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Lake George graduates persevere through crises

Moment of silence for lives lost to COVID opens morning event

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LAKE GEORGE — Everyone had their eye on the weather as Lake George seniors gathered at the elementary school for graduation Saturday morning.

Superintendent Lynne Rutnik joked that she had been doing a rain dance.

The sun didn't shine, but no raindrops fell as 84 seniors received their diplomas in two graduation ceremonies Saturday morning. Every person attending the graduation was asked to sign a contract agreeing to social distancing.

This was the first time in the school's history that graduation wasn't held at the high school on Canada Street in the heart of Lake George village. Instead, parents brought their own chairs and sat inside designated circles on the soccer field, and graduates in blue and white gowns sat 6 feet apart outside the elementary school.

"Having an actual in-person ceremony, as opposed to an on-line graduation, I think is one of the best gifts the school could



Lake George graduates throw their caps at the end of their graduation ceremony, the first of two ceremonies held outside the elementary school Saturday morning.

have given us right now," said graduate Rachel Hunsicker.

"I think it's really great how much effort they actually put into it," said graduate Carly Collins. "Most schools aren't doing as much as Lake George has done, and it's amazing."

Principal Francis Coccozza opened the graduation ceremony with a moment of silence for all the lives lost due to the coronavirus pandemic.

The theme of this year's graduating class was "persevering against all odds."

"It could not be a more fitting theme," Rutnik said. "On behalf of the entire school district, we

are proud that they have exemplified positivity and leadership and faith that we would get to this day, and we're so proud of their accomplishments and know that this time period will surely teach them so much moving into the future."

Rutnik said the Class of 2020 is academically accomplished, talented, humorous, fiercely loyal to each other and generous beyond measure.

Ninety-one percent of the Lake George Class of 2020 will attend college, while 13 students plan to enter the workforce and three are going into the military.

"You are the generation to

be born during the 9/11 era and the ones to leave high school in the COVID-19 era," Rutnik told graduates. "And whether you know it or not, you are connected globally with the Class of 2020. And I hope this global connection will serve someday to bring our world together in peace."

The coronavirus pandemic is a not-so subtle reminder that life isn't always easy or predictable, said honor student Joshua Defayette.

"Being here at high school graduation also reminds us that with hard work, patience and perseverance, we can still accomplish our goals despite any challenges that come our way," Defayette said.

Honor student Joseph Coccozza spoke about failure.

"The great beauty of failure lies in the ability to show us a better way forward, and so make sure you're that person that fails better. Fail. Learn. Grow. Rinse and repeat," Coccozza said. "Fail better and there's no limit to where you can go."

His father, the principal, said his generation, known as Generation X, is defined by the Challenger space disaster, the Iranian hostage crisis, AIDS, the fall of the Berlin Wall and MTV.

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GRADUATION 2020



GRETTA HOCHSPRUNG PHOTOS, GHOCSPRUNG@POSTSTAR.COM

Lake George graduate Jordan Brophy-Palsson helps his classmate Megan Briggs with her cap before the start of their graduation ceremony, the first of two ceremonies that took place outside the elementary school Saturday morning.

Seniors

From C1

Generation Z, including the Class of 2020, will be defined by the Great Recession, terrorism and ISIS, the Sandy Hook tragedy, the first ever African American president, equality for all and coronavirus.

He quoted John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country."

"There is not a gener-

ation present here today that envies what lies before you guys," Coccozza said.

He told graduates not to shrink to the responsibilities before them, and to keep an eye on the important things in life.

"I promise you this," he said, "you will attain great things in life."

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