

Student presentations capture the spirit of ASD



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Superintendent

A wave of inspiration hit me as I sat in Room 214 of Anacortes High School last month. The occasion: Annual senior presentations. The inspira-

tion: Our kids.

To a person, the students spoke persuasively and movingly about their learning in Anacortes schools. They reflected on who they are, what they want to do with their lives and how their school experience has prepared them for the road ahead.

Dressed professionally, they entered the room one by one for their half hour presentations and evaluator questions. They shared people of inspiration in their lives, courses of study, community service and other insights into what makes them tick.

Community volunteers and school staff spread across classrooms to listen and evaluate the presentations. My room included history and drama teacher Scott Burnett, band teacher Sarrah Vanzanten, Island Hospital commissioner Paul Maughan and real estate broker Allen Workman.

I asked students in our group if I could share their story, and they all agreed. They've accomplished a lot in preparing for the future.

Kim Meyer has dedicated 14 years to dancing about five hours a week with Fidalgo DanceWorks. She also completed more than 50 hours of community service to helping the dance organization and other civic groups in town. With the goal of becoming an orthopedic surgeon, Kim heads to Gonzaga this fall to pursue biology or biochemistry. She

says her academic background with anatomy, biology and two chemistry classes leaves her feeling well prepared for the rigors of college. In a job shadow at Island Hospital, Kim saw knee and vertebrae surgeries, an experience she called "absolutely life changing." In the future, she would like to consider working as a physician for the Navy or for an organization such as Doctors Without Borders.

to attend Bellingham Technical College to pursue studies in automotive technology. Eventually, he would like to get a business degree and open his own shop. He shared that engineering and pre-calculus classes stood out as his favorites at AHS. He also found robotics and metals really helpful in providing hands-on opportunities that connected to his interests. Nick is known as a kind person, and he prioritizes that in his life.

Taylor Webb lost her mother to cancer last year. She spoke movingly about the deep connections with her mom, the challenges and rewards of taking care of her, and the resilience she developed as a teenager in contemplating the future. "It was definitely a turning point for me," she said. The experience deepened her commitment to become a caretaker, and she plans to pursue nursing at Skagit Valley College and Western. High school accomplishments include varsity swimming all four years and three department academic awards.

As you can see, it was a diverse and interesting group. Each student presented a powerful life story that captured how their school, family and community had shaped them into who they are.

Their stories showed how they are prepared for the future, both in terms of their learning and their character. They all articulated a clear path forward, based on their skills, knowledge and interest. Evaluators in other rooms shared similar positive reactions to their student presentations.

It's exactly what we're shooting for as a school system. Taking students as young ones, working hard to support their academic and social growth, and watching them blossom into young men and women with passion and purpose.

The Anacortes community is an amazing partner in this endeavor. We thank the 71 community volunteers at the senior presentations, and all the individuals and groups in our district who make it a point to support and empower kids.

At the end of the presentations, Dr. Paul Maughan, an internationally recognized expert in satellite imaging, turned to me, smiling.

"Based on what I just heard, I would say our future is bright," he said.

I couldn't agree more.



Kim Meyer, Debolika Sen, Nick Maddox, Lauryn Boelke and Taylor Webb shared life insights as part of their senior presentations last month at Anacortes High School.

Debolika Sen is a Green Club member who listed biology among her favorite classes. She named her father, a first generation U.S. citizen, as a person who inspires her because of his focused work ethic and his non-stop support of their family. Debolika completed a job shadow at the Merle Cancer Care Center at Island Hospital. She learned how chemotherapy works and how to give an IV and take out a port. She's excited to enroll in the nursing program at Western and pursue a career in health care.

Nick Maddox is passionate about cars. He plans

Lauryn Boelke is a black belt in taekwondo. She has thrived at AHS in Speech & Debate, drama, swimming, track and field and Link Crew. Community service includes helping to prepare Thanksgiving meals for community members and teaching young kids to sprint in the Parks & Rec track program. Advanced placement courses such as environmental science and calculus have sparked her in high school, with coding as a particular interest. Lauren will attend UW next year with a possible major in science or technology. Her career goal: Work for NASA.