

Family Finds a Way

Earlier this year, everyone in the senior class was sent a survey to fill out. I remember two things that we had to select on this form. One was our class flower, which I didn't even know was a real thing. The second was a class quote. I chose "Family finds a way". Evidently, the majority of my classmates did as well as this won the vote. When I first looked at it, I thought about how this quote applied to the past year. When things were constantly changing and unpredictable, we found a way. Teachers, I'm sorry for all of the emails we sent letting you know a schoolology assignment wasn't accepting submissions. I'm sorry that our audio on zoom was terrible at times. I'm sorry that you had to look at our foreheads and ceiling fans for five hours a day. I'm sorry that we could only be in class twice a week for the majority of the year. But we found a way. Because that's what family does.

As I sat down to write this speech, I thought more about that quote, and suddenly it dawned on me. This quote isn't just relevant to the past year. It's always been true of the Red Land community because we have always been a family, and family finds a way. It's easy to be supportive and encouraging when things are going well. But the true test is how you react when things get tough. In my experience, nobody is more supportive than the Red Land family, in times of glory and struggle.

I've been lucky enough to be a part of a couple great Red Land Baseball teams. In 2019, we won the State Championship which was one of the greatest moments of my life, but my earliest success with Red Land Baseball was in 2015, when we won the United States Championship at the Little League World Series. However, we **lost** our final game, the World Championship. Despite being the number one little league team in the country, we were inconsolable. Because we finished second. Thirteen twelve year old boys with tears streaming

down our faces, suddenly shaken awake from a dream that had nearly come true. Many of you might remember the home runs and the walk-off victories, but there are some moments that only a few in this audience can relate to. One of the things I remember most about that final day is the bus ride home from South Williamsport. It was dead silent for about 45 minutes. Every player and coach on that bus was replaying the game in their head, staring out the window and wondering what we could have done differently. “How did I miss that fastball?”, “How’d that kid hit that 0-2 pitch?”, “They must have had hour signs.” But then the mood started to change. I believe we were near Selinsgrove when we started to notice people lined along the side of the highway. As we looked out the windows, we tried to decipher the faces. No one recognized a single person. The Red Land spirit was so far reaching that there were complete strangers holding posters and banners, cheering for us. As we got closer to home, we noticed the familiar faces. We saw all of the people that had created this amazing family feeling. But why? We had **lost** that final game. Everyone loves a winner, but we were coming home in second place. That didn’t matter to the Red Land family. After we had united so many, they were right there to support us when we needed it most.

Today, I want to thank you all for your support. I’m not talking about on the baseball field or after a big win. I’m talking about all the moments that nobody sees. It’s Timmy Seiferth drawing smiley faces in my notebook. It’s Mr. Gonce spending a couple minutes after class answering my questions about cognitive dissonance. It’s Bible Club every Thursday before school. It’s Mr. Kerstetter riding his computer cart across the room. It’s Nancy Zimmerman capturing the perfect shot at every sporting event. It’s Christmas carols with Senora Skinner. It’s napkin physics with Mr. Wagoner. It’s a fist bump from Adi every morning. It’s the

unconditional support from our family, friends, and teachers every step of the way. Moments like these, that we all can relate to, are what make me so incredibly proud to be a Red Land patriot.

Today is an important day in all of our lives. It's the culmination of years of hard work. As we all go on to our next chapter, let today serve as a reminder. A reminder of how amazing it is to be a part of the Red Land Family. I can't wait to see all of the incredible things the class of 2021 will accomplish. Wherever we go and whatever we do, we will always be Patriots for Life!