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School News

Raymond High Class of 2012 Valedictorian and Salutatorian

By Leslie O'Donnell - For Raymond Area News



Ashley Lord, Valedictorian and Abbey Schlangen, Salutatorian

Ashley Lord and Abbey Schlangen have been best friends throughout high school. So it's particularly special for them that they are the Valedictorian and Salutatorian of the Class of 2012 at Raymond High School.

Ashley, 18, daughter of Eric and Samantha Lord, will graduate with the highest grade point average in her class. She has lived most of her life in Raymond, and has attended Raymond schools since first grade.

In the fall, she heads to Dartmouth College in Hanover, where she was accepted early admission and was recruited for her ability in track.

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Ashley has been in varsity track four years and has served as her class president for four years as well. She played varsity soccer her sophomore through senior years – playing JV soccer as a freshman – and is a member of the Raymond High chapter of the National Honor Society, Interact Club, yearbook, and the Reach High Scholars Program.

She was state champion three times in track – once for the 300-meter indoors, twice for the 400-meter outdoors. Last year she was ranked 50th in the country.

While she is undecided on her college major, she said her interests in academics have changed through the years. She favors math and science, but said during the past year and a half, she has been leaning toward English as well.

Her advice to incoming RHS freshmen? “If you have a goal, go all out for it,” Ashley said. “Put forth the effort. Anything good takes effort, so give it all you’ve got. You need a social life, but stay oriented toward your dream.”

She said Dartmouth has been her first choice college for years, ever since she received a Dartmouth shirt as a child. “I fell in love with it when I visited,” she said of the Ivy League campus. “I told myself in my freshman year that I would give myself a chance to reach that goal.”

Ashley said she took all the honors and Advanced Placement classes offered at RHS – AP Biology in her junior year, and AP calculus, English and U.S. History in her senior year. She attended summer school a few years ago at Phillips Exeter Academy.

Outside of school and track, she enjoys painting and drawing, and spending time with family and friends. She has an older brother, Mike, and two younger brothers, Mason and Aidan.

Ashley said she credits John McDaniels with helping her reach her dream of being accepted at Dartmouth. “I met him my sophomore year, and he saw my chance to reach my goal with athletics,” she said. McDaniels leads the Reach High Scholars Program, whose objective is to encourage RHS students to “reach high” at one of the top colleges in the country.

And she also thanks Abbey. “I have to thank her a lot for my success,” she said. “We push each other, and we’re best friends.”

Abbey Schlangen, 17, is Salutatorian for the Class of 2012, and has gone through her high school years with plenty of academic and track triumphs. The daughter of Molly and Steve Schlangen, she has lived in Raymond all her life. She has an older sister.

In the fall, she will enroll at Trinity College in Hartford, Conn., to continue in her pursuit of academics and sports. While she has not declared a major, she hopes eventually to work in advertising and marketing design.

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At Raymond High, Abbey played varsity soccer for four years, and was on the varsity indoor track team three years and outdoor track team four years, competing at the state meet. She was secretary of her class, and a member of the Raymond High chapter of the National Honor Society, Rotary programs, and Reach High. She studied piano prior to attending high school.

In her spare time, she enjoys photography and painting. Her advice to incoming freshmen is to “work hard to find a balance between academics and social life – that’s one of the hardest things to do. And do not be afraid to take the rigorous classes the school offers,” she said.

“Every teacher in the building,” she said, “is willing to help. Kids just have to not be afraid to speak up and to ask for help.”

Abbey took AP Biology, Calculus, U.S. History and English Literature – all the Advanced Placement classes offered at Raymond – and said she had good relationships with her teachers.

When she entered high school, she favored math, but recently has found her English classes to be her favorite. “In those classes, we had discussions – I really like that,” she said. “I came into high school afraid to turn in a paper, and that has really changed.”

She credits the summer school she attended at Phillips Exeter Academy a couple of years ago with turning her interest to class discussions, something she hopes will continue in college.

Having a best friend to share academic and sports pursuits was rewarding, Abbey said. “Best friends can be a bad influence, but we’re competitive and super close,” she said.

Abbey was recruited to Trinity to run track, and said that it’s going to be different not being at the same school with Ashley. But with both of them attending college in New England and both competing in track, she hopes they will get to see each other at meets during the school year.

“I know lots of people rag on the high school, but it was really rewarding for me,” Abbey concluded. “It’s a place where if you put in the effort and are open to learning, you’ll find there are a lot of talented educators in the building ready to help.”

And she is looking forward to college. When she visited Trinity, she found the students were excited to be there. “I’m excited too,” she said.

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