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FRIDAY, JUNE 12TH, 2020

Disappointment Then Praise for SHS Graduation Ceremony

By Jarret Liotta

There was some initial disappointment when it looked like the shutdown and subsequent restrictions generated by the pandemic looked to squash hopes for a traditional graduation ceremony for Staples High School (SHS).

Yet as one graduate so acutely stated, maybe it's been something of a blessing in disguise.

"It's never a bad thing when you're the least traditional ceremony to graduate," said Roxy Augeri, 18, who is bound for Ithaca College in the fall to study communications.

Augeri was one of the first students in line when the first leg of the graduation parade of cars assembled on Hyde Lane

Starting at 10 a.m. cars caravanned up to SHS. Egged on by cheers from signs and individuals at roadside along the drive up Long Lots Road and North Avenue, graduates entered their alma mater to find a staging area set up at the front entrance.

"I think it's really nice that the town officials and especially the school administration worked really hard under the circumstances to make the best out of the parade," said her Roxy's mother, Melissa Augeri.

"In the end I think it's going to be a really special memory for all of the kids," she said.

"I think it is actually really special," Roxy said, noting that the traditional ceremony is rather on the stuffy side, especially with hundreds confined to the SHS field house on a hot summer day.

"And it makes the ceremony much more personal," she said of the parade and series of mini ceremonies that took place in front of the school.

"It's cool to be the graduating class to have this type of ceremony," said Gabriel Cohen, 18. "Overall I see it as a positive."

"I think it's great," said his father, Brett Cohen. "I really think people came together and overcame a bunch of obstacles. That's really impressive."

With horns honking and streamer flying, parades of cars drove up in front of the school entrance to mark graduation.

Groups of four students in caps and gown were invited to stand outside their cars until their names were called. They then walked up to the stage and posed for a picture.

"If you would now turn your tassels from right to left," said SHS principal Stafford Thomas.

"Congratulations!" he said. "You have just graduated Staples High School."

"Given the conditions, this is definitely the best we could have hoped for," said graduate Matt Cerrito, who will be studying music at the University of Miami.

"I'm really happy and really proud of what the school was able to put together," he said, noting the family would be having a big dinner together later on.

"At first I was disappointed," said graduate Alyssa Chariott, 17, "but then I definitely realized everybody is making the best of it."

"A lot of people put a lot of effort into this," she said, "and I'm definitely appreciative of it."

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Sammy D'Anna got a rousing car ride from her family, as well as from relatives along the Staples graduation parade route. (CLICK TO ENLARGE) Jarret Liotta for WestportNow.com

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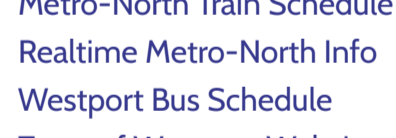
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