

Class of 2022 Graduation Speech by Shelby Mills

I would like to thank everyone for providing me with this great opportunity to share my speech with you all. Hi, my name is Shelby Mills and I am a graduating senior at Southeast Valley high school. Our class quote by Marilyn Monroe is “against all odds and despite all the obstacles, we are going to make it.” And when I look at my classmates I can't help but think of a better group of people that has gone through so much but has come out on top.

Freshman year, a perfect storm was brewing for us to achieve what we wanted. We watched the class of 2019 achieve so much while they were here. They were great role models who taught us the importance of work ethic, class, and teamwork. As we observed them we were setting ourselves up for success throughout the next three years. To this day we still watch them as they are in college doing the same thing they did here, breaking records, performing with passion, and maintaining good grades.

Sophomore year, school year 2019-2020. I think I can go without saying that was the most difficult year any of us have experienced. All of our sports teams except the boys basketball team, had an off year. The musical that year was difficult. We had endured so much disappointment that year, and just when we thought it couldn't get any worse. We went home on Friday, March 13th 2020, after Mr. Ketcham told us, “I'm not sure what the deal is in the world right now, but I'll see you all on Monday.” He dismissed us and we went to our cars and went home. Over that weekend I remember sitting on the couch with my mom Sunday watching our governor tell us the rest of our sophomore year is canceled as well as track and baseball and softball seasons. What was supposed to be a two week break from school turned into extended summer break.

Even though we weren't able to carry on with a normal summer, we made it work. Rather than a summer morning weightroom group with Coach Swieter, we bought weights off the internet and put them in our houses. If we couldn't afford it, we did body weight exercises in our rooms. If we couldn't compete on the track like a normal track season, we measured out distance and ran sprints in the streets and went for long runs out in the countryside.

We went through that extended summer wearing masks, standing six feet apart, and not seeing our friends like a normal summer. Another set back. What is usually a period to get ready for the upcoming school year, we were forced to stay at home. However, August came around, and we were so excited to return for our junior year! There were modifications, but we were back. What I remember about this year is coming so close but falling short. For example, our football team after a great regular season, made it to the third round of playoffs only to lose after desperately wanting to make it to the UNI Dome. The cross country team came so close to meeting the team and personal goals, only to fall short. Both basketball teams were just on the edge of achieving their goals. So many track athletes were close to qualifying for state, but not everyone who wanted to go, made it.

The summer after junior year, I felt a shift in motivation with everyone. We got tired of second place, tired of not quite making it, second place was no longer acceptable. We quit cutting corners and doing the bare minimum. If we had to do something we did it with purpose. We had a mission.

Fall came around and senior year was here. We were ready. The cross country seniors had the best year of their careers. Even though sometimes you don't hear about it, the group of seniors out for cross country this season had the best times they had ever ran, if not they had matched their best times they had set previously. Needless to mention that not only did our

football team make it to the Dome, they became state champions as well, and so many made all state teams, and all tournament teams. Fast forward to winter, and we had wrestling state qualifiers, who went and competed really well. Here we are in track season and we had so many of us set meet records, school records, we qualified for drake, and state.

When I sit and think of all the groups of people I have been around in my life, I could not think of another group that has overcome so many challenges. We have been through so much as a group together. And not once did we throw away the towel and give up. We kept fighting. This doesn't just apply to extra curriculars, so many of my classmates opened up to me about their personal battles, and they are still going and living their best lives everyday.

I could not be more proud to be part of such a promising group of young individuals. I cannot wait to be watching TV with my family one day and be able to look at my kids and say "I graduated high school with them." We have future college athletes, people who played lead roles in the musical, and brainiacs. I have no doubt that in the future we will have olympians, professional athletes, business owners, politicians, service members, doing better than how successful we were in high school.