

## Congratulations to All Graduates

Good Morning Woodstock and beyond. As so week nine begins. The leaves are slowly sporting their greenest green. The northern flicker has become the 6 am alarm. Dew has replaced the frost on the fields, and the lilacs are near ready to pop. If nothing else quarantine has made many of us more astute observers of the emergence of spring.

This experience reminds me of the need for patience and perspective. We know there are so many less fortunate who do not have the luxury to work from home, who do not have access to health care, who are food insecure, and can't afford *not* to go to work. And of course, do not have the luxury of taking long walks and enjoying a new season.

Nonetheless, as graduation season approaches and the school year winds down I allow in the feeling of sadness and disappointment that comes from missing our oldest graduate from Carleton College, of the absence of end of school year rituals for our other son and daughter. Rituals that are celebratory but also that provide closure to a school year soon to be behind them.

I sympathize with the WUHS seniors who will not sit in the chairs behind the High School before friends and family, hear their class president speak, hear words about their class from the Principal, and music from the amazing jazz funk band. I sympathize for the proud families who will miss the anticipation of hearing their child's name called and witness the handshakes and hugs from the Principal and faculty when receiving their diploma.

Yes, we know there are far worse impacts from this pandemic, but I also think we should allow ourselves to be sad for the moments and milestones missed.

Yes, I will continue to tell our kids that we are very fortunate, but I know that the words sound hollow when we know we cannot provide with certainty the parental guidance and advice they have grown to expect.

Now I can say for certain that Pentangle will ride out this pandemic. I also realize like a clever turn of a phrase you don't want let go even though it adds nothing to a piece of prose, we may need to at least temporarily let go of those programs and activities that are dear to us.

Gone for the near future are the days of a packed theatre for blockbuster screenings, live musical theatre and concerts.

I can still feel the chills of watching the American flag rise and the cast emerge on to the stage in the opening act of HAIR. I remember the pure joy of watching Zack's Place production of *The Jungle Book* in front of a full house. I miss high fiving students as they leave the Town Hall after a performance, and hearing the reactions and responses to what they've just seen and heard.

While we can relish those memories, we must not get despondent, we must get creative!! We must do more to forge partnerships with our local businesses finding new ways to bring folks into town to shop, dine and enjoy all that the arts can provide. This is also an opportunity for collaboration with other arts organizations and performance venues to maximize resources and to learn from each other new and innovative ways to create and support community across the state.

While Governor Scott will continue to turn the spigot there is no guarantee when those businesses and organizations greenlighted to open will have the confidence and resources to open. Also, in question, is when folks will feel safe to enter businesses, restaurants and yes – enjoy a movie, or a live performance.

We will soon participate in a survey to gauge community interest in various programs and activities for area youth, families, residents, and visitors alike. And to get a sense of a collective comfort level to enroll kids in camps, to enjoy a live concert, outdoor movie, or performance even with all safety precautions in place.

This is a time for us to work together, to be respectful of one another's concerns, and of course to pay heed to the health and safety recommendations and directives that are passed down to us. We may not all agree on the pace in which we resume, restart and remerge from "stay safe and stay at home", but hopefully we will agree that going backwards is going to make going forward all the more difficult.