

*Parisa Kaliush presented the following "Senior Class Speech" at the Hereford High School graduation Friday, May 28. The faculty chose her talk over more than 20 other entries.*

Diversity – not a word that we commonly associate with the Hereford Zone, let alone our senior class. But who says that diversity must be based solely upon the color of one's skin, or the accent with which one speaks? Who says that diversity cannot be defined by the unique, yet unified, personalities of a people, or by the wide array of talents present within one people? I laugh to myself when I overhear someone commenting on the immense lack of diversity within our school. I laugh, and I think to myself, "Hon, you simply do not know the senior class of 2010."

We have a Boys Varsity Soccer team that competed in the State Finals for the first time in twenty years, and we have a wrestling team that labored exceptionally hard to earn their 90% overall winning record since our freshman year four years ago. We have a robotics team that made it to the National Competition in Texas, and we have talented artists who showcase their work at national competitions, like that of 'Fotoweeek' in Washington D.C. Our field hockey team worked their way up to a State Championship, and our cross-country team experienced a season rife with record-breaking runs. Within our class are strong-willed and inventive students who have authored and published their own novels as well as talented athletes who have skated their way to the World Roller Skating Championship in Germany. Our Agricultural Department hosted their most well-represented and successful 'Ag Day' since the start of the program, and thanks to our environmental clubs, our school has been named 'green' for the first time in history. Also making a first appearance in Hereford history, our music department sent the band, chorus, and orchestra to the prestigious State Competitions. Chosen from over 3.2 million high school seniors, we had not one, but two, Presidential Scholar Candidates.

Unfortunately, it has not been only these amazing accomplishments that have come to define our senior year. We are constantly told that life is not fair, that life is full of challenges. Well, we have, without doubt, faced our fair share of challenges during our senior year. We live in an age where your email, your music, and your cell phone can be compacted into one simple device which can be held in the palm of your hand. We live in an age where continuous advancements are being made towards the ultimate cure for cancer. And yet, we live in an age where one earthquake, in just a matter of minutes, can devastate an entire country, and very powerfully influence almost the entire globe. Currently, we are facing some of the toughest challenges in economic history. Every single one of us has been affected in some way, shape, or form by this seemingly never-ending nightmare of high unemployment rates and unpredictable gas prices. However, I am not standing before you to reiterate what we have heard countless times again and again. We know that a difficult road lies ahead, that our dreams and our aspirations will not be handed to us upon a silver platter.

So, the question we should be asking ourselves now is not what are we going to do with ourselves after high school, but are we prepared to make the most of what we have in order to become the best that we can be, or more importantly, to attain true happiness. Perhaps we can harness our diversity to not only overcome, but challenge, the adversity. Let us learn from our own experiences, as well as those of our fellow classmates, so that we are able to stare adversity in the face and say that we are not scared. With the immense knowledge and compassion and foresight that we have acquired, we will dive head first into the future. We are the class of 2010 and we will never, never, never give up.

I suppose that I should have provided you with an inspirational quote from a person of our past, but I figure that we have always thrived under the beat of our own drum. So, I conclude with the true words spoken by our very own class of 2010: “One-oh, baby!”