

BY AMY KENT

## GRADUATION

# A Race to the Top

### *Valedictorian designation returns at Clinton High School*

Assistant Editor CLINTON — Eight one-hundredths of a grade point. That's all that separated Rohan Aggerwal and Nick Beckwith in this year's race to earning valedictorian.

Not since 1986 has Clinton High School awarded the honor, and though both students possess the academic prowess to earn the title, it was Aggerwal who pulled away, by 0.87th of a point, in the end.

Though the competition was tight, there isn't any hard feelings between the two; in fact, they have grown to be close friends over their four years at Clinton High School, in part because of the abundance of programs and activities they have participated in together.

Tennis, Future Business Leaders of America, Student Council, the State of Iowa Youth Advisory Council and the Real World Design Challenge, are just a few of the organizations the two are involved in, but their lives aren't always encircled by academia.

They still give themselves time to be teenagers.

"We play a lot of pingpong," Aggerwal said. "We'll get like five or 10 people together on the weekend and just play ping-pong for a couple of hours." "And video games," Beckwith added.

The soon-to-be graduates are looking forward to the summer away from school, allowing them time to relax, spend time with family and of course play ping-pong. But, when the fall semester arrives, the two know just how hard they will have to work to make their dreams come true.

Aggerwal will join 34 of the nation's best and brightest students in the Jerome Fisher Program in Management and Technology at the University of Pennsylvania, where he will look to obtain a dual degree in engineering and business. Beckwith has decided to stay in the Midwest and will attend the University of Wisconsin in Madison, Wisconsin to study computer engineering. Both also intend on continuing their education and expect to attend graduate school following their undergraduate studies.

While both have a level of nervousness with the idea of leaving home, the prospect of experience, academically and otherwise, they will gain at their respective college choices far outweighs the nerves.

"It's nice just moving on to the next step now, because we've been in Clinton, Iowa for the last 18 years of our lives," Aggerwal said. "Just getting out and seeing how the rest of the world is, how people differ from a small Midwestern town for me in Philledphia, one of the biggest cities in the country, just seeing what's out there in the rest of the world. I'm not too scared but there will be unforeseen challenges for sure." It's those unforeseen challenges that have added to the nerves for their parents.

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**Rohan Aggerwal (left) and Nick Beckwith battled all year to earn the top spot as this year's valedictorian, an honor narrowly taken by Aggerwal. Beckwith earned salutatorian and both will be recognized on Sunday during the graduation ceremony at Clinton High School.**

Amy Kent/Clinton Herald

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## **RACE**

### **Valedictorian designation returns CHS**

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As the youngest of two children, Aggerwal said his parents have embraced his desire to study engineering - as both parents and his older brother are all in the medical field - but the idea of him leaving his hometown has them feeling a little of the empty nest syndrome.

Beckwith on the other hand assured his parents they could visit any time they want since he is only a few hours away.

"My parents are pretty sad to see me leave. They thought I'd go to Iowa, Iowa State or UNI (University of Northern Iowa)," Beckwith said. "But they've really embraced all the academic stuff and are happy with wherever I go." If Aggerwal and Beckwith are able to accomplish all the goals they have set for themselves, living in Chicago, New York or Pennsylvania will be but a side note in their lives; their aim is business owner (Beckwith) and CEO (Aggerwal), or anything that allows them to be leaders in their fields.

They know their experiences at Clinton High School will aid in making those dreams come true.

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**Nick Beckwith**

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