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Vikings set out

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"Go, and light your world," urged Mascenic Regional School District Superintendent Stephen Russell, to the 59 graduating seniors of the class of 2018. "That's my message to everyone here this evening."

Russell's words, spoken Friday during graduation in the Mascenic High School gymnasium, harked back to the ending song at the district's Baccalaureate ceremony, held last weekend, which was capped with Chris Rice's rendition of "Go Light Your World." The advice, he told the class, went beyond the religious meaning of the song. They would be responsible for becoming examples, giving and sharing support and their own pieces of advice into the world.

To do that, class salutatorian Samantha Bilodeau suggested to her classmates, start as you mean to go on.

Bilodeau, who ran cross-country all four years of her high school career and plans to continue the sport in college, said she knows a thing or two about consistency. Even her graduation cap, decorated with the words "In it for the long run," spoke to that thread, which ran through her address.

"What I truly love most about running is that a good work ethic is essential in order to find success," said Bilodeau. "Training to be a successful cross-country runner takes time and dedication even before the season has begun. Consistently running in the summer prior to the season allows the body to adapt more easily to running in the fall."

Despite knowing that putting in the work allows one to reap the rewards, Bilodeau assured her classmates that she knows it's not easy -- the temptation to make excuses about the early hour of the morning or the heat of the afternoon is ever present. But knowing the sting of disappointment when you didn't put in your best effort is the motivating factor to get moving, she said.

"We spent our entire lives up to this point putting the work in, day in and day out, studying, practicing and learning," said Bilodeau. "We stand before you today, well conditioned from our 13-year stretch of summer running, and prepared to move on with the next step in life."

Valedictorian Melonie Ojala, too, looked forward, and urged her peers to not lose the feelings they held in the moment. "The daily grind," she remarked, does not stop with high school, or with college, or after securing the first job.

"What happens when tomorrow, next week or next month comes, and the inspiration has subsided?" she said. "What happens when the motivation, so prevalent today at this graduation celebration is threatened? As we reach the other side of this milestone, may we not fall victim to monotony. The years fly by when we abandon our drive and just go through the motions."

So, said Ojala, be mindful every day of the moment -- don't wait for the next milestone in order to live the life that you want. Whatever the next step for the class of 2018 -- 29 of which plan to go on to further education, two into the United States Marine Corps and 28 into the workforce -- she told them to continue to challenge their expectations.
