

'Making the best of it'

Seniors feel sad but supported as graduation approaches

By Anna Jauhola

High school graduates around the county are facing the most uncertain end-of-year in decades. As graduation looms this weekend for Kittson Central and Lancaster, and the following weekend for Tri-County in Karlstad, plans are mostly in place but could change before the ceremonies happen.

Despite that, and the loss of the last two months of school, class trips, prom and just making memories, seniors around the county are not letting their sadness get the best of them.

Morgan Hanson, senior at Kittson Central, said she's found she's not good at distance learning but she's made it through.

"I've learned people around here are very quick to adapt to things," she said. "Even if things change, there's always going to be somebody who makes the absolute best of the situation. And I've learned I am somebody who can try and make the best of it."

She had a hard time separating school and home while being stuck at home. It was difficult to carve out a schedule and be responsible, at

first, especially since she has two part-time jobs to juggle in her schedule. But she feels the experience has taught her to be more on top of her classes and has prepared her for how she will need to organize when she attends Boston University in January 2021.

The sadness of missing the last two months of their senior year runs deep in all graduating classes. Hanson's classmate Megan Hylton said she was looking forward to prom and just soaking in the fun she had with her closest friends during the school day — especially in Tina Turn's classes.

"I really miss Becky (Lehrke) the librarian. It was always the highlight of my day to visit with her," Hylton said. "I really miss going to the office and talking smack with Stephanie (Hanson). Those are things I really, really miss."

Although most seniors wait years to go on their class trip, Hylton is OK missing it. Her biggest concern is she wouldn't have gone anyway as her father has cancer and she has been integral to getting him to appointments. Also, she wasn't excited about the base-

ball game they were set to attend or the full 10 days she'd spend with her entire class.

The event she was most sad to miss, other than a typical graduation ceremony, was prom.

"Last year I won a TV, so I was looking to go two-for-two," she said with a laugh. "And I enjoy dancing and all the games."

Throughout the uncertainty of whether the seniors would have a graduation ceremony, they have found their communities to be incredibly supportive. Teachers have been responsive, helpful and caring.

"Everybody is desperately trying their best to make sure we feel supported," Hanson said. "Everyone is throwing love and support our way, doing whatever they can, even if it's a small gesture to make us know they're here for us."

Hylton and fellow senior Grace Lamberson both had help finishing quilts.

Hylton was on the home stretch with her project when Gov. Tim Walz ordered schools closed in March. She didn't have the ability to fin-

ish it at home, so Monica Halvorson offered to help her.

"I went to her house two days a week. We used hand sanitizer, masks, all that, and she helped me four hours a day and we got that quilt done," Hylton said. "She just helped me out of the goodness of her heart."

Lamberson had also worked on a quilt with Sharlene Klegstad and Diane Younggren at school. She was unable to finish the quilt because she went to Arizona at the beginning of March and school let out the middle of March. Klegstad finished the quilt for her as a graduation present.

Lamberson said her entire community has been supportive - her co-workers at the Farmers Store, her sister who just graduated from Northland Community and Technical College and her parents. She will attend North Dakota State College of Science in Wahpeton for culinary arts. Although that industry is highly affected during this pandemic, it hasn't affected her decision to enter that career.

"I'm still super interested in learning all about cooking, owning a

restaurant. That's because it's always been a passion," Lamberson said.

For Lancaster senior Mariah Olson, the end of the year has been difficult because she and her six classmates were so excited to experience their class trip and make memories. Olson's sister graduated two years ago and watching her excitement made Olson even more excited for her final year of high school.

"I guess we've found different ways to connect - group chat, video chatting - so we kind of work through (the sadness)," Olson said. "But it's really hard not to do those things we've seen everyone else do."

The Lancaster seniors were set to travel to Boston, attend a baseball game and see Gettysburg, among many other adventures. Although they - as well as Kittson Central - may still take a trip later this summer, it's just one more thing they missed out on.

Tri-County senior Jada Klegstad said the lost time has been bitter-sweet, even more so than a regular end to high school.

"I don't have to wake up early, get ready, go to

school. I get to lay in bed and do my homework, be in pajamas all day," she said. "But I don't get to see my friends, my favorite staff, there's no prom this year and we're not sure what we're doing about graduation. It really stinks. But you just got to be positive about it."

She said she's learned life isn't fair and moving on is the only option.

"Can I give some advice to other students? Don't take anything for granted because you never know what's going to happen," she said.

Each student agrees that, really, they missed being with their friends and classmates the most - whether they were hanging out in the hallway, laughing and joking during class, attending prom, going on a trip across the country, or simply being able to hang out outside of school.

But they also agree the loss of their last months of high school is not the end-all and be-all of their lives. Yes, they've ended on a sadder note than most, but there is still a future to pursue and this event has helped prepare them for that future.



CONGRATULATIONS
Graduates

Hallock Farmers Mutual

"Serving NW Minnesota Since 1886"

23 South Second St. • P.O. Box 695 • Hallock, MN 56728
Phone: 218-843-2483

HFPM
Perry F. Pearson, MGR/GA



May the future
bring even
more success
to each
and
every one
of you!

**HUMBOLDT-ST. VINCENT
ELEVATOR**
218-379-3122



We are proud of all your accomplishments and wish you continued success in your future endeavors!

Johnson Oil Company
Your hometown petroleum products distributor

CENEX 218-843-2681 **CLARK**