

Lessons from Past Portage Graduates

First, I would like to congratulate the Class of 2024. It's been a pleasure growing up and experiencing high school with you, and I can't wait to see what the future holds for each one of you.

Portage Area High School is unique in that a lot of us have family members who have gone to this school and walked this stage on their graduation day. MY parents have graduated from Portage, along with many of my aunts and uncles. Each of my three older sisters have graduated from this school, making me the last Chobany to walk across the stage. I thought about the significance of that, and realized that they were all here, where we are right now, at some point in their lives. They all took those next steps after high school, and in doing so, taught me some valuable lessons about life and how to live it. I would like to share with you what I've learned from each of my sisters in the hopes that you can apply these lessons to your own future.

The first piece of advice that I want to give you comes from my oldest sister, Emily. She taught me to find your passion in life and do what makes you happy. She was able to take something she has loved since high school, working out and keeping fit, and make it into a career. Now, she is doing something that she loves and never has to "work" a day in her life. This is something that I hope you consider as you enter the next stage of your future. Find what makes you happy and what you are passionate about and go for it. Make your work enjoyable for you. This can look different to everyone, but if you are doing what makes you truly happy, you will be successful in life.

Next, I want to share with you what I've learned from my sister, Abby. She taught me to remember that life is an adventure and to take chances without fear of regret. After teaching at Portage for a few years, she decided to take a chance on herself and continue her education across the country in Nevada. There are big steps in life that have the capability of changing everything in your future. When these opportunities arise, it is important to embrace them, rather than overlook them. Be bold in your decisions and don't be afraid to make big changes. Challenge yourself and step out of your comfort zone. This is how you grow as a person and live a life full of adventure.

Lastly, my sister Kasey taught me to work hard. She has always mentioned how she is "not really intelligent," but knows how to discipline herself and study to get the grade. This has taken her through college, the national guard, and PA school. Watching her, I have learned that no matter how daunting a task may seem, anything is achievable through hard work. Remember that nobody is born knowing everything. Even the most skilled painters had to start somewhere and simply pick up the brush. It may seem difficult in the moment, but once you reach your goal, you'll be able to look back and see how far you've come. All you need is that first step and the ability to work hard through the rest.

To conclude, I hope you all remember to find your passion, take chances, and work hard in your future. I'm thankful that I have my older sisters to pave the way and teach me these important life lessons. But I'm also thankful for you all for teaching me one more key value. Growing up with the Class of 2024 has taught me to always be yourself. Our individuality makes us unique, which is what makes this class so special. We each have our own traits and talents that we have brought to Portage High School which made this last year fun and memorable. I hope

you can take all these pieces of advice with you as we each begin our new journeys that start after walking across the stage tonight. So, find your passion, take chances, work hard, and be yourself. Congratulations Class of 2024 and good luck!