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14 Remaining

TJ grads celebrate successes at graduation ceremony

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Among those participating in the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology 2015 graduation ceremony were (front row) Anna Tsutsui, Heather Lukas, Julia Dunbar, Helen Zhang and (back row) Kayvon Tabrizi, Danial Hussain and Coby Benheim. (Photo by John Lane)

Posted: Wednesday, June 24, 2015 7:00 am
by JOHN LANE, for the Sun Gazette | [0 comments](#)

On a stormy evening, where thunder rumbled beyond the walls of George Mason University's Patriot Center, members of the Class of 2015 at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science & Technology gathered June 20 for commencement exercises.

For the countless theorems, equations and mathematical proofs TJ students had encountered over their years at the high school, assistant principal Tinell Priddy advised the newly minted graduates, "This life is about people."

Whether elaborating on the compassion from loved ones or the pressure of others' expectations, students and faculty alike emphasized the impact of people during the ceremony.

"The most important thing about the people sitting next to you is that they're your friends," principal Evan Glazer reminded the soon-to-be graduates.

Student speakers Kayvon Tabrizi and Newton Nagirimadugu reflected on the importance of their classmates. Tabrizi began his speech "recalling the humble beginnings" of the Class of 2015. But as these graduating seniors have now finished their years at TJ, he declared, "We are the best, and we always will be."

With a rousing introduction from two of his peers, Nagirimadugu underscored the importance of friends in his development in high school. Further, he encouraged his classmates to "not get stuck waiting" because "nothing is more important than the now."

Picking up where Nagirimadugu left off, class adviser Adam Smith revealed that he made his "decision to leave the waiting place" when he stopped doing what others expected from him.

Keynote speaker Alexandra Petri, author of "A Field Guide to Awkward Silences," highlighted the significance of others, albeit with an original sense of humor.

Reminiscing on her journey through high school and college (she proclaimed, "I'm only old in Internet years - I remember when I had to buffer!"), she recounted her days as an ambitious student with a steadfast desire to achieve any and all success.

As she told of entering Harvard to pursue a degree in mathematics, her high-school years appeared not too dissimilar from those of the pupils below the stage. The Class of 2015 possessed nationally recognized students in subjects ranging from mathematics and sciences to creative writing and music.

These Thomas Jefferson graduates pursued an average of 8.2 Advanced Placement courses and received a whopping \$32 million in scholarships from some of the most prestigious universities in the country.

But speaking to these AP classes, SAT scores and extracurricular activities which feel so paramount to high-school students, Petri revealed with playful chagrin that these facts have little place in the adult world.

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FRIDAY, JULY 10

- 10:00 PM**
 DJ G Knott
The Light Horse
- 10:00 PM**
 Terry Mullan, Back in the Day
U Street Music Hall
- 10:00 PM**
 New God
Cafe Nola
- 10:30 PM**
 John Witherspoon
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After a flunked math test her freshman year at the Ivy League institution, Petri became an English major. Reflecting on the benefits of failure, she said, "You realize what parts of you are you and what parts of you are just things people think about you and expect from you."

She further emphasized the role of others, saying, "People will forget what you did, forget what you said, but they will never forget how you made them feel." Petri argued that ultimately the question of "Who are you?" is in actuality "How do you make people feel?"

Established in 1985, Thomas Jefferson is currently undergoing significant renovations. The renovation project began in the spring of 2013 with a target completion by fall 2016. The recent construction drew a few jokes from the graduating students; Tabrizi quipped he will miss walking through TJ's "many hallway."

In addition to speeches and musical performances, students Nan Baker and Jenny Kim presented the Class of 2015's class gift. The seniors decided to dedicate two electric-vehicle-charging stations for the school's parking lot.

After caps were slung into the air, Nagirimadugu relayed a recent conversation with his father. Through the rigorous academics and lofty expectations, his dad asked, "Was TJ worth it?"

"Without hesitation I said, 'Yes,'" Nagirimadugu replied.

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Overcast **83°** **Humidity: 54%**
Winds: N at 7mph
Feels Like: 85°

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<p>Today High 87°/Low 72° A few thunderstorms possible</p>	<p>Tomorrow High 82°/Low 69° Morning thunderstorms</p>
<p>Sunday High 90°/Low 71° Partly cloudy</p>	
<p>Monday High 88°/Low 74° Morning showers</p>	

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