

Greene Co. High School confers 96 diplomas during Commencement for its Class of 2026

Wildcats don't let threat of rain dampen mood as they celebrate Class of 2026 with open-air ceremony

— From Staff Reports —

Thunder rolled outside as Greene County High School celebrated the accomplishments of its 2026 graduates at Class Night last Thursday. Heavy rain continued overnight and through most of the day Friday as weather conditions threatened to play spoiler Friday night at Wildcat Stadium.

But, school officials remained committed to an outdoor graduation ceremony. GCHS graduates, their friends and families did deal with a light drizzle, but didn't allow that to dampen their spirits as they celebrated the Class of 2026's Commencement.

After the rain paused, graduates hurried to their appointed seats and Graham Breland stepped to the podium to lead those in attendance in saluting the U.S. Flag and reciting the "Pledge of Allegiance."

Shevy Maurer then offered a lovely rendition of "The National Anthem," which was followed by welcoming messages from Class President Austin Palmer and Vice President Sophie Whalen.

Palmer thanked friends and family for their support, as well as the school faculty and staff, Supt. of Education Charles Breland and the members of the Greene County Board of Education. "Tonight marks a significant milestone for all of us - a moment filled with pride, reflection and excitement for the future," Palmer said. "Your guidance, support and wisdom have helped shape us into the individuals we are today. Without you, this achievement would not have been possible."

Whalen told her classmates and the audience that the night's events was the beginning of a new adventure that would take the graduates in different directions.

"The past four years have allowed us to forge lasting friendships, develop as individuals and embrace the lessons and experiences that have shaped us."

"We leave Greene County High School with a legacy of our own, unique from those that came before us, and now it's time for us to leave our mark on the world. Once again, thank you for joining us in this celebration."

Jacie Ethridge, Harper James, Maisan Tribble, Brody Turner and Keri Graham gathered at the podium next to share a brief devotion and kick off the event with prayer.

"Tonight is a special night — one where we celebrate not only an ending, but a beginning," Ethridge said.

"We gather to honor the hard work, dedication and perseverance that brought us to this moment."

"There were moments of stress, moments of doubt, and moments when giving up would have been easier — but we kept going."

James added that as graduates and their families celebrate the fruit of their labors, they do so with the knowledge that determination, faith and perseverance is what carried them through the not-so-easy times.

"But as exciting as this moment is, graduation is more than receiving a diploma. It is stepping into a new season of life filled with opportunities, uncertainty and purpose."

After reading a passage from Proverbs, Turner said while graduation is exciting, it also comes with a lot of questions.

"Sometimes it feels like we have to have every answer before we take the next step," Tribble said, following Turner's train of thought. "There will be moments when life doesn't go according to plan. There will be closed doors, unexpected turns and seasons that challenge us."

"But, even then, God is still guiding our steps. Even then, He is still making a way."

Graham closed the devotional with prayer.

Class Historian Caroline Holder was the first of the three featured speakers for the program. Holder retraced the Class of 2026's journey at GCHS and reminded classmates that while the experiences of those four years will help shape their futures.

"Over these past four years, we have experienced moments of excitement, challenge, laughter, growth, and success," Holder said. "We have watched each other grow from young teenagers into adults preparing to begin the next chapter of life."

"Every school year brought something different, but each one became an important part of the story of the Greene County High School Class of 2026."

Holder said while there was a feeling of excitement about the future, there was sadness in realizing this chapter of the graduates' lives was coming to a close.

"Greene County High School has been more than just a place where we attended classes," she noted. "It has been a second home where we discovered who we are, built lifelong friendships, learned important lessons, and created memories we will carry forever."

"The story of the Greene County High School Class of 2026 is one of growth, perseverance, faith, friendship, and determination, and it is a story I will always be proud to tell. When we think about history, we try to find the "big" moments of the past; but, simple actions and words of encouragement are some of the things we will cherish the most."

She finished her address by sharing a quote from poet



Photo by LYDIA MORENO | Herald Contributor

Greene County High School graduate Chloe McLeod was all smiles as she accepted her diploma and congratulations from Principal Caleb Prentiss during last Friday's Class of 2026 Commencement at Wildcat Stadium. McLeod was one of 96 graduates to earn diplomas at the school this year.

and novelist Margaret Atwood ... "The ability to remember the past helps us plan the future."

Next to the podium was Salutatorian Lillian Rau, who told those in attendance that while she will always be grateful for her time at GCHS, she found it odd when people tell her "these are the best years of your life."

"Honestly, I hope not," Rau said. "There's something strange about expecting people who are still growing and becoming themselves to believe this is as good as life gets."

"Each of us carries something different into the next chapter of our lives, shaped by our own choices, our own strengths, and our own version of what it actually means to succeed."

Rau said the important part is not comparing those paths against each other, but learning how to thrive in one's own individuality as they continue their journeys through life.

"Because success is not measured by a GPA, a class

Wishing our
Class of
2026
graduates
much success
and happiness
on the road
ahead.

Thanks for setting the example with your hard work and dedication. We're very proud of you.

Congratulations!

Embracing Community HealthCARE

GREENE County Hospital
A Division of George Regional Health System

1017 Jackson Avenue
Leakeville, MS 39451
(601)394-4135

See GRADUATION

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Congratulations ... to ALL our Graduates!



Way to Go!

We are proud of the efforts of our young people here in Greene County. You make us proud in the classroom and when representing our community around the state. Good Luck in the Future!

County-Wide Elected Officials

- Ladd Pulliam - Coroner
- Cecelia Bounds - Circuit Clerk
- Shelley Eubanks - Chancery Clerk
- Mark Holder - Tax Assessor/Collector
- Ryan Walley - Sheriff

