

# Top students reflect on HS careers



Madelyn Thornton and Jessica Patterson have been friends since their first days at St. Mary's School, and will lead the River Ridge Class of 2023 into their commencement, Thornton as salutatorian and Patterson as valedictorian.

## Patterson and Thornton show friendship throughout school

When interviewing the top two students for the River Ridge Class of 2023 - Valedictorian Jessica Patterson and Salutatorian Madelyn Thornton - you do not need to have them tell you they are the best of friends, as that friendship permeates the conversation.

They will start talking about what the other one was passionate about, which led to the choices they made for study after they graduate. They talk about how weird it was when Madelyn made the jump to River Ridge two years earlier, in sixth grade, than Jessica, who stayed at St. Mary's until after the eighth grade.

"It's a pretty great feeling to be one of the top students with her this year," Patterson said of them sharing the spotlight. "There's nobody else I'd rather be up there with," Madelyn continued. "I know, Jessica has worked so hard for everything she does. And everything that we do together is it's always been like, right back and forth with each other."

Neither one said that being the top was specifically their goal growing up, just doing their best, and pushing themselves to achieve. Madelyn added that she knew they would be joining a number of smart people when they would eventually combine with the River Ridge students,

and so she wanted to make sure she was ready.

So they started their high school careers together after being apart for two years.

"I think there's a lot of great memories between Maddie and me," Jessica said. She went down a list of all the memories that came to mind for her - competing in track, dart Fridays in math class, FFA trips.

"Fun things that you do that to make those memories and make high school seem so special," Jessica shared.

For inspiration on achieving, Patterson said it was about family.

"They've inspired me to do well, I remember, I forget how many years ago, coming up here to watch my older cousins graduate. Seeing them up on stage was pretty cool," she shared.

For Madelyn, one of her inspirations was her elementary school instructor Ruth French. "She was always so kind to me and always told me how much he believed in me and how smart I was. And I guess it kind of just took that to heart and wanted to do good for her, but also for my family who has been there for me and pushed me as well."

Even a setback is not a setback for Thornton, as she discusses the one class that separated her and Jessica's GPA - Algebra II. "It is probably the best

River Ridge | SEE 5A

## Kruser, Guiney reflect on times at Potosi

At the top of the class of 2023 at Potosi High School sits Logan Kruser and Katelyn Guiney, two soon-to-be graduates who will be taking different paths once they graduate this month. While they are diverging once their high school careers are over, they have a shared experience that got them to the same point.

Both approached being at the top of their class a little differently.

"It wasn't really something that like, ever thought about," Logan stated, noting that he was not really aware of it until



Logan Kruser is Potosi High School's Class of 2023 Valedictorian, while Katelyn Guiney is the class salutatorian.

his sophomore year, when he saw he was in the top spot.

Not that he wasn't pushing himself even before high school - he took the advanced math courses throughout middle school, so when

he was in eighth grade he was taking freshman math.

"It still is like, a pride thing, I guess to know that I did this while in school," Kruser stated, noting that because he will be apprenticing to

be an electrician, he was not working for it for things like the Wisconsin Academic Scholarship, given out for public school graduates attending a state university.

For Katelyn, the scholarship was not a thing either, as she plans on attending East Tennessee State to study biology.

"East Tennessee State University gave me opportunities that other colleges did not," she said, noting she is working to become a pharmacist.

As for working on being at the top of their class, she said that "it's been a goal of mine since I started high school, so I'm very proud to be one of the top students. I've worked hard to set myself up for success in the future and I'm happy it has paid off in this way."

Potosi | SEE 5A

## Okey and Hauk enjoyed partnerships forged in Cassville

Erasmus Okey stated that he knew a long time ago that he had the goal of being the top student in his graduating class at Cassville High School.

It is kind of a family thing, as most of his older siblings have either been the valedictorian or salutatorian when they graduated.

Okey plans to take some elements from their speeches when he gives his own commencement address this weekend, joined on stage by Xander Hauk, who is the Salutatorian of the class.

"I kind of just set the bar for me to try to get there too," Okey said, noting he was probably in sixth or seventh grade when the goal crystalized.

Hauk said he came to the position more organically - he was doing his best, and he just reached it. "I wouldn't say it was a goal, but it was something that I guess I was working towards."

the 14 members of the Cassville High School

Class of 2023 are a close-knit group, and that extended to the top of the class, as they never felt they were in a competition. "We always got along.... we just worked together on stuff," said Erasmus.

Not that they were not competitive, as Xander recalled calculus class, where the teacher would have them answer bonus questions during practices, which amounted to extra credit, and they would compete to see who could get the most.

As for those who inspired them, Okey said his mother was always there for him. "She always expected a lot of me and always made sure I did my best."

When he was younger, he noted that during the summer she would always make sure I read always make sure he was reading, or doing like some math stuff.



Xander Hauk and Erasmus Okey will be giving speeches at the Cassville High School commencement this Saturday - Hauk is the class salutatorian, while Okey is the class valedictorian.

For Xander, one person who pushed him was his fourth grade teacher Mrs. Boyum. "She was really good influence on my class. And one of the cool things we did was we read the book Where the Red Fern Grows, and I feel like that just brought us together as a class," Xander reflected.

Erasmus talked about the spirit of community that was instilled in them as they were growing up.

He noted that when he was writing his speech he was thinking back about last month, when students filled sandbags and helped prepare for the recent flooding.

"We're always willing to help out and do stuff when the community needs us," Okey said, noting that it was payback for the community supporting them.

They had to deal

Cassville | SEE 5A

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# River Ridge

FROM PAGE 3A

class I've taken just because of the fact that it has shown me that I can work towards my goals, and that it is difficult to achieve them."

In looking at the sports that they are involved in, Jessica and Madelyn note they are never too far apart, as Jessica pointed out that during the winter, she is in basketball and Madelyn is in dance, but they see each other when the dance team performs at games.

For Patterson, sports was also very helpful for her own transition into River Ridge High School from St. Mary's. She noted that she joined the Cross Country team in the fall of her freshman year, and she found a family with the team.

So the pair will be heading off in different directions this fall - Jessica is going to UW-Whitewater where she will be studying math education, while Madelyn is going to the University of Dubuque for flight operations.

Each immediately jumped in to talk about how much they were excited for the other to follow their dreams.

"I'm so happy I know that Jess has been talking about not just like expanding her, like

knowledge on math, because that's what you're going for, but like, also just like going and experiencing new places," Thornton stated. "That makes me happy that she's able to do that."

Jessica noted that Madelyn's move to learn flight stems from her love of space when they were young. "Maddie has, since we were little, she's always been interested in space. You could ask her anything and she could spew forth all these different facts about space. We've had many long conversations, or maybe not conversations, but me listening and enjoying many knowledge of space.

Thornton added that she feels the direction in flight also will tie in with her background and love of agriculture. It was Ag Teacher Madeline Esser that got her in touch with a relative to learn more, and she ponders flying for cropdusting as well as handling corporate flights.

For Madelyn, one thing she said that she will miss when they graduate is the sense of community and support she has seen growing up. When she was young, Thornton lost her father to ALS - something they knew would happen, but for a child, nothing can prepare you for that.

"We had a lot of community support, there would be people who would drop dishes of like food off at our house, come and

take care of us kids, well, my parents went to various hospitals.

"With all that going on, I think thing I'm gonna miss the most is just the, like, the familial atmosphere of just being a small school and being from all these small towns, where everybody knows you and knows what you've been through."

Patterson agreed. "They've been so supportive throughout like, even when I was at St. Mary's, you know, everyone knew you know, what you were up to, like, if we went down to the bakery to decorate windows or anything. They've always been supportive. And yeah, I'm just thankful for that. And I hope they continue to do so because it makes this community what it is.

Showing their personalities, Jessica and Madelyn answered the question what advice they would give an eighth grader who asked them what they could do to be just like them.

"I would say just work hard in school," Patterson said. "Be willing to go up and ask teachers questions, especially if you don't understand something. Because if you don't get something, it's probably going to come back to haunt you on something later on and being able to understand that concept will help you later on."

"Oh, and I would also say the same thing along with the fact that being involved not only is just fun," Thornton added. "Another thing I would say is that it's okay to make mistakes and making mistakes is actually what is going to help you learn how to not make mistakes and how to succeed in the future and you can't allow yourself to get down about the mistakes you make because you will always make mistakes no matter what age you are, no matter how experienced you are at something or how good you are at math or how good you are at science, you're going to make mistakes no matter what you do and you the best thing you can do is just learn from them and not let them constrict your abilities."

# TEEN OF THE WEEK



The Teen of the Week spotlight is cast on Madelyn Thornton, 17 year old at River Ridge High School. Madelyn is the Daughter of Kerry and the late Bill Thornton.

**SCHOOL ACTIVITIES:** Volleyball - Captain • Dance - Captain • Track & Field - Captain • Choir • Band • National Honor Society - President • Leo's Club - President • FFA - Treasurer • Wellness Club

**HONORS:** High Honor Roll • Class Salutatorian • All-State Speaker - Forensics • All-Conference Honorable Mention - Volleyball

**ACTIVITIES, HOBBIES & SPECIAL INTERESTS:** Blake's Prairie 4-H • St. Mary's Parish • Kayaking • Hiking • Running • Spending time with friends and my dogs

**VOLUNTEERING:** Can Cage Cleanout • Highway Cleanup, Operation Santa Claus • Pancake Breakfast • Bingo with nursing home residents

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Mayelyn THORNTON

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# A LOOK BACK

60 YEARS AGO  
MAY 9, 1963

GRANT COUNTY INDEPENDENT

The extension of natural gas service to Lancaster is virtually assured this summer, a special representative Elmer Wardell of Milwaukee Gas Light company told city council Monday afternoon. Barring procedural delays, gas installation could begin in July after the final decision of the Federal Power Commission. The commission last week issued an examiner's order recommending that Northern Natural Gas company of Omaha, Nebraska, deliver gas to Milwaukee Gas Light company for distribution in Lancaster. Lancaster's city gate station would be located east of the city.

50 YEARS AGO  
MAY 9, 1973

GRANT COUNTY INDEPENDENT

The construction of a Yogi Berra's Jellystone Park Camp Resort in southwestern Wisconsin is well underway, according to Robert Rymarz and Gene Sorenson, Milwaukee area businessmen who own the new facility. The new Jellystone Park, part of the rapidly growing franchised system owned by Jellystone Campgrounds Ltd., is located on the mighty Mississippi River, 15 miles south of Prairie du Chien on County Hwy X, a mile north of Bagley. An existing campgrounds, it was formerly known as Holiday Haven and was purchased by Sorenson and Rymarz last fall for conversion to the Jellystone system. The Bagley Jellystone Park is due to open in June.

40 YEARS AGO  
MAY 11, 1983

GRANT COUNTY HERALD INDEPENDENT

Last Thursday, May 5, was the last day the Pink Pony was open for business. Lois Alcorn sold it to Dave Bainbridge who plans to open a Hardee's at last location. It was back in 1952 that Alcorn opened a Tastee-Freeze shot at the corner of Madison and Walnut streets. Seven years later, she "went independent," changing the name to the Pink Pony and expanding the menu. In 1962, she built an addition to the original small building, lengthened the season, and again increased menu offerings. The present building was erected in 1974, and in recent years, Alcorn said from 600 to 700 people came in each day.

30 YEARS AGO  
MAY 13, 1993

GRANT COUNTY HERALD INDEPENDENT

The location of a one-stop ag service center was criticized by a group of local citizens at a meeting Wednesday night. At its April meeting, the Grant County Board of Supervisors approved a lease agreement with local developer David Bainbridge for a 10,000 square foot building to be built at the Grant County fairgrounds. The building will house four agricultural government agencies: Soil Conservation Service, Land Conservation Service and Farmers Home Administration. However, the appeal of centralizing a place for farmers to do business is countered by the concern over its location at the fairgrounds.

20 YEARS AGO  
MAY 8, 2003

GRANT COUNTY HERALD INDEPENDENT

Inmates at the prison formerly known as Supermax may be reading the Boscobel Dial before the month is over, according to a court decision announced last Wednesday. The Wisconsin Secure Program Facility (WSPF), as the prison in Boscobel is now called, prohibited inmates from subscribing to or possessing copies of the local weekly newspaper in July 2000. That was a little more than a half-year after the prison's first inmates arrived. Last week, Dane County Circuit Court Judge Michael Nowakowski declared the prison's ban on the Dial unconstitutional in response to an inmate's lawsuit.

# Cassville

FROM PAGE 3A

with the outbreak of COVID the second semester of their freshman year, and they noted how much that impacted them, from being quarantined at times because of close contacts, to the duration of having to wear masks, to those opening months where there was no school held in person.

"Schoolwork was a lot harder," Xander shared. Yet, he noted they found ways to work with one another, like setting up SnapChat rooms so they could

talk about classes. "We found ways to work together still as a class, like online, but it definitely made it more difficult."

Hauk is focusing his speech on things that class has been through together, which has been a long time - of the 14 graduating, 11 of them have been together since kindergarten at Cassville, while Erasmus and another came over from St. Charles.

"I think that's just really special," Xander said.

Okey plans to go to UW-Whitewater for Marketing, while Hauk is going to UW-Stevens Point for Wildlife Management.

For Okey, he said his career

path was inspired by the high school's desktop publishing class for the yearbook. "One of my jobs do like staff spotlight and these things called Think Fast. I had to kind of like design and create videos for that class. So kind of just getting into that and like working with computers and getting into that aspect kind of got me into marketing."

For Hauk, he was influenced by his uncle, who works for the DNR. "I've got to hang out with him and do some, like small projects to him. I think that just shows me, you know, like the importance you can make in nature and I just really like being outside and working outside."

One aspect they were also asked about was the cooperatives Cassville has with Potosi for several sports. That started when they were in middle school, and they recalled that early on, they considered themselves rivals with their new teammates, but it has created a bond between the students of both schools.

"There's not as much of a disconnect between the two schools, we kind of almost have grown together like sports as one school. And you know, we hang out a lot more outside of just sports now than we used to," Hauk said.

# Potosi

FROM PAGE 3A

As far as influences that inspired or pushed them, Logan noted that his parents always were there for him.

"My parents have, like, pushed me to be the best I can my whole life. And they've always been there for me," Logan said. "I guess everybody in my family has really, like, pushed me to be who I am now. And I want to thank all of them."

For Logan, it was also his father that inspired him on his career path as an electrician. "My dad is is an electrician, and when I was probably 12 or 13, he was doing like some side work....I went with him a couple of times to help him and it always sparked my interest." Continuing to help in him in different ways led Logan to know this is what he

wanted to do.

Katelyn also spotlighted her parents. "The people who supported me the most would be my parents. They helped keep me motivated to do my best and study hard so that I had many opportunities in the future."

As for what she will miss, "I'm going to miss the small-town environment and the friends I've made here. This small town is what motivated me to choose the career path I did and I'll be sad to move so far away from my lifelong friends. It was in the second semester of their freshmen year that COVID hit, and both remarked the impact it had on their high school careers.

"Online learning was definitely a struggle," Katelyn stated. "It was harder to learn the material and it made a lot of us feel isolated for a while. However, it helped me be able to communicate better with my teachers and it brought me and

my friends closer."

Logan added "junior year was nice, like being back to normal. It just felt normal. Like again, it hadn't since the beginning of freshman year, and it was nice.

Because he will be starting his apprenticeship this August, Logan wants to make sure he fits in plenty of things in his last summer before joining the work force. In addition to spending as much time with friends before they head out, and golfing, Kruser will also continue to coach youth rec baseball in the community.

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