

LAUREN: Good evening and welcome to the commencement ceremony for the Cedar Cliff High School Class of 2021. I ask now that you please silence all cell phones. Please rise, and gentlemen remove your caps, for the singing of our national anthem, which will be performed by the senior members of the Cedar Cliff Chamber Singers.

<National Anthem is performed>

Please be seated while the color guard leaves the field.

<Pause for Color Guard exit.>

It is my honor and privilege to welcome each and every one of you to West Shore Stadium on this Friday in June, not July, for the 2021 Cedar Cliff High School commencement ceremony. My name is **Lauren Giovagnoli**, and I will be serving as today's master of ceremonies.

LAUREN'S speech: Well. Here we are. Graduating together, all of us, last names A through Z. No more A-K and L-Z. Splitting us up by our last names used to be how we broke into groups for field trips in elementary school, not how we decided who would attend school on certain days of the week. The start

of this year was less than ideal for all of us. Getting dressed up to take a first day of school picture, to then go back to our rooms and sit in front of a computer screen for 5 hours. We've come a long way since then. After surviving enough major events for the rest of the decade, the one event we've all been looking forward to is finally here.

The word perseverance is typically used to describe a graduating class, but after what we've been through, I think we deserve a few more words.

Determination, patience, and tenacity seem to fit this class well.

This means persevering to a difficult goal in spite of the obstacles we have faced. The word “obstacle” means nothing to us now. We’ve been through it all. Signing up to take the SATs and hoping they won’t get cancelled, dodging boys the size of small trees walking down the hallway, Mrs. Hyde’s impossible grammar unit, among many others. Although these times were tough, we had each other to lean on.

To our parents: thank you for all that you have done to help get us here today. Your sacrifices and encouragements are admirable and I hope you will continue to bear with us as we frantically call you from school when we can't figure out how to do our own laundry.

As we prepare to move on into the next exciting part of our lives, we have to remember what we are leaving behind. Younger athletes, musicians, and leaders, all excited to be taking over the spots we are stepping out of today. This class has helped

create a legacy and many memories that will forever remain a part of the Cedar Cliff family.

Especially this year, it is important to know that when the world gave us the perfect opportunity to give up, we fought back and pushed even harder to succeed. So, class of 2021, I encourage you to go out to wherever life is taking you next and fight to keep going. Congratulations!

<Pause>

It is now my pleasure to introduce the district administration seated on the platform:

DR. TODD STOLTZ, Superintendent of Schools

<Applause>

And, would the rest of the cabinet and administrative team of the district please stand to be recognized?

<Applause>

I would also like to acknowledge the school board seated here on the platform:

Mr. Frank J. Kambic - President of the School Board

<Applause>

Additionally, I invite the rest of the West Shore School Board to rise and be recognized.

<Applause>

Thank you all for your presence here today and for your devotion to the West Shore School District.

The wonderful teachers in attendance have taught us, mentored us and coached us through our four years. I ask that all Cedar Cliff High School teachers present today please stand as we recognize you for your dedication to your students and for creating a community of caring. None of this

would have been possible without you. Thank you.

<Applause>

Our first speaker today, heading to **The University of Virginia** is salutatorian **Maria Rahmouni**.

<Applause>

MARIA: Thank you, Lauren.

Good evening ladies and gentlemen, friends and family, teachers, administrators, and most importantly the graduating class of 2021. It is my pleasure to be here today as your Salutatorian.

I'd like to begin by thanking our wonderful teachers, administrators, and staff who have always supported, encouraged, and applauded our efforts in academia and beyond. And to our parents: thank you for all you have done to get us to this point. Who knows where we'd be without you.

When I was younger, I desperately wished that I could see the future. Mostly I wanted to see what would happen on the next episode of *The Suite Life of Zack and Cody*, but part of me longed to know who I would become years down the road. It didn't help that I was assigned to write letters to my future self on multiple occasions. As it turned out, I never got to read most of those letters and who knows where they are now. However, recently, I did get to read one that I wrote to myself during freshman year. "Do not open until May 2021" it read in huge pink letters on the front of the envelope.

Inside, I was greeted with handwriting 10x neater than it is now and freshman problems long forgotten. “You might’ve just failed your math test,” I wrote. I’ll be honest, the contents of that letter were far from entertaining, but in reading between the lines I realized that at some point I stopped caring about the future. It’s not that I wasn’t curious, I’m sure we all are, I just learned that life is unpredictable. By now I think we all know that, and we are all too familiar with the moments where something you have relied on in your life is suddenly and heartbreakingly taken away.

Like when they banned Silly Bandz in the third grade. I think it's harder to realize that the moments where everything changes are the moments that give life meaning. We had no clue that our last normal year of high school would be our sophomore year. We didn't know that we would never have a prom, that we would miss our last year of Mini-THON, or that "Zoom" would stop meaning "to travel quickly." We also didn't know whether the last time we performed in that musical, played in that sports game, or stepped into that building would be our last.

That uncertainty is what made these past few months all the more meaningful. We were able to complete our lasts knowing that they would actually be our lasts. We got to devote ourselves completely to the activities that we love and the activities that we will miss after this graduation.

And so, Class of 2021, from this day on our lives are going to be different. It's easy to feel dread as you consider your life without the activities, people, and environments to which you have grown accustomed over the last 13 years.

And it's natural to wonder what life in the workforce, military, or college will be like without Ms. Lingle's clacking heels interrupting your focus, or Senora Leland's laugh filling the first floor hallway. But do not spend so much time thinking about the future that you let these next three months evade you. I promise it will all be here before you know it. For once we can predict when the change is about to happen, for once we have an advantage over life. So fill this summer with music and sandy swimsuits and ice cream that melts a little too fast.

To be honest, writing this speech was very difficult for me. It was difficult to culminate 13 years worth of education, friendship, and experiences into a few paragraphs. And it was not until I came across a quote from author Deepak Chopra, that I was able to weave unity into the story of our diverse experiences. He said, "In the midst of movement and chaos, keep stillness inside of you." I hope you are all able to find peace in the changes these next four years will bring. Thank you.

<Applause>

LAUREN: Thank you, **Maria.**

This year's valedictorian will also be heading to
The University of Virginia to study **biochemistry**
and economics. Please allow me to introduce
Karina Chima.

<Applause>

Karina speaks

<Applause>

KARINA: Good evening members of the school board, faculty, families, and classmates. I am honored to be standing up here as this year's valedictorian. We did it, class of 2021! We survived hours of homework, took countless quizzes and tests, and maneuvered through the crowded halls over the course of four years. We also sacrificed going to school, playing sports, seeing our loved ones, and so much more in order to combat a worldwide epidemic. For all of this, we deserve a nice, big round of applause! *pause*

We could not have made it here without help. I would like to thank our teachers, administration, families, and so many others for their continued support, encouragement, and advice throughout our four years. I would especially like to thank my parents who always reminded me to enjoy every moment of this wild journey.

Some of you may know me as the small girl you passed in the hall from time to time. Others of you might remember me from dancing up on stage at Mini-THON each year. A few of you may not know me at all, but that does not matter because today, this speech, and the many parties we will be partaking in this summer are not about me. They are about us and serve as celebrations for all we have achieved.

To say we have accomplished a lot in the past four years would be an understatement. **Each and every one of us has excelled in a unique facet. As a group, we have also attained so much. Over four years, we have given countless hours and resources to many local charities, flourished in our community, and grown into the individuals sitting here today. This year alone, we have battled a pandemic, navigated remote learning, endured quarantines, and pushed through the difficulties that Zoom entails. I also can't forget to mention that we have crushed Red Land in almost every sport every year!

Our shared interests and affinity for our community have brought us together beyond the four walls of the building. We have forged lasting friendships, and come together not just as a school, but as a family. Like any family, we have made many great memories together. These memories include splashing paint on each other every fall to support our football team, the musical staff preserving for two years to finally perform Into the Woods this spring, surviving Mr. Aliloth's crazy math tests, and even having a snake on the loose for a few hours in

the building. There are so many others I would love to recognize, but unfortunately I only had a few minutes to give this speech.

With all of our memories also comes those about our many lasts: our last games that we won, the last notes that we played, and the last tests that we have taken. Many of our final events occurred without us knowing it at the time such as our last homecoming dance from junior year. However, I urge you to not look back at these final moments with sadness or regret. As author Mitch Albom said “All endings are also beginnings. We just don’t know it at the time.”

This is indeed true, especially about today as a whole. Although this ceremony marks the ending of our time at Cedar Cliff and thirteen years of education, it also acts as a beginning for a new and exciting chapter. Each one of our lives **is going to be different after today. Some of us will be entering the workforce. Others will be going to college. A few of us have even chosen to bravely serve our country. Behind each of our new adventures is an underlying force: our dreams.

Ever since we were little we have dreamed of something. If you were anything like me, you dreamed of meeting the cast of *Wizards of Waverly Place*. As we matured, so did our dreams. They evolved day by day, year by year, eventually into our aspirations of today. Graduates, I would like you to take a second to think about what big dreams you have for your future (slight pause). Perhaps you just dreamt of your career, of love, of a family, or even simply of happiness. I am almost certain no two of us share the same dream, but it is the uniqueness of our dreams that makes them so special.

Whatever your dreams may be, I urge you, class of 2021, to never forget them for they have driven you to push through the obstacles to get to today. Allow them to continue to fuel you to wherever you land next in life. Let them serve as a map through your journeys, and as a reminder to continue to persevere. As Eleanor Roosevelt said, “The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams.” Never stop believing in yourself and your dreams, Class of 2021!

LAUREN: Thank you, **Karina.**

At this point in our ceremony, I call forward **Mr. Joshua Curtis**, Cedar Cliff assistant principal, and **Ms. Stacy Thorpe**, the senior class guidance counselor, who will recognize those who received Senior Awards on May 11th.

<Awards winners stand to be recognized>

<Applause>

LAUREN: Thank you, **Mr. Curtis** and **Ms. Thorpe**, and congratulations to all of the award winners.

I now call upon **Dr. Kevin Fillgrove**, principal of Cedar Cliff High School, for the presentation of the

class.

<Dr. Fillgrove presents the class>

<Dr. Stoltz accepts the class>

<Diplomas are awarded>

LAUREN: After 13 years of education this is our crowning achievement. Would the graduates please rise? *[Raise arms to class]*

Our educational career at Cedar Cliff High School is now over. Please follow my lead as I move my tassel from the right to the left side of my cap.

[Move tassel from right to left]

This symbolizes the end of a very important step in the lifelong pursuit that is education.

Congratulations, Class of 2021!

<Applause>

LAUREN: I ask now that the audience please rise and join in the singing of the Alma Mater, led by senior members of the Cedar Cliff Chamber Singers.

I also ask that you honor the class of 2021 by remaining at your seats until all the participants in today's ceremony have recessed out of the stadium.

Thank you very much for attending the commencement ceremony. Have a wonderful

evening!