

CRHS Class of 2022 Graduation

June 10, 2022

[Welcome](#).....Dr. Carlos Ramirez, Principal
[Opening Remarks](#).....Jhoselyn Vásquez Jiménez, Class of 2022
[Address to Graduates](#).....Sonya Drake, Class of 2022
[Address to Graduates](#).....Kellan Hepditch, Class of 2022
[Awarding & Conferring of Diplomas](#).....Dr. Carlos Ramirez, Principal

Welcome.....Dr. Carlos Ramirez, Principal

Welcome to our Class of 2022 graduation ceremony. My name is Dr. Carlos Ramirez, Cedar Ridge High School’s principal. On behalf of the CRHS learning community, Congratulations Class of 2022! We are proud of you and your accomplishments.

I would like to recognize some important members of our community here with us today:

- Carrie Doyle, Board Chair
- Brenda Stephens, Board Vice Chair
- Will Atherton
- Sarah Smylie
- Bonnie Hauser
- Hilliary MacKenzie
- Dr. Jennifer Moore
- Dr. Felder, OCS cabinet, and our assistant principals, Ms. Johnson and Dr. Batten

If we have past CRHS alumni, please stand:

And members of military branches, thank you for your service, please stand to be recognized.

And, the Amazing CRHS Faculty and OCS Staff. **Please stand.**

Finally, I would like to express our sincerest gratitude to the OCS Board of Education, OCS leadership teams, community members, students, parents, and staff for making today’s events possible.

- And now, without further ado...I would like to introduce Jhoselyn Vásquez Jiménez who has some opening remarks for you in Spanish. Use the QR code to read her opening remarks in English.

Opening Remarks.....Jhoselyn Vásquez Jiménez, Class of 2022

Good evening family and friends who are gathered tonight to see the big day that I am sure we have all been waiting for. At this time, parents, I want you to remember the first day of school for your son or daughter, who at that time was a boy or girl of just 5-6 years old. At that moment you saw him or her crying because he or she didn't want to stay in school or perhaps the joy that your son or daughter had. Now look over here and they are wearing the cap and gown, ready for us to finish up here and go celebrate with all of you. Today is a very special day for us where if we count every experience we would never leave. The phrases that can summarize this experience for me are "value what you have before time teaches you to value what you had." We sometimes take many things for granted and then wish we could go back in time. I know for sure many of us here are thinking of what we could have done but that is the past we can't go back to. What we can do is explore our new opportunities. One of the things I wish I could have done my Junior year was the internship at Grady Brown. I couldn't because of the pandemic but I decided to explore this internship this year and it was the best. Another quote that has a great impact on my life is "Never stop exploring." I have always been scared to try new things and be wrong and struggle at it. Being in school is like an exploration: you start school without knowing the end. Now allow me to talk to you about one of my explorations.

This year I was able to work at Grady Brown with a Kindergarten class and I loved it. I didn't know who anyone was. I didn't go to Grady Brown for elementary but I was in the #1 school in America with amazing teachers and students. But what caught my attention the most was that even though I was a Senior I was exploring with them too. When they felt that they couldn't do something because it was difficult, such as writing a number or letter, many times they asked me, "Why is everything easy for you?" My answer was simple, you can do it too if you keep practicing... And when you're older you'll do better than me. I want to remind you that dreams do come true when you are willing to work hard and not give up even when it seems impossible. I remember it was a normal day at Grady Brown and Ms. Wiley asked each student to write their goal. She told me, "Jhoselyn, now write yours" and I wrote "go to college." And today I look at my dreams closer than ever, thank God.

Today I want to congratulate each of you for what you have achieved! And for each of the teachers, leaders, and SROs who encouraged us many times, and believed in us and gave us that push to continue, thank you. I also want to thank those who always doubted us because those who did it pushed us to work harder. Thank you because we finally made it. Fathers, mothers, or guardians, thank you for your hard work and persistence with each of us.

Congratulations Class of 2022 and "Never stop exploring."

Address to Graduates.....Sonya Drake, Class of 2022

We've learned a lot during our time in high school. The mitochondria is the powerhouse of the cell. Correlation is not always causation. $x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$. You might be wondering: but Sonya, how will any of this be relevant to my future? ...We've also gained many important skills during our time at Cedar Ridge. Today, I want to talk about a few things we've learned that will help us in the future, no matter where we're headed.

We've learned to adapt to unexpected changes. In our sophomore year, we went from complaining about getting up for school to not being able to go at all. We were faced with disquieting questions: on Zoom, were we supposed to look at people's faces onscreen or at the camera? Our usual teenage fears morphed to fit the times: instead of deciding whether to raise our hands, we were deciding whether to unmute, hoping not to accidentally interrupt our classmates. There were new opportunities for embarrassment. Once, I got up during class and returned with a slice of cake from the fridge. It was only *after* I'd finished licking the tin foil that I realized I'd forgotten to turn off my camera. Guys, if any of you saw that... It is undeniable that the pandemic has been exhausting. Many of us struggled in school, experienced feelings of social isolation, and even lost loved ones. So how did we get through it? We pivoted. We adjusted. We took what had been thrown at us and we did our best, because in situations like these, that's all you can ever do. At the end of the day, we made it through one of the greatest curveballs in the history of education. The fact that we are here today, completing this journey, is a testament to our ability to persevere.

We've learned to find inspiration in unexpected places. In a world of 8 billion people, it never really occurred to me to look up to my own classmates. But this year alone, Cedar Ridge students have done some awesome things. Like Quinn—who wrote and produced her original play *Talia on the Path of Shadows*, winning two contests in the process. She was awarded a publishing deal and the chance to see *Talia* performed professionally. And Vera, who has become a fixture of Cedar Ridge culture with his neverending positivity. He's the reason that many of us actually started listening to morning announcements! The dedicated student volunteers who raised five thousand dollars to support the war effort in Ukraine through auctions, races and t-shirt sales proved that we can have impact beyond our community when we work together. And, of course, those of you who always, *always* remembered to sign up for Flex Time. If only the rest of us could have been so organized. People may assume that high school students aren't capable of doing anything impressive. But I challenge that assumption. The next time you need inspiration, remember that you may not have to look far to find it.

Finally, we've learned how to learn from our mistakes. I walked into chemistry class one morning to see the teacher handing out tests. Luckily, I'd known about the test for weeks, so I was feeling prepared... Just kidding, I was shocked. I turned to a friend, hoping for some reassurance, but she just shook her head and said, and I quote: "you're totally going to fail." Obviously, I messed up. And when we mess up, it can feel like the end of the world. Maybe you raised your hand in class but got the wrong answer. Maybe you went to school with your shirt on backwards.

Maybe, like one of my classmates, you accidentally called your teacher “mom.” Mortifying, right? But everyone needs to fail in order to improve. Taking that chemistry test was painful, but upon reflection, I realized that maybe my memory wasn’t so reliable after all. So I started writing down my assignments in a planner. Since then, I’ve consistently remembered important things. When your teacher corrects you, you grow as a student. When someone teases you for wearing your shirt the wrong way, you start looking in the mirror before you leave the house. When you accidentally call your teacher “mom”... well, I’m not sure how you could learn from that one. But if you can take the time to figure out what you’ve overlooked and how to prevent it from happening again, your life will become a lot easier. Your mistake-making career has only just begun. In the future, you’ll make a lot of small mistakes and a few really big ones. The good news is that you’ll learn from all of them.

We’ve certainly learned a lot in high school. But the most valuable things we’ve learned are the intangibles that we’ve picked up along the way. Long after we forget how to diagram sentences and recite the state capitals, these are the memories we will carry with us.

Address to Graduates.....Kellan Hepditch, Class of 2022

On behalf of the Class of 2022, I would like to welcome all faculty, alumni, friends, family, and other distinguished guests to this ceremony. I would also like to thank each of you for being here, for supporting us, as we celebrate this transitional stage in our lives.

It is also my honor to stand so close to the location of Austin Rivers' game winning dagger. Graduates, this is it. The moment we have dreamed of since we were kids. The relief of receiving your diploma, moving on to new things, and carving your own path are now your reality.

I think I can speak for us all when I say this moment feels surreal. I remember sitting in my kindergarten classroom and watching my teacher write a bolded 2022 on the board. She told us this was the year we would graduate, and it seemed like the time would never come. I wished so bad I could travel to the future and experience the freedoms of a teenager: to live the idealized life shown in movies. Parents, I now understand what you mean by they grow up so fast. That wish is now my reality, and while I can’t say life is as ideal as I once thought, it is pretty cool to be here.

It would be a lie if I said the process was easy though. After everything we have endured it is crazy to think that this is the outcome.

It started with the fear that we would catch Ebola. Then the worry that Herobrine would attack us in Minecraft. Then the stress that we would be attacked by a clown. Not to mention the ruthlessness of snapchat rates and cringe TikTok thirst traps.

But in all seriousness, we have endured many unimaginable things in the past four years.

1. A turbulent presidential election
2. Immigration conflicts
3. The need for a Me Too movement
4. Managing rampant climate change and its effects
5. Confronting racial and societal inequalities
6. Technological warfare
7. Stressful transnational conflicts
8. An unpredictable and impactful global pandemic

I would not wish these moments on anybody, but they have shaped us in unmeasurable ways.

While sometimes overused, I think the word resilient is the perfect descriptor of the class of 2022. Like a lotus flower that begins under thick, dark mud, we have all been put through harrowing struggles that have left us isolated and hopeless. However, the flower sprouts above this mud and spreads its beautiful, white petals in the open air. We, the class of 2022, have sprouted from intense struggles into unique and talented individuals. We came back to in-person school this year not knowing what to expect. Masks, depleted social skills, and unfamiliar expectations interfered with the normal high school experience. Despite this, we organized new school events like the Fall Festival, brought home the 3A Volleyball State championship, had a student win the Pole Vaulting State Championship (shout-out Caroline), had an All-American lacrosse player (shoutout Roman), created and performed an award winning play (shoutout Quinn), sent multiple students to the First Robotics World Championship, made it to the State Science Olympiad Tournament, and earned \$1,719,804 in scholarship money.

As Thomas Edison once said: "Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time." This class certainly did not give up. Day after day we put in the work to be here despite all that was holding us back.

This is our resilience.

Let's take with us the lessons we have learned. Be proud of what we have accomplished and what we have overcome. We thank those who have helped us get here, and aim to demonstrate our resilience going forward.

We are Hillsborough's Finest.

Awarding & Conferring of Diplomas.....Dr. Carlos Ramirez, Principal

**Class of 2022, this is your big moment! By virtue of the authority vested in me by the great state North Carolina, I hereby confer upon each of you the high school diploma earned, with all of its rights, honors, and responsibilities.
Congratulations!**

Graduates, we are all so proud of you, as you should be in yourselves. You did it! And now, please move your tassels from the right side to the left side.

[Spread arms wide] Ladies and gentlemen, I present to you the Class of 2022!