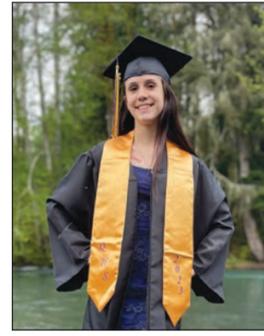


**THE LEADER**  
*Congratulates our*  
**Graduates**

**Class of 2023**



# Quilcene High School The Class of 2023



**Yeoman, Kaydence**  
Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 2 Year, \$5,000, Allison Tornensis Memorial \$500, Quilcene-Brinnon Dollars for Scholars (endowed) \$500, Ruby-Jean Murray Memorial \$500, Emerald Town Alliance Shrimp Fest \$1,000



**Babcock, Logan**



**Hack, Destiny**



**Newman, Gage**



**Budnek, Deakon**  
VFW Post 3213 Scholarship \$1,000, Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 4 Year, \$25,000, Quilcene Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship \$8,000



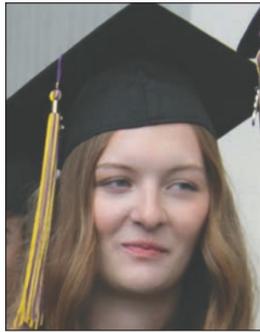
**Hoffman, Cody**



**Robinson, Hunter**



**Carver, Zoey**



**Jones, Ashley**



**Satterlee, Jeremiah**



**Chapman, Rhiannon**  
Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 4 Year, \$6,000, Jandl/Rancich Memorial \$3,000, Jefferson County Bar Association \$1,000



**Lont, Lane**



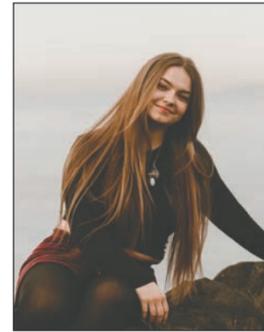
**Sutphin, Jasmin**



**Eldridge, Sara**



**Lont, Natalie**  
University Women's Foundation (UWF) of Jefferson County \$4,000, Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 2 Year, \$16,000, McCullough-Elliott Family Scholarship \$2,000, Quilcene Fair/Al Jakeway \$1,000, Rotary Club of East Jefferson County \$3,500



**Wilcox, Claudia**



**Fox, Josiah**  
Quilcene Harbor Yacht Club Scholarship \$500, Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 1 Year, \$11,000



**McBride, Savannah**  
VFW Post 3213 Scholarship \$1,000, Quilcene Harbor Yacht Club Scholarship \$500, Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 2 Year, \$16,000



**Williams, Baron**



**Gossette, Anastazja**  
Amaranth Scholarship \$1,000, Bremerton Valley Scottish Rite Scholarship \$1,000, Pacific Seafood Scholarship \$2,000, Quilcene Harbor Yacht Club Scholarship \$500, Rotary Club of East Jefferson County \$3,500, VFW Post 3213 Scholarship \$1,000, Key City Chapter 71-Order of the Eastern Star \$1,000, Seattle Foundation Bob and Maggie Bergman Scholarship 4 Year, \$18,000, CMIQ Scholarship – High School Graduate, \$1,000



**Miller, James**  
Babik/Heineman Memorial Scholarship \$500, Jandl/Rancich Memorial \$3,000



**Zellmer, Thorrin**



The Quilcene Rangers' Class of 2023 gathers for a group photo before their entrance into the school's gymnasium for Commencement. Leader photo by Brian Kelly



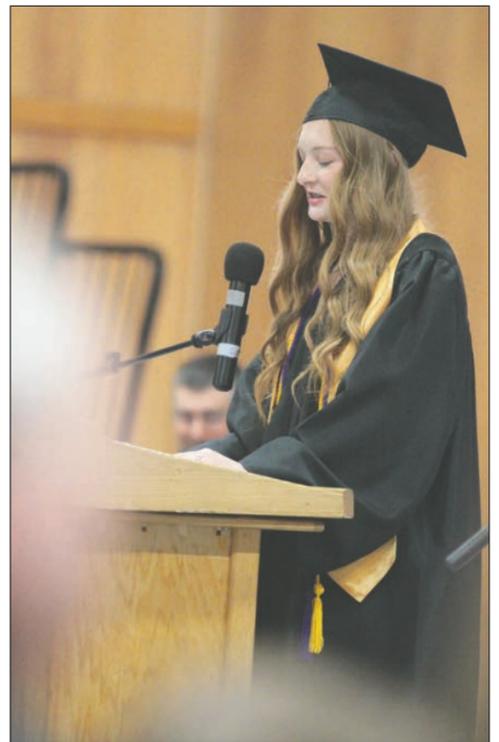
Salutatorian Natalie Lont and class vice president Ashley Jones march to the gym before the start of the graduation ceremony. Leader photo by Brian Kelly



Savannah McBride receives her diploma from Principal Sean Moss. Leader photo by Brian Kelly



Lane Lont shares a hug after the graduating class passed out their "flowers of appreciation" to people in the audience. Leader photo by Brian Kelly



Ashley Jones recalls the moments that mattered to the Class of 2023, from freshman year to the 12th grade. Leader photo by Brian Kelly

# A Griddy graduation for Quilcene's Class of 2023

**BRIAN KELLY**  
BKELLY@PTLEADER.COM

Ask any teenager: The adults in your life can do the most embarrassing things.

Highest on the super cringe list: Dancing in public. Without music.

Jake Reichner did the unthinkable before not one or two but dozens of teens. In fact, it was a packed gymnasium, filled with students, graduating seniors, their families and friends.

And he survived, without an exaggerated eye roll or face-hiding-behind-hand in sight.

Reichner was the staff speaker for the Rangers' Class of 2023 at Quilcene's Commencement on June 10.

"Choosing an art teacher to be staff speaker is like choosing a monkey to drive a school bus. Hopefully we don't all regret this," he told the crowd.

Standing in front of the riser filled with Quilcene's 22 graduating seniors, he asked them to reflect on what got them there.

"Appreciate every moment that created you and honed you and refined you, the good and the bad. Appreciate all of your choices and that, both despite them or because of them, you sit in this room today about to graduate from Quilcene High School and move into the next chapter of your lives," Reichner said.

The 2023 graduating class entered high school at the start of the COVID-19 era, he recalled.

"Remote learning, masks, canceled athletics and activities. And yet everyone in this class can be described in two words: positive and creative," he said.

"These seniors are always smiling and, in many different ways, they are inventive, curious, goofy, weird and productive. They are willing to laugh at themselves and work with mistakes," he added. "I have been so impressed by this group's ability to roll with adversity, accept responsibility, and stay in the fight with a smile on their faces."

The Class of 2023 is a fun and easy-going group of people, Reichner said.

"You have great energy, warmth, wit, humor, and empathy. You are destined to become great things: from veterans to veterinarians, teachers, coaches, bus drivers or country singers. Animators, illustrators, trainers, laborers, and linemen.

"I can sincerely say I have had a genuinely good time teaching with you, laughing, and learning about your culture. Thank you for letting me in," he added. "This year I have felt



Staff speaker Jake Reichner, Quilcene's art teacher, leads the audience in dancing the Griddy. Leader photo by Brian Kelly

very much like an archaeologist who has lived with the native tribe long enough to be one of the tribe. Like Sigourney Weaver in 'Avatar.'"

Commencement was filled with a looking-back vibe from start to finish, with the Quilcene gymnasium ringing with the sounds of "Glory Days" by Bruce Springsteen and "The End of the World As We Know It" by R.E.M., followed by the strains of "Pomp and Circumstance" as 11 pairs of graduates marched to their seats.

Superintendent Frank Redmon recalled how this graduating class, as sophomores, adapted to schedules that changed daily, while juggling sports, mask mandates and nasal swabs, amid homework and tests.

"As juniors, you finally were able to come to school without masks and things headed toward a new normal," Redmon added, "with even more homework and tests."

The seniors were now at a remarkable moment, Quilcene Salutatorian Natalie Lont told her classmates.

"It's the last time our entire class will probably be found in the same room together, the last time many of us will ever step foot into this school building, and the last time we truly exist as a class together," Lont said.

"But while it is the last time for many things, today opens the door for many firsts," she said.

The work world for some, college for others. Different paths will bring many firsts and new experiences outside of school, Lont said.

"Let us say goodbye to the lasts and welcome all the firsts with open arms. Keeping all of the memories we have created and lessons we have learned in mind as we go down our new path of life," she said.

Lont looked out over the audience, gave thanks for those who have been there along the way, and helped her and her "fellow graduates open this door to the rest of our lives."

"We will try not to screw it up," she said.

Deakon Budnek, valedictorian, recalled the friendships that were made, built to last.

"I know that for me personally, my high school friends have been a constant source of support and love," Budnek said. "They've been there for me through thick and thin, through breakups and makeups, through tests and projects and everything in between."

"For me, the only reason my high school experience was so good is because of my friends," he said, calling out "the boys in the van"; Maxx, Bishop, Eli, Andy, Nino, Jimmy and Jayden.

"From goofing off in halls, to under Saturday lights, to in a van moving 60 miles an hour. They made my high school experience memorable during every second together. And that is all I want from my time

at high school," he said.

"I love y'all."

As much as Commencement is always a time for looking back, what came equally was the advice for looking ahead.

Reichner, staff speaker, encouraged the graduates to find their passions: "Live fearlessly, but not recklessly."

"You are, in many cases, about to be the freest you've ever been. Whether moving out, going to college, working full-time, or living in Deakon's van, this is likely about to be one of the freest times in your life," Reichner said.

"Take advantage of every opportunity you can. Don't consider any goal out of reach. Whip up some art gravy whenever you want. You can use the class recipe, or you can go your own way.

"As adults it's your choice: Who you live with, where you move, who you love, how you survive. Don't be afraid of making hard choices. And, I would say, get in the habit of being honest with yourself, so you can hopefully trust yourself when life goes sideways," he said.

Suggestions? He had plenty.

"Make music or create playlists. Write. Build a house, work on a car or a bus. Grow a garden. Learn to cook. Please! Imagine if everyone was a good cook! We'd all eat like kings! Let everyone cook," he said.

Finally, it was time to just dance. Reichner asked the graduates, the faculty, and the audience "to recognize the true power of the Griddy."

The Griddy, he reminded everyone, is a celebration dance popularized by NFL and NBA players.

"One can both Griddy to celebrate something, or Griddy on something or someone they may have dominated or conquered," Reichner said.

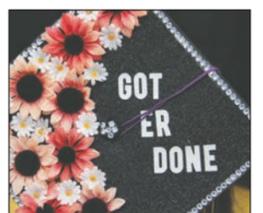
For those celebrating the moment, the years past, or something or someone else, he asked the audience to rise for a collective Griddy in honor of the Class of 2023.

"Please rise, bow your heads, bend your knees, swing your arms and stomp your feet in place," he said.

And for an awkward moment, many did. Students, faculty, school board members, grinning granddads, dads in plaid, and brothers in ball caps. Laughter, applause filled the gym.

"You may be seated," Reichner said. "We will never speak about it again."

"Be good to yourselves and one another," he told the graduates.



# Quilcene's valedictorian cut from familiar cloth

**BRIAN KELLY**  
BKELLY@PTLEADER.COM

Some readers may think they have seen this story before.

Football star. Class valedictorian. All-around great guy.

It's graduation time again in Quilcene, and for the third year in a row, the story remains the same.

Somewhat. There's a different first name.

Deakon Budnek is the Rangers' Class of 2023 valedictorian.

The year before, the valedictorian was his older brother Bishop. And the year before that, his oldest brother, Zachary.

Though he's the latest student standout from the Budnek family, it's unlikely he's the last. Deakon gave a quick namecheck to his younger siblings.

"I'm the middle child; then Maxx, then Ben Budnek, the youngest. He's in the sixth grade.

"It's a whole hand; it's five," he laughed. "I'm right in the middle."

The Budnek brood has been hard to miss in recent years. There have been five Budnek brothers on the Quilcene campus at once.

"It's weird. I'm one year apart from Bishop, he's one year apart from Zach. So it's weird," he said.

When his brothers graduated, Deakon became the big Budnek on campus. That was true at home in Brinnon, too.

"When they left, I'm like the man of the house. When they come back, it's sort of a turmoil. Because we're all like these big dudes who like to be the leader. We're valedictorians, we've done all these things in our life.

"It's a crazy household. But I like being the middle child. They get to make the mistakes; I get to learn from them," he added of his older siblings. "And then I just get to be the fun kid to my younger brothers."

His elementary school days were first spent in Sequim, at Helen Haller Elementary, before his family moved to South County after his mother Heidi got a teaching job in Brinnon. He was a student in the Brinnon School through eighth grade.

"I came up here just for only high school, but it feels like it's been forever," he laughed.

It's been the people, the friends, the connections he's made.

"This is by far the tightest group of friends I've made. Such a vast portion of your life is dedicated to that school," he said of Quilcene High. "And it feels like I've grown older and matured. It felt like I've spent my whole life in this school, just based on the relationships I've built."

Budnek entered high school with some crucial connections already in place. Being stair-stacked with his older brothers wasn't a bad thing, he said.

### A FOOTBALL FAMILY

"In eighth grade, I played football with Zachary and he was a sophomore. Every single year I've played football with at least one brother," he recalled.

As Ranger fans know, the football roster hasn't been short in Budneks in recent years.

"I've played with three brothers. In eight-man football, there's four of us that may start. That was unbelievably fun," he said.

But when it comes to that old sports saying - leave it all on the field - that can bit a bit of a problem for the Budnek brothers.

"If you hit them too hard, it's coming home with you. And you're going to get it back. You're taking it home; you're not leaving it there," he laughed.

Still, there's nothing like having a full hand, in the game and out.

"It's like you always have a friend with you. We're not brothers, we're friends. Especially me and Maxx. We do everything together. It's like you always have your best friend with you, nonstop," he said.

There's a special bond with the band of the oldest Budneks.

"We're much closer," he said of his brothers Zach and Bishop. "Our mom tells us all the time, 'Hey Deakon, I'm not going to be here forever. When you grow up, you are all going to have each other's backs.' And that's a great circle to have," he said.

"We're not kids anymore. Zach's 21; Bishop is 20; I'm 19."

Still, that competitive streak for the three oldest brothers echos still, especially when the oldest two are home from college. There's a bit of

"If you hit them too hard, it's coming home with you. And you're going to get it back."

**Deakon Budnek**

smack talk involved, he said.

"When Zachary was a sophomore and Bishop was a freshman and we were on that football team. Oooh, boy. A lot of bickering. It still is. Bishop and Zach will come home and I'm like, 'Guys, I was the best football player in our family.' And Bishop's like, 'No, Deakon, I was.' And Zach's like, 'No, I was.'"

### NO SECOND GUESSES

With the final day of school approaching, and along with it, the commencement ceremony where he will stand before all to give the valedictorian's speech like his older brothers have done before, Budnek said he had no regrets.

Well, maybe one or two. He said he wished he would have played baseball, or been in a high school play. Those would-haves, should-haves have evaporated as graduation nears.

"Before, I was like, dang, I wish I could have done this. I wish I could have done this. I wish I would have played baseball."

"I'm 19; there's no point in reflecting on it. I've got to move on. I've got the whole rest of my life, I guess, to hit home runs."

The run-up to graduation has prompted many memories; many good ones.

"I've reflected on so many small moments. The first time I won a football award; that was crazy. Being announced by Mr. Moss that I was valedictorian. I'm like, Zach and Bishop, I'm right here.

"I have zero regrets. I've loved high school. I've done everything I could do. I'm good."

The bigger thing now, he said, is to nail the speech at graduation.

"I've listened to a lot of valedictorian speeches," he said, laughing



Deakon Budnek earned valedictorian honors in his senior year at Quilcene High, following in the footsteps of brothers Zachary and Bishop.

*Photo courtesy of Quilcene High*

when reminded that he knows the people who wrote the last few ones pretty well.

"I want to make mine stand out. Not to the crowd but I want to show my friends that I love them and cherish them," he said.

### LESSONS LEARNED

It's those people who have been by his side, he said, who have mattered so much. The ones not sitting in the student seats, teachers like Jeff Taylor, Jake Reichner, and Trey Beathard, also coach of the Rangers football team. Budnek grew up without a dad, and said they were inspiring male role models.

"They all taught me something different. Coach taught me hard work. Mr. Taylor, he taught me to be determined. Mr. Reichner, the art teacher, told me you got to express your creativity in life. If you don't do that, everyone's the same,"

he said.

He's leaving with a lot, he said. Valedictorian, Honor Society president, a state participant in Mathletes. Junior year, defensive player of the year in the SeaTac League varsity football; senior year, again defensive league player of the year. Powerlifting record holder; highest benchpress in the state, at 375 pounds. Art show winner.

Art show winner?

That's where Reichner comes in. Budnek recalled the day his art teacher came into class with a huge canvas, 6-by-8 foot or so, and looked in his direction.

He recalled Reichner's words: "Deakon, I'm not going to help you. It's going to be all on you. Go to town."

Using acrylic paint, ink, and spackling paste, Budnek went to

see **VALEDICTORIAN**, Page B5



## PORT TOWNSEND School District



### NEW 2023-24 CALENDAR

Starting this fall: **More Breaks** during the Year!

- Full week off at Thanksgiving**
- Mid-winter break in February**

School will start the Tuesday after Labor Day and end the last week of June.

Scan with your phone to view the calendar!



### NOW ENROLLING

Register now for 2023-24:

- » New Transition to Kindergarten-Preschool & grades K-5 at Salish Coast Elementary
- » Grades 6-8 at Blue Heron MS
- » Port Townsend HS
- » OCEAN K-12 Family Partnership & Online Program

Scan with your phone to enroll your student!



### JOIN OUR TEAM

Our school district is looking for dedicated and passionate professionals to join our dynamic team in a variety of roles. Please sign up for Job Alerts with our online application system. We offer competitive salaries, benefits, and more.

Scan with your phone to learn more & apply!



We're proud of our graduates from **Port Townsend High School & OCEAN!**



**PT Schools Promise:** Every student will be **known, supported,** and **engaged** and graduate with the skills to thrive in the world and change it for the better.

[ptschools.org](https://ptschools.org) • 360-379-4501

# PTHS grads celebrate a bright future

ANNA TALLARICO  
ATALLARICO@PTLEADER.COM

As the opening notes of “Pomp and Circumstance” rose from a hidden side-stage orchestra, a sea of red began to trickle into the dark auditorium. The hushed silence that had fallen over the crowd grew to a symphony of cheers and applause, adding joyful harmony to the music as 123 beaming Port Townsend High School graduates, hands held, arms linked, poured onstage.

Principal Carrie Ehrhardt gave a heartfelt welcome and introduced student body president Lillian Morrison, who addressed her fellow classmates with bittersweet enthusiasm. She is excited for what’s next, she said, but sad to leave the small town that has shaped her through shared experiences.

After a greeting from superintendent Linda Rosenbury, Ehrhardt announced Leona Lee to

be this year’s recipient of the Andy Palmer Memorial Scholarship.

“[Lee] was chosen because of her kindness, loyalty, integrity, and humility,” Ehrhardt said.

The Class of 2023 had not one, but three valedictorians.

Adeline Gellert-DePalma took the stage first.

“I have been advised to keep this short and sweet,” she began. “Which should be easy for me, as those are my star qualities.”

In her speech, Gellert-DePalma quoted author Marianne Williamson: “There is nothing enlightened about shrinking so that other people won’t feel insecure around you... And as we let our own light shine, we unconsciously give other people permission to do the same. As we are liberated from our own fear, our presence automatically liberates others.”

Gellert-DePalma urged her fellow classmates to heed



The Expedition Club celebrates graduation together before their upcoming trip to Thailand this summer. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico

these words.

“Never dim your light for others. Go out and be the engineer, or author, or CEO, or dancer, or welder, or teacher, or environmentalist. Don’t take no for an answer,” Gellert-DePalma said.

Sophie Kunka, the second co-valedictorian to speak, marveled at how quickly time

passed.

“It’s that feeling of looking up to the big kids and then one day, we are the big kids,” she laughed.

“The thing I’m going to miss most about high school is the camaraderie,” Kunka continued. “I’ll miss the late-night gossip sessions in a hotel room on the LA

orchestra trip, complete with a bag of chips and an episode of a trashy dating show. I’ll miss shooting a panicked look at my table partner during a calculus final, realizing we’re both running out of time.”

Kunka then introduced her best friend, co-valedictorian Maeve Kenney. “She is the most witty, gracious, and

beautiful person I know,” Kunka said. “I know I could never be where I am today without her friendship.”

The two embraced before Kunka took her seat and Kenney stepped forward to deliver the final valedictorian address.

see PTHS, Page B8

## Compassionate, hardworking, independent: Quilcene graduate is ready for what’s next

BRIAN KELLY  
BKELLY@PTLEADER.COM

Sara Eldridge admitted she wasn’t at her best.

It was 8:30 a.m., two days before Graduation Day, and she was sitting in a counselor’s office at school, following a night without sleep.

The special occasion? An interview with a local newspaper reporter as one of the 22 remarkable in Quilcene’s Class of 2023.

Eldridge, a humble and perceptive person who doesn’t seek the spotlight, struggled to talk about herself. She’s not one to brag, but would have plenty to draw from if she did.

In her senior year at Quilcene, she went to State for Mathletes and crushed the math test, finishing as the No. 1 senior in the state of Washington. The Washington State Mathematics Council named her its Distinguished Senior.

Her creative talents run the range from music to art. She’s been playing the piano for about five years, and has started singing, too.

Still, it’s her dad who has the musical chops.

“My dad is one of those type of people who can pick up any instrument and know how to play it. I’m so jealous. He can hear a song and just be like, ‘Oh yeah, it’s like this.’ It would take me an hour to learn.”

Her senior year, she has gotten into art classes and a zebra head that she sculpted won an award in Peninsula College’s art competition.

“It was my first time working with clay and it was really fun,” she said.

The zebra’s stripes are embedded with a blurry red and blue effect.

“It was originally going to be a horse. I thought a zebra would be more visually striking,” she explained. “It took me forever. But I love it.”

Those who know her say she’s hardworking, independent, and very compassionate.

“I will do just about anything for the people I love, even if that means setting my own needs aside,” she said.

“I love helping others and pride



Horses are a passion for Sara Eldridge, a member of the Quilcene Class of 2023. Photo courtesy of Quilcene High

myself on being an open, honest person that people can feel safe reaching out to if they’re going through a hard time.”

She is also someone who can do just about anything with enough practice.

Also on the list: She’s great at training animals; she can haul and back up a trailer; and she can drive a car with a manual transmission — she once drove a six-speed Corvette all the way to Mount Rushmore when she was 15.

### POP QUIZ

Was it mentioned that she is also super smart and thoughtful? On this Thursday morning when she would rather be sleeping, Eldridge agreed to a final pop quiz;

fill-in-the-blank. Nothing like one more test before Graduation Day. The questions flew.

*The person who would play me in the movie of my life?*

“I’m going to go with Adam Sandler. He can play anything.”

*If I had to sing a karaoke song, it would be?*

“Probably, what’s that Carrie Underwood song?” she asked, then started to sing a verse while trying to recall the lyrics. She stopped. “‘Vienna’ by Billy Joel. I already know that.”

*My superpower is?*

“I definitely am an over-thinker. I’m thinking way too hard about all of these [questions]. I just need to

“I will do just about anything for the people I love, even if that means setting my own needs aside.”

Sara Eldridge

throw something out there.”

*If I had a theme song, it would be?*

“I got nothing. For a musical person you would think I would have it.”

OK, blame the early hour.

Eldridge started school in Quilcene after being a student in Chimacum from kindergarten through the eighth grade. The daughter of Amy Studiner and Billy Eldridge, she’s in the middle of a pack of siblings, with a younger brother attending school in Quilcene.

The final school days in Quilcene have seemed surreal.

“It feels weird being here. It feels like I already graduated. I think it’s finally starting to click that I’m not coming back here next year,” she said.

“It’s kind of liberating, but at the same time ... it’s going to be so different. But in a good way.”

Eldridge admitted to skipping school in recent weeks. A lot of her hours lately have gone to Penny and Copper, her two horses.

“I’ve got to pay for them on my own. They’re expensive,” she said, adding that she’s been working quite a bit with her family’s business, Eldridge Homes Construction.

An outdoorsy person with a strong passion for animals, her love of horses came at an early age, when she saw people riding horseback on television.

### SADDLE UP

“I saw it on TV when I was a little kid and I was like, ‘Mom, I want to do this.’ It took me like three years to really convince my parents that I

was really into it, long term. I saved up my money; I saved up all my birthday and Christmas money for like four years and I bought Penny.”

“I was really dedicated. I still am. I just love horses. They are definitely my passion. They’re just... It’s hard to explain without experiencing it yourself. They are so, like, understanding. They really connect with you. It’s a lot like dogs, too. They really sense your emotions,” she said.

Penny was an older horse when she got her and started riding at the age of 9. Copper, the new one, is a thoroughbred and still has some springs.

“I do jumping with her. She’s an awesome horse,” Eldridge said.

Though she first imagined heading off to college in Pullman and studying to be a veterinarian at Washington State University, she’s put a pause on those plans.

“I’ve always wanted to be a vet, so I was inspired by some of the veterinarians I watched [on television]. Like Dr. Oakley; she works up in Alaska [‘Dr. Oakley, Yukon Vet’ on Nat Geo Wild]. And there’s Dr. Pol [‘The Incredible Dr. Pol’ on Nat Geo Wild].”

### WHAT’S NEXT? TBD

Now, things are in a bit in flux, she said.

“I’m not 100 percent sure. Up until like six months ago, I was like, yes, I’m going straight to WSU after high school. And I’m going to become a vet.”

“More recently, I stepped back a lot,” she said. “It’s a lot of schooling. And I am not 100 percent sure that’s a career I would enjoy.”

Instead of going straight off to college, Eldridge is now planning on moving to Oklahoma, where a family friend has a horse ranch where she can volunteer with a vet clinic a few minutes down the road.

Looking back, if she could give herself some early advice, she said: “There’s always light at the end of the tunnel.”

“Just stick with it,” she said.

## VALEDICTORIAN

continued from Page B4

work. What came out was an abstract portrait, and it won awards at art shows in Sequim and Peninsula College.

“My mom loved it. She loved it. ‘Deakon, you are so creative,’” he recalled.

“She sat me down and said, you and your brothers have a lot of similarities. But your creativity sets you apart.”

When asked what advice he would give to a freshman student, the answer came easy.

“Listen your first year. Be a fly on the wall. A lot of kids come in and they want to prove themselves,” he said. “And they just do too much, or they make a mistake and then they

are defined by that mistake throughout high school. People only know you by your worst mistake.”

Budnek thought back to his own story, when he was an eighth-grader in Brinnon.

The eighth-grade version wasn’t so great. He found himself sitting at home, recovering from surgery for an ACL/meniscus injury.

“I was at home; state of depression. Middle school; you’re going through that hormone change,” he added. “I was like 300 pounds, borderline. It was a bad place. Weight’s gaining. Hating how I looked. Just a bad place, mentally.”

### THE HYPE GUY

And now? Here’s his assessment: “Goofy. Energetic. Loud. Always screaming. Hype. Whenever I am with somebody

if they are working out or struggling with school, I’m like, ‘You got this.’”

“I’ll be spitting off these one-liners. ‘Ain’t no weight classes in the jungle.’ I’m just saying anything to get me fired up and get them fired up,” he said.

“Last one would be: In control. I know where I am at, at all times. I know who is around me; I know my surroundings. And I feel like that’s a good thing to have. My mom always used to say, ‘You can be a great kid, but you can always be in the worst place at the worst time.’ I’m not going to do that.”

“I’ve always tried to be in control of what I say, what I do. I love to joke around, but I know that’s a time and place. And I know what’s too far; the crowd I’m with,” Budnek said.

Though college football was initially in

his future — he had planned on attending Northeastern State University in Oklahoma — the prospect of needing knee surgery again, and a recovery time of six to nine weeks, prompted other plans.

Now, he will be attending Washington State University to major in elementary education. He looks forward to being a teacher someday, maybe in Colorado or another state that has natural charms to rival Washington’s.

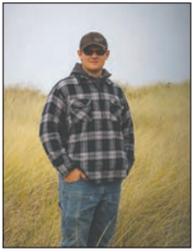
“I’ve had so many male role models growing up,” he said of his desire to teach.

“If I could give somebody who’s growing up an actual male model to look up to, that’s just an opportunity that I can’t pass up on,” he said.

# Port Townsend High School



## The Class of 2023



Allen, Jesse



Arce, Sage



Asbell, Addison



Auseuga, Siamau



Bailey, Chloe



Banks, Ichabod



Beal, Mason



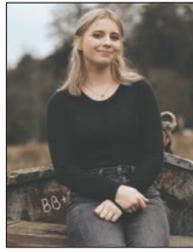
Beebe, Justice



Bennett-Anderson, Devon



Benton, Theodore



Brady, Eva



Carr, Adelle



Cervenka, Juniper



Conyers, Clara



Cook, Ezra



Crecca, Rosemary



D'Andrea, Persephone



Delaney Brandon



Dominguez Santiago, Alexandra



Duffy, Aidan



Duran-Sanchez, Stephanie



Erickson, Elliott



Ferland, Magdaline



Floerchinger\_Rylee



Frank, Sophia



Fulton, Tobias



Gellert-Depalma, Adeline



Germeau, Taylor



Gibson, Jared



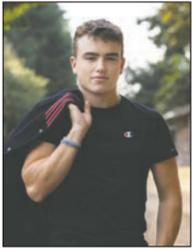
Greene, Briar



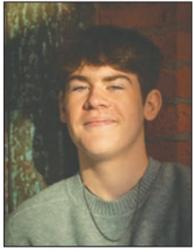
Gregg, Riley



Gurney, Isaac



Hammer, Austen



Harbin, James



Harris, Madison



Harrison, Leah



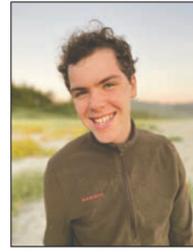
Hefley, Gabe



Heim, Hunter



Hernandez, Exael



Hiegel, William



Hill, Ivy



Hill, Trey



Hinds, Alan



Hines, Cameron



Holmes, Samuel



Horner, Izabell



Hos, Ash



Huber, Sophia



James, Hunter



Jones, Halie



Kaser, Noah



Kauzlarich, Amelia



Kenney, Lonnie



Kenney, Maeve



Kessler, Grace



Kilgore, Madeline



Kithcart, Lucia



Kjeldgaard, Zoe



Kunka, Sophie



Kutler, Shannon



Lampert, Chloe



Lee, Eunice



Lee, Leona



Lewis, Ephraim



Lindert, Kyle



Lumsdaine, Sophia



Manuel, Beau



Manza, Sebastian



Massey, Rosemary



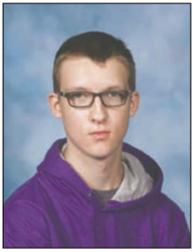
McCleese, Lorenzo



McCracken, Gillian



McCracken, Isabel



McDowell Jr Jay



McGregor, Eli



McKenzie, Joshua



Mergel, Marcus



Meyer-Bibbins, Ashton



Miceli, Derrick



Moloitis, Luna



Molotsky, Anna



Montgomery, Taylor



Morris, Drew



Morrison, Lillian



Mugrage, Opal



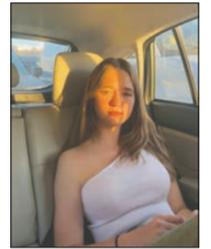
Newsome, Lily



Norton, Fenix



Nye, aHokule



Opatrna, Agata



Petta, Michael



Pirwitz, Emerson



Popp, Rhian



Pray, Kaylen



Pray, Kerith



Queen, Emerson



Ramsey, Emilia



Rankin, Chatham



Rincon, Roxanne



Rioseco, Antonio



Scanlon, Connor



Seton, Lillian



Sierociuk, Samuel



Simmer, Kylie Re



Simmons-Reimnitz, Matia



Slater, Jackson



Storm, Elizabeth



Stromberg, Samantha



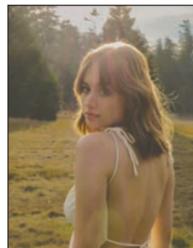
Wakefield, Lars



White-Rodriquez, Emmanuel-Wel



Wilson, Trevor



Winsheimer, Ashlyn



Woodward, Analiece



Wright, Adriana



Wright, Roean



Yelaca, Teagan



Zavalza, Natalie

## Port Townsend High School Scholarships

**Sophie Kunka**

Donald Thomas Memorial Scholarship

**Adeline Gellert DePalma**

Ginger Jacobsen Memorial Scholarship  
Port Townsend Kiwanis Charitable Trust Scholarship  
Port Townsend Rotary Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend Yacht Club Scholarship

**Alexander Zimpher**

Arnold and Lucille Eggert Vocational Scholarship

**Anna Molotsky**

Minard Family Memorial Scholarship  
Port Townsend Elks Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation  
Port Townsend Rotary Club Scholarship

**Antonio Rioseco**

Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Ashton Meyer-Bibbins**

Port Townsend High School Alumni Association Scholarship

**Camryn Hines**

Chris Kimball Voc/Tech Scholarship  
Deb Johnson Memorial Scholarship  
Port Townsend Elks Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation  
VoTech Scholarship

**Emerson Pirwitz**

Deb Johnson Memorial Scholarship  
Port Townsend Kiwanis Charitable Trust Scholarship

**Emilia Ramsey**

PTSD School Board Student Voice Scholarship

**Emme Pirwitz**

Holiday Wreath Scholarship  
Jewel Atwell Cline Scholarship

**Haley Jones**

Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation  
Port Townsend Elks Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend Rotary Club Scholarship  
University Women's Foundation High School Girl's Scholarship

**Hunter James**

Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Izabella Horner**

PTEA Scholarship  
VoTech Scholarship

**Josh McKenzie**

PTEA Scholarship  
Terri Purviance Martin Memorial Scholarship

**Juniper Cervenka**

Jefferson County Retired School Employees Association Scholarship

**Leah Harrison**

Niel Potthoff Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Leona Lee**

Andy Palmer Memorial Scholarship  
Port Townsend Elks Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Lillian Seton**

Rivals Youth Football Appreciation Scholarship

**Lorenzo McCleese**

Anne Murphy Ocean Stewards Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Alumni Association Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation  
Port Townsend Kiwanis Charitable Trust Scholarship  
Port Townsend Rotary Club Scholarship  
Port Townsend Yacht Club Scholarship  
Service Above Self Scholarship

**Maeve Kenney**

Port Townsend High School Alumni Association Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Matia Simmons-Reimnitz**

Chie Bounds Memorial Scholarship

**Noah Kaser**

Arnold and Lucille Eggert Vocational Scholarship

**Opal Mugrage**

Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation

**Sebastian Manza**

Windermere Agents of Good Roots Scholarship

**Sophia Lumsdaine**

Port Townsend High School Alumni Association Scholarship  
Port Townsend High School Scholarship Foundation  
Port Townsend Rotary Club Scholarship

**Sophie Kunka**

Surfrider Scholarship

Wishing all Graduates Happy Trails Ahead of You

From all of us at Don's Pharmacy

**Don's Pharmacy**  
360.385.0969  
1151 Water St, Port Townsend • donspharmacyporttownsend.com

**Bonita's**  
Four-legged Friends  
pet supplies

Fine dining for your family pet

1433 W Sims Way Port Townsend, WA 98368 (360) 379-0436  
10159 Old Olympia Hwy Sequim, WA 98382 (360) 477-4388  
bonitaspetsupplies.com



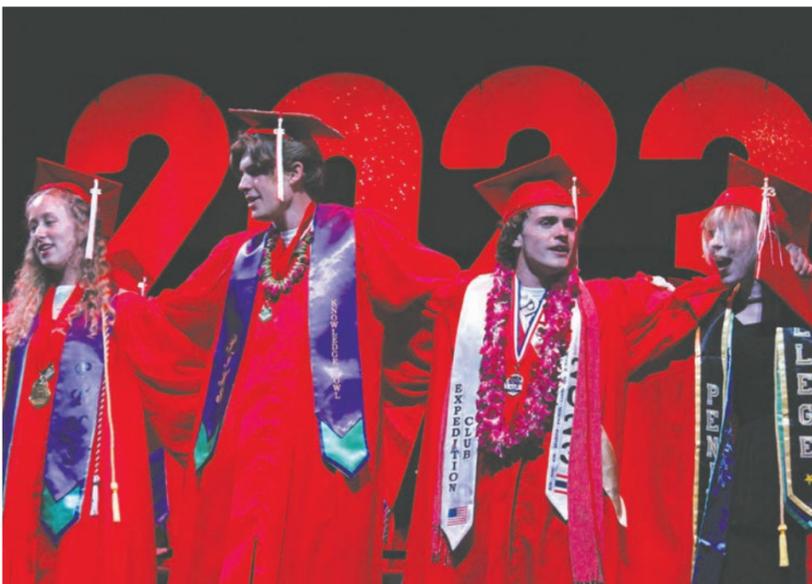
Tuva Hoyer helps Natalie Zavalza get ready. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico



Ashton Meyer-Bibbins gets hyped before the ceremony. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico



Victoria Rincon and Samantha Stromberg pose with a friend. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico



Seniors sway in time to the alma mater. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico



The moment they'd been waiting for – graduates toss their caps in celebration. Leader photo by Anna Tallarico

# PTHS

*continued from Page B5*

“One way or another, each of us has been told that we’re living in a war-torn, overheating, bitter world and that somehow, it’s our fault,” Kenney said. “But if that were true, graduation would be a sad occasion.”

She did acknowledge the

melancholy — the constants of their lives that were now changing, the fact they may never all be in one place together again — but Kenney emphatically rejected any messages of hopelessness.

“Each and every person here tonight has the capacity to make the world a better place, and I believe that each and every one of us will use it.”

Among other speakers were

student-elected speaker Hunter Heim, who demonstrated exactly why he was selected with his humor and banter with Ehrhardt; faculty-elected speaker Samantha Stromberg, who shared the wisdom she’d learned over her high school career (“Some days you’re the bug, and other days you’re the windshield”); and social studies teacher Ben Dow, who accomplished the tremendous feat of fitting all 123

names into his yearly poem.

Three thoughtfully chosen musical numbers were sprinkled throughout the ceremony. The first was “Andante Allegro” by Florence Price, played by a quartet of orchestra members. The next was also a string arrangement: “Slipping Through my Fingers” by ABBA, performed by all the seniors in orchestra. Luna Moloitis and Taylor Montgomery brought many

to nostalgic tears with their cover of “Never Grow Up” by Taylor Swift.

The energy was palpable as the graduates finally rose and one by one, accepted their diplomas — confetti cannons were fired, kisses were blown, and uncountable high fives and fist bumps were given as each student walked, ran, and danced across the stage to receive their tangible symbol of success and a bright future.

# Port Townsend High School boasts three valedictorians in Class of 2023

## Adeline Gellert-DePalma

Though senioritis was starting to hit hard, co-valedictorian Adeline Gellert-DePalma was excited for what's next.

During a pre-graduation interview, the graduating senior was eager to talk about lessons learned and her next steps.

"I've lived in Port Townsend my whole life — I was even born in the same house I live in now," she said.

Growing up in a small town allowed her to grow strong roots, but she has discovered a passion for exploring new places. Though committed to Lewis and Clark College in Portland, she plans to defer a year so she can return to Thailand with the Expedition Club, as well as volunteer in other countries such as Sri Lanka, India, and Bali.

Her heart lies in environmental science.

Of all the clubs she's been involved in over her high school career — and the list is extensive — she's been most passionate about Students for Sustainability. This year, she was co-president.

"The biggest lesson I've learned is that it's OK to ask for help when you're in a leadership position," Gellert-DePalma said.

"You can delegate difficult tasks, and accept that maybe not everything can be done your way. Group input can be a wonderful thing."

Gellert-DePalma's favorite part of high school has not been school-related at all.

"Just getting the opportunity to meet new people, hang out with friends from all different walks of life, getting the time to make connections, and build a community in our small school has been beautiful," she said.

She, along with her fellow students, struggled the most during the pandemic.

"Trying to stay motivated at the time was hard, but managing expectations after being online and then coming back was even harder," she said.

As she neared Graduation Day, Gellert-DePalma felt bittersweet.

"I'm nervous about the whole process — how things are all going to come together in one day. But I'm excited for us as a class to all get to that spot together, then go our own separate ways," she said.



Adeline Gellert-DePalma

## Maeve Kenney

Maeve Kenney is about to join the Ivy League — this fall, she will be attending Dartmouth College with the plan to study a combination of English and environmental or marine science.

During her time in Port Townsend, she has poured her heart and soul into a myriad of activities: Dance, orchestra and chamber ensemble, Knowledge Bowl, and Students for Sustainability.

"I feel lucky to be among other people who care about our world and our future, and participating in all of the events has taught me a lot about the power of direct action," she said.

Like her peers, she struggled through sophomore year to navigate the rugged pandemic landscape.

"I felt unmotivated and isolated during the Zoom classes," Kenney recalled. "I definitely didn't learn as much as I could have."

However, the experience made her appreciate an in-person junior year even more.

Overall, she enjoyed her high school experience. Her hard work paid off—she was named one of three valedictorians for the class of 2023.

"I had a lot of good classes and good teachers, but the best part was the friends I made. None of my high school memories would be the same without the people I shared them with," Kenney said.



Maeve Kenney

## Sophie Kunka

Though she's only lived in Port Townsend since starting high school, co-valedictorian Sophie Kunka made quite the impact.



Sophie Kunka

She has been involved in a wide range of activities, from orchestra, chamber ensemble, and fiddle club to Students for Sustainability, Knowledge Bowl, and (to the delight of the reporter interviewing her), writing for the Redhawk Review.

Kunka was a little hesitant to start these extra-curriculars in the beginning, but soon learned the value of trying new things and taking chances.

"I met great people and learned a lot," she said.

Kunka's senior year was a busy one — juggling those activities with her three AP classes, college applications, and other homework was a challenge, but it was tempered with support and love from her classmates, whom she enjoyed spending time with.

Kunka plans to attend the University of Victoria, where she wants to major in environmental studies with a minor in either political science or journalism. She hopes to participate in different internships and research projects while there. She is especially excited to stay in the Pacific Northwest while still exploring a new place for the next four years.




# FIELD DAY

## AT FORT WORDEN

### JUNE 24TH | 2-8PM

\$10 suggested donation

### OLYMPIC GAMES



**- Maritime Line Tie**  
Person One "on the boat" tosses line to Person Two "on the dock" and ties a knot onto a beam.

Free game sign up from 2-4pm

**-Super Field Race**  
Points will be awarded for style and speed!

**-Tug of War**  
Olympic rules apply. 1,500lb per team.



**-Sack Race**  
A Field Day Classic! Hop towards the glory.

**-Watermelon Eating Contest**  
Be the fastest person to eat a slice of watermelon down to the rind.



### FREE ACTIVITIES

**-1,000 Rootbeer Floats**

**-Face Painting**

**-Birdhouse Making**

**-Centrum Temporary Tattoo Shop**

**-The Bouncy Zone**  
3 different Bouncy Structures.

**-Ice Bath Challenge.** Participants enter a raffle for a weekend pass to **THING**. Bring your own towel & suit.



### ENTERTAINMENT

- DJ Adaptogen
- Ling Hui Dancers
- Global Heat
- Ember Brightheart and the Shift

### VENDORS

Barbarian Cuisine	Fort Worden Hospitality	Big Dawgs Hot Dogs
Beer, Wine & Cider Garden	High Country Donuts	Tie Dying Station
Sugar Hill Farms	Gypsy Coffeehouse	Fiddlehead Creamery

Check the link for full schedule

## SUMMERKICKOFF.ORG



# Chimacum High School Scholarships

**Sean Botkin**

Duke & Jeanne Shold Scholarship \$2,000  
Mitch Black Memorial Scholarship \$3,000  
Greg Bolling Memorial Scholarship \$500  
Big Blue Booster \$500  
Chimacum Alumni Association Scholarship \$1,200  
Pierce College Men's Soccer Scholarship \$590

**Madison Burgess**

Duke & Jeanne Shold Scholarship \$2,000  
Truvedson Estate Scholarship \$1,000  
Norm Chris'e STEM Scholarship \$1,200

**Tanner Haddenham**

East Jefferson Rivals Youth Football Scholarship \$1,000  
Duke & Jeanne Shold Scholarship \$2,000  
Chimacum Staff Payroll Scholarship \$1,165

**Gracie Hasson**

SU Achievement Scholarship \$27,500  
SU Redhawk Grant \$6,400  
Federal Pell Grant \$6,245  
Washington College Grant \$9,739  
Federal Supplement Grant \$1,500  
Tina Johnson Memorial Scholarship \$500

**Sean Jones**

East Jefferson Little League Scholarship \$1,500  
Franson Trucking & Excavating Scholarship \$1,000  
Henry Rogers Memorial Scholarship \$1,000  
Mitch Black Memorial Scholarship \$3,000

**Paisley Micon**

Quilcene Lions Scholarship \$500

**Luke Miller**

West Sound Tech Foundation Scholarship \$1,000

**Conner Paterson**

East Jefferson Rotary Club Scholarship \$8,000  
Ross & Claudine Roesler Memorial Scholarship \$10,000

**Elliott Pflueger**

Susan J. Phillips AP Scholarship \$2,500  
First Federal Scholarship \$1,000

**Maria Powell**

East Jefferson Rotary Club Scholarship \$9,000  
East Jefferson Rotary Club Cloudy Beyer Memorial Scholarship \$1,000  
AAUW 4,000  
UNT (University of North Texas) Excellence Scholarship Deans List \$8,000  
Sequim City Band Scholarship \$1,000  
Duke & Jeanne Shold Scholarship \$2,000  
Judy Gunter Memorial Scholarship \$500

**LuElle Rowan**

Truvedson Estate Scholarship \$1,000  
Chimacum Backpacks For Kids/Karen Jensen Memorial Scholarship \$1,500

**Shelby Thibeault**

West Sound Tech Foundation Scholarship \$1,000

**Alyssa Vandenberg**

East Jefferson Little League Scholarship \$500  
Windermere Real Estate Scholarship \$1,000  
Discovery Bay Women's Golf Club Sheila Kilmer Female Student Athlete Scholarship \$1,250  
Chimacum Alumni Scholarship \$1,200  
Duke & Jeanne Shold Scholarship \$2,000  
Jodi Cossell Memorial Scholarship \$1,000  
Truvedson Estate Scholarship \$1,000  
Dave Garing Memorial Scholarship \$1,541  
Big Blue Booster \$500

**Robyn Weaver**

East Jefferson Rotary Club Scholarship \$2,500  
Chimacum Backpacks for Kids/Karen Jensen Memorial Scholarship \$1,500  
Oregon Institute of Technology Presidential Scholarship \$6,000  
AAUW \$100

# Chimacum High School



## The Class of 2023



Allen, Emily



Allen, Kallista



Botkin, Sean



Bulliman, Oxygen



Burbank, Trillium



Burgess, Madison



Foster-Clark, Ivy



Haddenham, Tanner



Hasson, Gracie



Hirschel, Shawn



Jarrard, Makai



Johnson, Daniel



Johnstone, Aric Carter



Jones, Sean



Miller, Luke



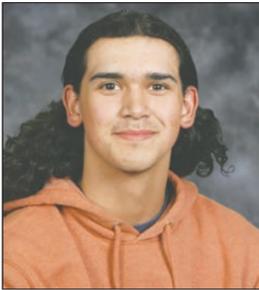
Mitton, Paisley



Naylor, Nate



Padilla, Santana



Palmer, Blake



Pata, Gabriel



Paterson, Connor



Pflueger, Elliott



Pickering, Shawna



Powell, Maria



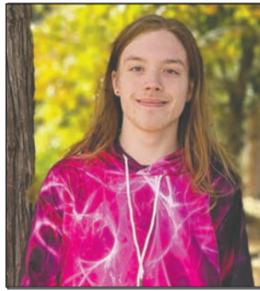
Rowan, LuElle



Smith, Jayden



Stevenson, Andrew



Storey, Andrew



Thibeault, Shelby



Vandenberg, Alyssa



Vega, Ricky



Weaver, Robyn



Weidner, Nicholas



Weiler, Brett



The Chimacum High School Class of 2023 pose for a group photo at rehearsal for their graduation ceremony. *Leader photos by Cate Winters*

# Rocky start, but fantastic finish for Chimacum's Class of 2023

**CATE WINTERS**  
CWINTERS@PTLEADER.COM

Chimacum High School's seniors finished the school year a week before the rest of the students.

The day before graduation included a senior breakfast, then a talent show and a field day.

Graduation Day was drizzly and gray, but spirits were high as family and friends of the graduates gathered in the school gymnasium for the ceremony. The theme of the day was "resilience," with every speaker referencing the disruption of the COVID-19 pandemic and its tremendous effect on the Class of 2023.

The Chimacum Junior/Senior High School and Alumni band played the traditional "Pomp and Circumstance" as faculty and students filed in.

"In honor of our traditions, we are bringing back many of the things that have been lost due to transitions and COVID, including graduating in our own house," said principal Ryan Stevens. "This is the first time in 25 years that we're hosting graduation right here on our campus."

"I am proud of each and every one of our graduates," he added.

Superintendent Scott Mauk passed on giving any graduation advice of his own, and instead read the advice of Chimacum Primary School kindergartners, to the delight of the crowd.

The sage advice included:  
"Always help people if they are hurt or sick."

"Look for caterpillars."

"Be a cop, or be a doctor, or be a fireman."

"Be a rock star."

"You just need to have a good day and make a friend."

"Give a hug before you leave."

The students had elected Tony Haddenham as their faculty speaker.

"It's been a great journey to see you grow up," he began. "One word that describes this class is 'kind.'"

He then gave "some advice from an old man," including, "Have a firm handshake. Look people in the eye. Sing in the shower. Give people a second chance, but not a third.



Alyssa Vandenberg congratulated the class of '23 on overcoming obstacles.



Andrew Stevenson encouraged his classmates to fight for the win.



Madison Burgess proclaimed the class of '23 the strongest yet.



Elliott Pflueger assured his fellow graduates that they are what the world needs.

"Only as seniors did the Class of '23 experience, finally, their first full year of normal high school."

"That COVID roller coaster, especially five quarters of enforced social isolation as underclassmen, left deep scars," MacKenzie said.

He praised the students' "awesome strength and resilience.

"Every graduate has an individual tale of tenacity that brought them to this stage today," he continued.

MacKenzie read through a list of characteristics that had been attributed to each student by their peers and by members of staff, naming each in turn.

Class president Alyssa Vandenberg gave a speech titled "Overcoming Obstacles."

"We are a strong and resilient group with talents beyond belief," she proclaimed. "I know my peers will succeed in anything they want to do."

Faculty-elected student speaker Elliott Pflueger was next, following with "You Are What the World Needs."

He began with a quote from Mary Shelley: "Nothing is so painful to the human mind as a great and sudden change."

Pflueger applied this idea to what they had been through as a group, and the further change that graduation would bring.

"We have emerged victorious, albeit not unscathed.

"The uncertainty of life is a jarring change from the comfort of routine," he said. "No matter what, you are worthy. You are what the world needs."

"Don't end the day on a loss. Fight for that win," added student-elected speaker Andrew Stevenson.

Madison Burgess, class salutatorian, declared that the Class of 2023 is "The strongest yet."

After co-valedictorians Maria Powell and Connor Paterson gave the final speeches, "The Rocks We Carry," and "No One Will Do It For You," Gracie Hasson and Tanner Haddenham read the names of their peers as diplomas were presented.

The graduates turned their tassels together as a group, sang the Chimacum "Alma Mater," and walked out of high school, into their lives as adults to the sound of Billy Joel reminding them, "Vienna waits for you."

Always accept an outstretched hand. Be brave — even if you're not, pretend to be. No one will know the difference."

Senior class advisor Brian MacKenzie followed, with what he called his "last history lecture."

"The Class of '23 began like any other," he said, referring to their freshman year. "COVID opened an abyss beneath them."

He then described the two-plus years of remote classes, social distancing, activities cancelled.

# Congratulations



Voted **Best Asian Food** in the County!

Good • Clean • Fresh  
Mon-Sat: 11am-8:00pm  
**1-2-3 thai food**  
30+ MENU OPTIONS  
AVAILABLE FOR TAKE-OUT ONLY  
2219 East Sims Way **360-344-3103**

Life is a journey and only YOU hold the map.

**Congratulations Class of 2023!**

Providing behavioral health and wellness programs to communities throughout East Jefferson County.

For Services call: (360) 385-0321

**If you are in crisis, call: 1-888-910-0416**

884 West Park Avenue • Port Townsend

# Multi-instrumentalist jazzes things up

CATE WINTERS  
CWINTERS@PTLEADER.COM

Maria Powell knows how to keep a perspective.

"It's bittersweet," said the Chimacum co-valedictorian of the end of her high school experience. "I'm excited to go on with life, but I also will miss the time with friends."

The Class of 2023 had less time with friends than the typical graduating class.

With the pandemic-induced shutdown of the school, "No one got to see any of their friends," Powell said. "We didn't get to have any of the normal experiences."

After a two-year interruption, Chimacum High School students did their best to rebuild all that they had lost. "We did an amazing job

rebuilding," she said. "The Class of 2023 has put in amazing effort."

For Powell, that meant stepping up into a leadership position with the school band.

After a season as drum major, she was ready to dive in when the school band director tested positive for the coronavirus and was unable to accompany students on a trip to the Washington Music Educators Association Regional Ensemble Contest in Port Angeles. Powell took charge and the band earned a Level 1, Superior rating, the highest possible score.

Powell has specialized in saxophone, both alto and tenor, and also plays flute, clarinet, recorder piano and Uilleann pipes, which she described as Irish bagpipes.



Chimacum co-valedictorian Maria Powell. Photo courtesy of Chimacum Schools

She makes the trip to Poulsbo "one or two times a week," she said, for saxophone lessons. The multi-instrumentalist already has a wide range of

experience with bands both in and out of school. This summer Powell plans to participate in Centrum jazz camp, as well as play with the Port Townsend Summer Band.

After that, it's off to college. Powell has chosen to attend the University of Texas, Denton, for their renowned jazz performance program, with a focus on saxophone.

"It's one of the most prestigious jazz programs in the country," she said. "I'm really excited to work with like-minded musicians."

Powell plans to utilize the program's well-established network to move into a professional spot after she earns her degree.

"They have really good

professional placement," she said.

The school regularly hosts scouts from high-level house bands, and Powell is excited about the idea of playing in a house band on a television show.

"Maybe I'll come back later in my career and teach music here in Chimacum," she added.

Powell said her favorite thing about the Chimacum community is "how tight the community is. Everyone is friends with everyone's family."

Of course, her favorite memories are with the band.

When asked if she had any advice for the students coming up behind her, Powell said: "Take it in. It goes very fast."

# Chimacum graduate engineers his future

CATE WINTERS  
CWINTERS@PTLEADER.COM

Connor Paterson is all about the team.

When asked about the highlights of his high school career, Chimacum High co-valedictorian Paterson is quick to praise the efforts and success of those around him.

"Chimacum marching band punches above its weight class," he said. "Last year we had 12 kids in the band, this year we had 27 and like 11 people in the drumlines, none of whom played before, but they're all really good now because they practiced so hard."

He then listed the three peers who placed at State.

"I'm really proud of this class," he said.

"We've gone through so much, and still fought through it all. There were times when we've staggered and grades have slipped but overall we've really been resilient. We've done a

great job of recovering and we're leaving the school in a lot better place than the beginning of the year."

The closure of the school during the pandemic was a trying time for students, who had to give up or postpone plans they had been looking forward to for years.

Paterson, who plays baritone sax, had watched his older brother go through the band program at Chimacum High School, and was especially eager about the travel opportunities.

"I was looking forward to the away trips, and then COVID hit and just shut those away trips down."

"A lot of our high school experience was taken away from us but we still fought to get it back."

The band recently traveled to British Columbia, Canada, and played in the Victoria Day parade.

Paterson said his plan for the summer is to take it easy, work

a part-time job, and spend time with friends.

He's heading off to college in September, to study engineering at the University of California, Davis.

"The area is really nice," he said. "It's a good Venn diagram of being different enough while still being sort of familiar and still friendly and approachable. It's one of the nicest places I've been."

He likes that it started as an agricultural school, and maintains a focus on the environment.

"There are so many plants on campus and nature, I'm glad I'm going there and not to a campus in the middle of a city," he said.

His parents are sad that he's leaving, but glad that he's staying in the time zone. He's following the example set by his father, who has a degree in electrical engineering and built the house that Paterson grew up in.

The 2023 grad said he's drawn to mechanical engineering, but

added, "I'm not dead-set on it yet."

"I like it because it's the most physical form of engineering. All of engineering has the same baselines, but I like building something and seeing other people use it," he explained.

Paterson is clear on the path he's chosen, but maintains a sense of flexibility about the future, something he says he learned from his mother.

"Mom was a lawyer for a long time, then decided she didn't want that and got a job at Churchmouse Yarns and Teas, which is the most mom thing I can imagine her doing."

She inspired him to "find what you want and really go after it, no matter what you put into something else, if you discover that there's something better out there you switch gears."

"Instead of full forward after one thing, there's no problem going full forward after another thing," he continued. "You just need to work at it and succeed."



Chimacum co-valedictorian Connor Paterson. Photo courtesy of Chimacum Schools

## Help Sponsor a Pet for Adoption 2023



The Leader partners with the Humane Society of Jefferson County, Center Valley Animal Rescue and the community to help find homes for pets available for adoption.

For more information contact Vicki at The Leader: **360-385-2900**

## SIGN ME UP

1 - 2 issues for \$25 each,  
3 - 4 issues for \$20 each.  
Sponsor all year for \$80.

Deadlines:  Aug. 30; publishes Sept. 6, 2023  
 Nov. 29; publishes Dec. 6, 2023  
 Jan. 31; publishes Feb. 7, 2024

April 3; publishes April 10, 2024  
 August 7; publishes August 14, 2024



Kindly sponsored by: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name as it will appear in ad)

(and/or) In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_  
(name as it will appear in ad)

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Street: \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail with your payment or drop off at The Leader, 226 Adams St., Port Townsend WA 98368  
Credit Card payment also accepted by phone: 360-385-2900.

Sponsorship purchases space for the name & photo of an animal in need on our quarterly full-page Adopt-a-Pet spread.

