



Laconia's top 10 seniors from left to right: Madison Brooks, Anita Wentworth, Sullivan Mousseau, Hanna Lowell, James Stafford, Elizabeth Muller, Katie Westcott, Evan Rollins, Bryce Baird and Ryan Poloquin. (Jon Decker/The Laconia Daily Sun photo)

## Laconia's Top Ten give thanks to those who guided them

BY ROBERTA BAKER  
THE LACONIA DAILY SUN

LACONIA — In the restaurant at the Huot Technical Education Center Wednesday night, 55 students, teachers, parents and school administrators gathered to celebrate the top ten seniors at Laconia High School, applauding their years of hard work, perseverance and academic achievement.

There were some tears in the audience, but mostly smiles, hugs and clapping for standout kids whose schol-

arship and school and community involvement were undeterred by the shutdowns and shadows of COVID-19.

"My goal has always been to create an atmosphere that creates and celebrates excellence, and provides education that translates into life opportunities," said Jim McCollum, principal at LHS.

The annual event, begun in 2013, honors the students as well as their parents and teachers who made their journeys possible. "On behalf of Sachem Nation, I wish you my very best as you savor

this moment and plan your tomorrows," said McCollum. "Education is about achieving skills and knowledge that apply" to the future, and to other areas in life.

Against the backdrop of remote learning, and school work and projects that had to be accomplished through a combination of teamwork, leadership, independence and determination, these students shone, even in a field of high-achieving peers.

"They're leaders in the building. They're student ambassadors. They'll volun-

teer to do things" above and beyond the regular commitments of school. "They're in National Honor Society, school chorus and band. They're captains of sports teams," said Assistant Principal David Bartlett. "Eight of the ten also attended the Huot Technical Center.

"It's a group of kids with really good character. They step up and get involved," and are motivated, self-directed and concerned about the community in ways that seem

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mature beyond their years, said Guidance Director Mollie Greeley. They are clear communicators who are modest about their achievements, who are able to inspire and lead their peers.

In the tradition of this dinner event, each graduating senior invited their parents and one coach, activity advisor or teacher who inspired them, guided them and helped them focus, identify their strengths and weaknesses and persevere, and prepare for future goals and careers. According to the LHS staff members who introduced their student hosts, most shared a similar list of character traits.

### Hannah Lowell and teacher Lindsay Hurley

Lindsay Hurley cited Hannah Lowell's dedication, willingness to learn, high standards for personal and academic achievement, and caring heart for others combined with a desire to work against social injustice.

"She is going to change the world. She may not change the entire world, but she will change for the better whatever corner of the world she is in," said Hurley of Lowell, citing a quote from Dr. Seuss, "Kid, you'll move mountains."

Lowell worked on the yearbook with Hurley as the activity's advisor starting in her first year of high school. "I cannot thank her enough for being my go-to teacher who is something every freshman needs," she said. "Mrs. Hurley is the reason I'm in the top ten," she said, thanking the teacher for being one of her "top 10 supporters."

### Sullivan Mousseau and teacher Krin Monterose

Krin Monterose, music teacher, expressed her awe and admiration for Sullivan Mousseau, who will be

attending Johnson and Wales next year as culinary student, with a passion he exercises through his part-time job at Local Eatery. Sullivan is also an accomplished pianist, who unfailingly provides piano accompaniment for the high school chorus. "He will be an excellent master chef," said Monterose, "Aside from his passion for culinary, he can accompany a choir without missing a beat," and will perform with the high school concert choir in Hershey Park in May. "Sullivan's love for his music will carry him through his life, wherever culinary takes him."

Mousseau returned the accolades. "Monty' has been one of the more supportive and down-to-earth individuals in my life," he said. "She is the first person to ask how your day is going. It's those little things that make high school a better place."

### Evan Rollins and teacher Josh Greenbaum

Evan Rollins, an aspiring business and finance major, picked his English teacher, Josh Greenbaum, as the staff member he most admired and was inspired by. Greenbaum had no shortage of nice things to say about Rollins, who he considers very different from himself. "Evan is the kind of student everyone wants in class," said Greenbaum. "He leads by example, and carries himself with dignity and pride but also with modesty." Greenbaum also said, "This is the most academically competitive senior class I've ever seen. I have no doubt Evan will meet success in whatever path he chooses."

Rollins thanked Rollins for finding "a way to make it interesting every single day throughout the year, either reading a book or writing a paper... He always finds a way to put a smile on kids' faces. I think Mr. Greenbaum represents the best in what we do every day."

### Katie Westcott and her soccer coach Ray Sleeper

Ray Sleeper was shocked that Katie Westcott asked him to be her guest. He's never been her teacher, but he has been her soccer coach through four years of high school. "She always played the game with joy," said Sleeper. "During the last four years, Katie and I rarely spoke" except for greetings in the hallway, which played out like this: "Westcott." "Sleeper."

In coaching soccer, Sleeper noticed her valuable "habits of the mind" including perseverance, and thinking and speaking with precision, he said. She has empathy, an ability to find the humor in things, and applies past knowledge to a new situations, he added. "To Katie's teachers and parents, you have helped Katie become an exemplary student and a wonderful person."

"He's a positive mentor that helped set me up for suc-

### Anita Wentworth and teacher Anthony Krivitsky

Anthony Krivitsky, Anita Wentworth's math teacher, said, "She cares so deeply about the people around her. She's kind, genuine, funny and hardworking. Some students say they love coming to class just to joke with Anita." Krivitsky said she's also thoughtful, meticulous and organized. "Thank you for bringing energy, pizzazz and laughter to my classroom," he said. "I know you will do great things in college. Find something every day to be thankful for," he told her.

When she got teary-eyed during a calculus test, "Mr. K. sat with me while I talked my way through a problem. Going to Mr. K's class brings a smile to my face," Wentworth said. "When I went to UVM Admitted Student Day, Mr. K was the first to ask how it went... and whether UVM had a squirrel watching club and whether I can start one. One thing he taught me is how much a smile can change someone's day, even if I never use calculus in my life."

### James Stafford and teacher Linda Hinds

Linda Hinds raved about her math student James Stafford, and his exceptional abilities. "He has a math brain that is like a Rubik's cube, the click-click back and forth, then click-click up and down. He's a math teacher's worst nightmare because he does all the work in his head," said Hinds, reflecting on her frustration at receiving a test sheet with 10 answers, no written-out steps to the solution. "He's hard working and strives to take his academic ability to the highest level. He has all the characteristics of a strong role model. He's responsible, driven and has a passion for his learning..."

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and dedication that will support any aspirations in his future."

Returning the praise, Stafford said, "I don't think there will ever be a day I'll be as good at math as she is. Nothing compares to having someone as brilliant as Mrs. Hinds standing 20 feet from you, ready to answer any question." Stafford, who had always loved math, credited Hinds for helping him choose a career path in finance that would allow him to use it.

### Bryce Baird and teacher Ivy Levitt-Carlson

Mrs. Ivy Levitt-Carlson called her dedicated biotechnology student, Bryce Baird, "academically intimidating. She would grill me until she understood the material" and showed "kindness, flexibility and generosity working with peers" leading the group and answering questions – attributes of a natural leader. "You're independence, combined with your work ethic and kindness, make you unstoppable," Levitt-Carlson said.

By helping and encouraging Baird's passion for medicine, "She truly changed the path of my life and I'm forever grateful," Baird said. "She took the time to know each and every person in my class. Her consistent positivity and amazing work ethic have been a great role model for me. Thankyou for always pushing me to succeed."

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done all the hard work, and you should be very proud of yourself."

Poloquin, who plans to become a mechanical engineer, thanked Martin for constant help and support, which included purchasing coding software for Poloquin's computer. "Mr. Martin became my mentor and greatest supporter. I don't know if my future goals would be the same without him. I want to thank him for his encouragement and all the hours he put in."

### Elizabeth Muller and Key Club advisor Karen Abraham

Karen Abraham, the high school librarian and Key Club advisor, called Elizabeth Muller the very definition of exceptional – and Muller called her inspiration and steadfast supporter, who goes the extra mile for her advisees, the embodiment of dedication.

cess," Westcott said. "With his constant encouragement" and learning from mistakes, "I began to believe in myself on the field and off. I was never a great soccer player, but the lessons I gained from my high school soccer experience are the greater reward... with your guidance and support."

### Ryan Poloquin and teacher Ken Martin

Ryan Poloquin, an Eagle Scout - Boy Scout's highest earned honor, took all the classes he could in engineering at LHS – to the delight of Poloquin and his teacher and mentor, Mr. Ken Martin. "I've never seen Ryan on his cell phone other than to take photos of his engineering project," which demonstrated college level knowledge and skill, Martin said. "For me personally and professionally, I could not be more proud of you, Ryan. You have

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"My family and Mrs. Abraham, you have my heartfelt gratitude," said Muller. "Her dedication to her students I'll always be grateful for. She instilled in me a love of service, not only in my community but all over the world."

### Madison Brooks and teacher Elyse Pert

Elyse Pert praised Madison Brooks' fortitude and dedication to her deep interests in health science, which she said enabled Brooks to complete EMT and Medical Assistant certifications, on top of traditional coursework and soccer, in 11 weeks.

"Ms. Pert fosters an environment of learning and encouragement. She has been my favorite teacher since day one. She has pushed me to reflect on myself every day to do my best every day. Thank you to Laconia for being a place I could do it all," Brooks said.