHS grads



'Make it a great life, Panthers!'



By Gary Weckselblatt

After each new graduate walks the stage to receive their diploma, Superintendent Dr. Bill Harner meets them at the bottom of the steps to shake their hand.

On Friday night he shook the hand of nearly 385 graduates at Lehigh University's Stabler Arena. As he held the hand of Alexandra Brandis, who's on her way to George Washington University to major in economics and political science, and minor in Mandarin, Dr. Harner asked when she's running for president. The self-assured and high-achieving student responded immediately: "2036." The superintendent smiled from ear to ear and shook his head in the affirmative.

Alex is the type of student QCHS officially sent out into the world after Principal Dr. David Finnerty concluded the commencement ceremony with his "Make it a great life, Panthers!"

Superintendent Dr. Bill Harner congratulates QCHS grad and 2036 presidential candidate Alexandra Brandis.

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These young men and women have scholastically achieved great things. As Dr. Finnerty recited for the large crowd:

- 17 students have committed to serve our country in the Armed Forces.
- 43 seniors will serve our community by entering directly into full time employment, including many in their trade learned at Upper Bucks County Technical School.
- 273 will follow their dreams to a college campus this fall in a 2- or 4-year program. Collectively, these students have earned more than \$6.2 million in scholarships.
- 65 seniors have earned membership in the National Honor Society.
- 17 seniors have earned membership in the National Technical Honor Society.
- 62 achieved AP Scholar recognition by their 11th-grade year, including 13 with Honors, 24 with Distinction, and 3 AP National Scholars (David Michael Fletcher, Nicole Katherine Gromadzki and Adria Lea Retter).
- Three students earned AP Capstone diplomas, “Our most challenging Pathway,” Dr. Finnerty said. They are Mikayla Joy Fuentes, Hailey Marie Reiss and Sophia Marie Shaiman.
- Earlier this week, QCHS presented 158 locally sponsored awards and scholarships to 106 seniors worth more than \$108,000.

And as he read these record-setting accomplishments, you couldn't help but notice the prideful smiles of teachers and counselors, who formed a protective flank for the



QCHS grad Gabriel DeCosta received one of the evening's largest ovations when he received his diploma from Principal Dr. David Finnerty.

students seated in the center of the Stabler floor. It's not unlike their lessons each day in classrooms, music rooms and athletic fields instilled a resolve in them to carry as they take their next steps.

Kurt Handel, advisers to the Class of 2019, with Bethany Fuller, Dr. Nick Hood and Andrew Snyder, said as much during his time on stage. He thanked QCHS English teacher Mr. Mackey for helping him write his resume 25 years earlier. “He was a part of my life success network along with many of my teachers,” Mr. Handel said. “All these teachers are here for you for a lifetime, just as Mr. Mackey was here for me and many others.”

There were also kind words for Stephen Kimball. Called to the stage by Dr. Harner, the big-hearted assistant principal is leaving the dis-

trict to attend law school. With the help of Lincoln Kaar, the Video Production teacher, Mr. Kimball put together a video for the Class of 2019. Mr. Kaar, and students Amelia Derry and Joe Lock, streamed the graduation live on the QCSD TV News Youtube channel.

Student speakers included Class Officers Mikayla Fuentes, Sarah Godshalk, Paul Hand, and Zachary Zajkowski.

Mikayla noted that their high school careers began 1,383 days ago in the former Freshman Center (now the Sixth Grade Center) on Aug. 31, 2015. “I distinctly remember the terms ‘Milford kid’ and ‘Strayer kid’ being thrown around, but as the year went on, those labels faded. We stopped seeing each other as

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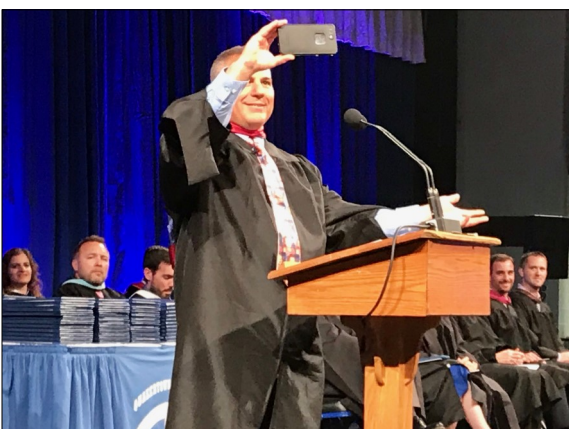
QCHS Graduation 2019



Class Officer speakers at graduation: Paul Hand and Zachary Zajkowski, at left, and Mikayla Fuentes and Sarah Godshalk.



Advisers to the Class of 2019, Bethany Fuller and Andrew Snyder, above, while fellow adviser Kurt Handel takes a selfie.



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the rivals we once were. We learned to embrace each other as the individuals we are even with our differences, and because of that, people were able to explore and embrace their own individuality.”

Sarah recalled walking into her sophomore English class with her two best friends. “We strolled in, eager to perform our live action Hamilton skit we had perfected the night before. Our teacher sat in his iconic swivel chair in the front of the class, computer in hand, eager to watch his students make utter fools out of themselves. But my friends and I walked into that room with such confidence I swear we thought we wrote that play ourselves. The simplicity, the memories, the sense of a family. That is what I will take away from these past four years at Quakertown.”

Paul advised his fellow graduates: “Whether you have found your passion already or are actively seeking one, remember that it is important to be comfortable and satisfied with what you do in every moment. When

something good happens, enjoy it. When something bad happens, understand why it happened. But most importantly, in either case, move on to the next day.

“Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things that you didn’t do than by the ones you did do, so throw off the bowlines, sail away from safe harbor, catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover.”

Zachary also had some advice for graduates. “Appreciate the abundance of opportunities that Quakertown has offered and be proud of the legacy that we have created. Just as Tony Stark said, ‘part of the journey is the end,’ and while we are at the conclusion of our high school chapter, there are still plenty of chapters to be written. Seize the opportunity and become the best version of yourself. I hope you continue to make the world a better place. I love you 3000 Class of 2019.”

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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