

Seniors say good-bye to Leonard High

Written by By Betsy Blevins, Managing Editor

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June 9, 2011 - Friday night couldn't get here fast enough for a particular group of 83. They had worked at least 13 years to get to this point in their life - a turning point, a milestone, a huge achievement. The Leonard High School Class of 2011 marched onto the field for their graduation, and they were ready.

After an opening prayer and the playing and singing of the Star Spangled Banner by the LHS band and choir - minus the Senior members - the ceremony began.

Salutatorian Catelyn Cash started off by apologizing for the heat.

"We can't help it if we're the hottest class from Leonard," she said, prompting laughter from the audience.



She took a few minutes to highlight special memories in her high school career, from her freshman year on up to her final year at LHS. Those moments included the Senior class dominating the Powder Puff games, college preparation and study, and lounging on the library couch after dual credit was over.

Valedictorian Brooke Kay took time to thank several who had a positive influence on her life - God, family, teachers, and friends. She took the audience on a journey through the campuses of Leonard ISD starting at Leonard Elementary with kindergarten - where they "took a tour of the building with a gingerbread man, had a field trip to the dairy museum, and signed

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countless Valentine cards."

(CAPTION) Celebrating: Leonard High School Senior Billy Michael "Bubba" Martin lets out a hoop and holler as he holds his diploma high in the air to show his family at Friday night's graduation. - Betsy Blevins staff photo

Kay said Junior High was all about the love - who was dating who - and the looks changing. And then finally at high school where they got a choice on classes.

She assured her class with the Bible verse Jeremiah 29:11, which says, "'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future,'" and reminded her schoolmates and the audience that relationships with people and God are important.

"Congratulations class of 2011. We did it!" she said in closing.

LHS Principal Brad Connelly took the podium next for the awards presentations. The first ones awarded were the Outstanding Male and Female, which were presented to Wesley Orr and Kacey Chennault, respectively. Certificates were also given to the Top Ten Percent - Brooke Kay, Catelyn Cash, Wesley Orr, Haley Brunson, Julie Harvey, Jordan Jones, Marissa Kuntz, Paige Watson, and Lauren Wilkins. Seven awards for Perfect Attendance for their entire school career were handed to Jacob Allen, Dylan Blackburn, Kacey Chennault, Charlene Greene, Nathan Hansen, Wesley Orr and Caleb Simmons.

Recognitions were also made to those seniors who are going into the Armed Forces, which include the following: Army - Blane Lopez and Matt Bapties; Navy - Cody Smallwood, Jordan Dayberry, Tristan Custis and Christy Stringer; Coast Guard - Miranda Anderson; and U.S. Marine Corps - James Cartwright.

Many scholarships were awarded to seniors during the end-of-year academic awards assembly held at the high school. All of those students were recognized, and a few that were not available by the awards assembly were presented at graduation. Scholarships received were as follows:

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Verne Cooper - Dylan Blackburn, Haley Brunson, Jake Buchanan, Kacey Chennault, Jordan Norman, Najwa Nwankwo, Caleb Simmons, Paige Watson, Katelyn Womack, Charlene Greene, Lauren Wilkins, Brooke Kay and Catelyn Cash; Daniel B. Dupree Foundation - Dylan Blackburn, Kacey Chennault and Caleb Simmons; Glaesr Family Charitable Foundation - Paige Watson and Lauren Wilkins; Fannin Federal Credit Union - Aaron Shanks; St. Elizabeth Catholic Church Ladies Guild - Sadie Woodruff; National Association of Colored Women's Club Inc. League of Phenomenal Women Chapter at Texas A & M University - Commerce - Najwa Nwankwo; Honors scholarship from Southeastern Oklahoma State University totaling \$41,000 - Sadie Woodruff; Wilson N. Jones Community Foundation - Lauren Wilkins; David Norris Memorial - Lauren Wilkins; Dr. Ray and Elizabeth Thomas Scholarship from Grayson County College - Dylan Blackburn; Bonham Texas Business Women's Club - Lauren Wilkins and Catelyn Cash; Leonard Youth Sports Association - Lindsey Stanley and Billy Michael "Bubba" Martin; Patriotic scholarship - Aaron Shanks; San Antonio Livestock Show scholarship totaling \$10,000 and San Angelo Livestock Show scholarship totaling \$1,000 - Spencer Roberts; Academic Excellence Scholarship from Stephen F. Austin University - Catelyn Cash; Spartan College - Mario Gonzalez; C.K. and Allene McClendon scholarship - Kayla Winkler; Bill Davis Memorial - Lindsey Stanley; Leonard Athletic Club - Jake Buchanan; Leonard Chamber of Commerce - Marissa Kuntz, Kacey Chennault and Kendra Dougherty; Leonard ISD - Sadie Woodruff, Wesley Orr, Dylan Blackburn, Stacie Stroud, Caleb Simmons, Charlene Greene and Jordan Norman; Alumni Scholarship - Bubba Martin; LEAP - Dylan Blackburn, Catelyn Cash, Brooke Kay, Christian Lyday, Najwa Nwankwo and Lauren Wilkins; Tom Hymer Scholarship - Haley Brunson; Ashley Lodge Scholarship - Anne Burke; Sanitation Solutions - T.J. Stahley and Katelyn Womack; Theron Gray Scholarship - Aaron Shanks; LHS Student Scholarship - Jake Buchanan, Brooke Kay, Paige Watson and Wesley Orr; Mary Ann Marshall Memorial Scholarship - Jordan Jones; John R. DeFoor Memorial Scholarship - T.J. Stahley; and Joel McBroom Scholarship - Catelyn Cash.

Following the scholarships, Leonard ISD School Board President Bill Watson and Superintendent Larry LaFavers presented each student with their high school diploma. Many students used their walk as an opportunity to stand out from the rest - speaking to the audience or their family, dancing, blowing kisses, etc. as they walked.

Once all had received their diplomas, they took part in several traditions customary at commencement exercises. The first was the ribbon cutting ceremony where students cut a carnation flower from a continuous ribbon, which signifies that they are breaking ties with Leonard High School. That was followed by the traditional turning of the rings from facing inward to facing outward, and the moving of the tassel from the right to the left. The final event was the graduates' recessional and tossing of the caps.