



Update from the Superintendent

To: BDS Employees
From: Bill Husfelt, Superintendent
Date: May 13, 2022

This is the second in a series of articles highlighting each of our high schools and the stories of some of their outstanding graduates.

As the oldest high school in Bay County, Bay High School (formerly known as Bay County High School) has a long history of tradition and a reputation for rigorous college-prep programs, Career and Technical Education innovation and character education.

What you may not know, however, is that Bay High is really a family and the school is a family that believes wholeheartedly in learning by doing and in community service. More than 30 Bay High seniors work daily with intellectually disabled adults at Chautauqua Learn and Serve Academy and that partnership is now renowned throughout the world. Bay High students mentor and help the Chautauqua students but they would all be the first to tell you that they learn as much from their Chautauqua friends as Chautauqua students learn from them. You'll see those themes of services and family woven into the stories I have to share from a few of Bay High's seniors but first, I'd like to take a moment to just brag about some of the fantastic accomplishments of the Bay High Class of 2022:

- They've earned more than \$5,197,360.00 in scholarship offers.
- They have given back more than 22,988 HOURS of community service.
- Eighty of them completed all requirements of the AICE curriculum in pursuit of the AICE Diploma (an 89% pass rate).
- Of those 80, 49 have already earned AICE diplomas (and will receive automatic 100 percent funding through Bright Futures).
- Seven of them are enlisting in the military to serve our country further.
- Three of them have PERFECT ATTENDANCE during high school which is an incredible feat given the hurricane and pandemic.

Bay High senior Jeremiah Banks (who has balanced college-prep academics with sports, community service, church and part-time employment) credits the Bay High "village" for his success. "Ms. Harris, Mrs. Cox, Mr. Flint, Mrs. Lucas, Mrs. Laird and Mrs. Smiley (I could go on for days) ... all my coaches ... all of these people have played an integral role in my life at some point or another," he said. "When they say it takes a village, it really does and they were my village even if they didn't sign up to be. They have always encouraged me to keep pushing no matter what life may bring. They let me know that it was never Jeremiah by himself and that they were there for me not just by their words but, most importantly to me, by their actions

which speaks volumes. They were never judgemental and always made me feel as though I could conquer the world. I hope to one day be able to repay them.”

Classmate Alondra Quinones Santiago also feels indebted to the Bay High family. “I have attended many schools, many social groups and many programs but Bay High has created a home and a family for me that will never be forgotten,” she said. “As a part of the 2022 Class, I have experienced the unimaginable but these experiences have developed me and allowed me to see life differently. When you’re going through difficult times, you must adapt and flourish instead of dwell because difficult times are opportunities to become stronger and grow.” According to senior Jade Jones, there’s definitely a connection between the staff and students at Bay High. “Bay High has an invisible thread running through the halls that connects every student, teacher, and administrator. There is such a strong sense of community and caring that I can’t be more thankful for.”

All three seniors said they were speaking for their entire class when they thanked their teachers and other staff members for supporting them through the double whammy of the hurricane and the pandemic. While those challenges presented obstacles to learning, Jade noted BHS teachers were up for the task. “Each time I took on more difficult classes or responsibilities, my teachers knew just how to encourage me. As a result, I’m learning way more than the standards in my classrooms: I get life lessons, real-life applications, and a support system that encourages and celebrates me.”

Unlike many of her classmates, Alondra has been a student at several of our BDS schools due to her father’s military service. “I have attended Tyndall Elementary School, Bay Haven, North Bay Haven, Breakfast Point Academy, University Academy, Mowat Middle School, Mosley High School and I am now graduating from Bay High School,” she said. Yet, despite all of those moves, Alondra said she always found the help she needed. “BDS employees have helped me smoothly transition between schools when relocation within the county occurred, they have allowed me to be confident in my preparation for my collegiate studies by encouraging me through rigorous courses, and they have shared wisdom that has allowed me to not only find myself as a young adult but also to prepare me to become a successful professional,” she explained.

That same support helped Jeremiah achieve his dreams while in high school. “I have received the Perry and Young Scholar-Athlete Award and I was nominated for the NAACP 2022 Outstanding Youth Awards Recipient, the United States Marine Corps Distinguished Athlete Award, Chestnut Family Foundation Scholarship, and the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Scholarship,” Jeremiah said. “I am graduating with a 3.5 GPA, a letter in football, and a letter in basketball. I am a member of the Streetlights Club and New Bethel Baptist Church. I also helped coach youth sports such as baseball and basketball. In addition, I volunteer with the Boys and Girls Club of Bay County Christmas Tree Fundraiser during the holidays. I am currently working part-time with my dad's landscape business and am a customer service employee for Publix.”

Alondra has a similar story. “I have been named Bay High's First No Ordinary Joe

Representative for the St. Joe Foundation Scholarship and I am graduating with a 4.48 GPA and am 14th out of 263 people in my class,” she said. “I am an active member of Mu Alpha Theta, Bay High's Student Government Association, Anchor Club, and I am Beta Club's Vice President. In addition, I intern at local doctor's offices and I use this as an opportunity to learn and adapt to the medical environment.”

Alondra acquired her AICE Diploma in her first year at Bay as a Junior by completing all of the courses and exams necessary to fulfill the AICE Diploma requirements. This translates into significant funding for college for Alondra and other AICE diploma recipients. Alondra plans to attend Florida State University in Tallahassee to pursue a bachelor's degree in Biological Sciences “in order to begin my pre-med career. I plan on continuing my education in Florida by following the Medical School steps necessary for me to become an OB/GYN with a specialization in Fetal Surgery.”

Jade, who plans to attend the University of Alabama in the fall, is currently undecided on a major but plans to begin college focusing on “business, communications, and education.” Bay High, Jade said, “has really allowed me to diversify my resumé with various accomplishments that I am more than happy with and never bogged down by. I am Senior Class Secretary, Girl's Tennis Team Co-captain, Streetlights Secretary, and National Science Honor Society Vice President this year. I am also a member of the Student Government Association, National Honor Society, Pep Club, and I volunteer at Chautauqua Learn and Serve School. My GPA is 4.6 weighted and I am a National Hispanic Recognition Scholar. In addition, I work at Brooklynn's Boutique on the weekends.”

There are hundreds of individual success stories in the Class of 2022 at Bay High and it's my honor to share just a few. Whether the students are graduating with full-ride scholarships to the universities of their dreams or walking the stage as the first in their families to graduate ... they are all deserving of our recognition and celebration and I hope you'll join me in congratulating the Class of 2022 of Bay High School for their impressive accomplishments. As Jade summed it up so wisely, “Bay High is way more than a stereotype or a catchphrase. It is a hugely diverse family and each year, we grow and change our school and our community, and we're not done yet.”

Congratulations graduates!

Bill Husfelt ... proud member of the Bay High School Class of 1976.