

Island Graduates Share Highlights of School Memories at Commencement

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He cautioned the seniors that "the time to pay attention isn't over yet."

"Pay attention" were the two words that Mr. Dehring offered the class of 2006. He told them that paying attention will be a critical skill in their life, not just in school.

He joked that he has had to change his telephone number 10 times because graduates keep calling him. He then assured the students that he would not change his telephone number for them, saying, "If you need something, call me and I'll be there."

Mr. Dehring then shared memories of each student, noting that the worst memory of school for Melissa Bunker was having to read Shakespeare. Eric Cowell's fondest memory of school was sticking his tongue to a flagpole in the middle of winter. Mr. Dehring suggested that Mr. Cowell was unaware of what fondest meant.

Scoring a goal from the center of the soccer field was the highlight for Tyler Finkel. Sam Kamphuis wants to be remembered for being himself and

Christina McLean wants to be remembered for being helpful to everyone. Miranda McMahon will fondly remember being a line leader in kindergarten and Ben Mosley wants to be remembered as being fun to be around. Jason Pettit wants

"Home, like all beautiful things, is in the eye of the beholder. I've always found peace in this place."

— Eric Cowell, Valedictorian

to forget the wedgie he received in 7th grade and Emily St. Onge would like to forget taking the ACT.

Valedictorian Eric Cowell, despite having returned to Mackinac Island Public School his senior year, had fond memories to share.

"Home, like all beautiful things, is in the eye of the

beholder," Mr. Cowell began. "I've always found peace in this place."

He described family as a fluid entity and his classmates as an extension of his family.

Good and bad memories make a family, he said, and losing Frank Horn several years ago was a moment that not only brought him and his class together, it affected the entire community.

Love, he said, is what separates this class from the rest.

"What's the use in life when there isn't any love in it?" he asked.

The two most important things in life, he noted, are roots and wings. His classmates have always had their roots on Mackinac Island, he said, and with their diplomas, they now have wings.

"We are ready," Mr. Cowell assured his classmates, as he wished the class of 2006 a brilliant future.

Commencement speaker and former superintendent, Gary Urman, told the graduates to look under their chairs, remove the envelope, stand up, and open the envelope's contents. Inside, each student found a dollar.

"You have to get up off your backside in this life to make a buck," he told the students.

Students should set their expectations high and believe in themselves, he said. He also quoted from Robert Fulghum's book, "All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten," advising the students to "watch out for traffic," an important lesson for them to learn, most having lived their entire life on Mackinac Island.

Teacher Karen Allen showed the senior video that she creat-

ed, which took the audience back to earlier days when the class of 2006 was young. Carrie Underwood's "Don't Forget to Remember Me" played in the background, a salient reminder of the unmistakable bond that the class of 2006 has built over the years. The video also included a personal message of appreciation each student expressed to their parents.

When it came time to award diplomas, there were tears and hugs and a sense of excitement

as the seniors took their first steps as the Mackinac Island Public School graduating class of 2006.

After the ceremony, the parents hosted a party in their honor in the all-purpose room.

Commemorating the Class of 2006

Class Colors: Blue and pink
Class Flower: Lilac

Class Song: "Don't Forget to Remember Me" by Carrie Underwood

Class Motto: Carpe Diem!
"Seize the day!"

Lack of Funding May Be Reason School Visits Dip at Historic Sites

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May 27, through Tuesday, May 30, said Tim Putman, public relations and marketing officer for the parks.

During a similar period, from Thursday, May 25, through Tuesday, May 30, Mackinac Bridge traffic was down 1.32 percent over last year, reported Bob Sweeney, executive secretary of the Mackinac Bridge Authority. He did note, however, that crossings on Friday through Sunday were up over last year.

Overall, 92,415 cars made the crossing during the five day period, compared to 93,652 in 2005, said Mr. Sweeney.

Mr. Sweeney also analyzed statistics going back six years and found no parallel between Memorial Day weekend bridge traffic and summer traffic.

He said traffic fell last year when gas prices rose.

"Memorial Day travel is a

general indicator," he said, "but there are other factors that can affect the season."

Tom Pfeiffelmann, general manager of Star Line Ferry, said the numbers of passengers traveling to Mackinac Island were up over last year, both in crossings from St. Ignace and in Mackinaw City.

Dave Ramsey, dockmaster with Star Line, said business might have been even better if the weather had cooperated on Sunday. He said people tended to hold off going to Mackinac Island in the morning, waiting until the rain stopped.

Mr. Putman at the state park agreed. Sunday, he said, was the only soft day at Mackinac State Historic Parks during the long weekend.

Mr. Ramsey said travelers he talked with from Indiana, Ohio, Wisconsin, and lower Michigan last weekend may indicate that people are going to take shorter trips this year. He speculated high gas prices will keep summer travelers closer to home.

Leading into the Memorial Day holiday, attendance at Mackinac State Historic Parks was mixed. Group tours, primarily school children, were down 12 percent, but individual and family attendance was up 21 percent. The poor school attendance could be a reflection of strained school budgets, said Phil Porter, director of Mackinac State Historic Parks at the Mackinac Island State Park Commission meeting Saturday, May 27.

The early statistics cover fewer than 25 days since the fairs opened and do not include the Memorial Day holiday period.

New interest has been sparked with Old Mackinac Point Lighthouse following years of renovations and attendance is up 96 percent, which Mr. Porter attributes to additional marketing to school groups.

Overall park attendance is down seven percent from last year prior to the holiday weekend, and Fort Mackinac's visitor count dropped 11 percent. Colonial Michilimackinac attendance is down four percent and Historic Mill creek is down 10 percent.

Arnold Transit Company and Shepler's Mackinac Island Ferry also were contacted for this story, but could not return calls before press time.

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